

community—a reality for far too many of this nation's young people—the fear of bullets and gangs is certain to triumph over the desire to conquer new technologies. If a child goes hungry, if school is the only place that can be counted on for a good meal, that child cannot focus on computing and learning.

Mr. President, these are the issues of the digital divide: adequate and affordable housing, safe and secure school buildings, adequate health care, qualified teachers, an increased minimum wage, strong communities, and affordable day care. We must understand that in order to seize upon this brilliant moment of technological advance and move our entire nation forward, we must address these basic needs. We must shore up the foundation, Mr. President and provide all our citizens with opportunity as we march forward in the digital age.

I ask my colleagues to ponder this for a moment: change is nothing new, technology is nothing new, the challenge is the same as it's ever been. But we can use these new technologies to extend opportunity to more Americans than ever before—or, if we're not careful, we could allow technology to heighten economic inequality and sharpen social divisions. By the same token, we can accelerate the most powerful engine of growth and prosperity the world has ever known—or allow that engine to stall. As every economics textbook will tell you, new technologies will continue to drive economic growth—but only if they continue to spread to all sectors of our economy and civic life. And that's the challenge that faces this Congress and this nation.

Mr. President, we have a real opportunity here—and I urge my colleagues to seize it—to close the divisions within our society that have always existed and also to close the digital divide.

FAMILY OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 2000

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, recently my colleagues, Senators GRASSLEY, KENNEDY, JEFFORDS, and HARKIN introduced The Family Opportunity Act of 2000. I have proudly signed on to this important piece of legislation which will help hundreds of thousands of American families who have children with disabilities get access to Medicaid as well as obtain much needed support and information.

The Family Opportunity Act is modeled after last year's successful Work Incentives Improvement Act, which assures adults with disabilities can return to work and not risk losing their health care coverage. This new Act would create a state option to allow middle-income parents who have a child with special health needs to keep working, while having an option to buy in to Medicaid coverage for their child.

In my own state of West Virginia, over 50,000 children are known to have

a disability. I have heard personally from many of these families, who remind me about their daily struggles of sacrificing time, energy, and finances to provide the best environment for their child. In the past, this has meant that parents often refuse jobs, pay raises and overtime just to keep their incomes low enough so that they can qualify for services under Medicaid for their children with special health care needs.

Medicaid coverage is so crucial to the child because many private plans do not offer essential services such as occupational, physical and speech therapy, mental health services, home and community-based services, and durable medical equipment such as walkers and wheelchairs, which if uncovered, can be financially devastating to a family. Under the Family Opportunity Act, families would be required to first take employer-sponsored health coverage if available. The option to buy in to Medicaid would be used as a supplement to existing private insurance or as stand alone coverage if employer-based coverage were not an option.

In addition to creating Medicaid buy-in options for families, the Family Opportunity Act proposes the establishment of Family to Family Health Information Centers. These Centers, staffed by both parents and professionals would be available to help families identify and access appropriate health care for their children with special needs, as well as answer questions on filling out the necessary paperwork to establish health care coverage.

The Family Opportunity Act promises to promote early intervention, ensures medically necessary services, offers support, and will help restore family stability. I applaud my colleagues for proposing this important legislation, but even more important, I give a standing ovation to the dedicated families who give so greatly of themselves to care for their children.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Thursday, June 15, 2000, the Federal debt stood at \$5,644,606,868,488.81 (Five trillion, six hundred forty-four billion, six hundred and six million, eight hundred and sixty-eight thousand, four hundred eighty-eight dollars and eighty-one cents).

Last year, June 16, 1999, the Federal debt stood at \$5,579,687,718,133.89 (Five trillion, five hundred seventy-nine billion, six hundred eighty-seven million, seven hundred eighteen thousand, one hundred and thirty-three dollars and eighty-nine cents).

Five years ago, June 16, 1995, the Federal debt stood at \$4,893,073,000,000 (Four trillion, eight hundred ninety-three billion, seventy-three million, seven hundred eighteen thousand, one hundred and thirty-three dollars and eighty-nine cents).

Ten years ago, June 16, 1990, the Federal debt stood at \$3,121,688,000,000

(Three trillion, one hundred twenty-one billion, six hundred eighty-eight million).

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

HONORS FOR AN ARKANSAS STUDENT

• Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute and to recognize a fellow Arkansan, Blake Rutherford, for his accomplishments at Middlebury College in Vermont. Blake is a native of Little Rock, attended Little Rock Central High School, and will be graduating from Middlebury College with a degree in Political Science in August 2000. This fine young man is the first student ever chosen at Middlebury College to give the Student Commencement Address. This is a well deserved honor for Blake Rutherford and I wholeheartedly congratulate him on his achievements. I ask that the text of his speech be included following my remarks.

BLAKE RUTHERFORD'S COMMENCEMENT SPEECH

Today, we are fortunate to experience one of the great accomplishments in life. Like thousands throughout America, we are gathered at the beginning of a new millennium, a unique time in our nation and in our world. But unlike thousands we have come together in a very special place—nestled between the Adirondacks and the Green Mountains—a place where we worked hard, played hard, made lifelong friends, and have spent some of the best years of our lives. Paraphrasing the legendary Bob Hope, "Middlebury: Thanks for the Memories."

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Class of 2000—individually and collectively—for your achievements. I also want to thank the Board of Trustees, the administration, faculty, and staff for providing us the very best. And I especially want to thank our parents and families for paying for it.

At our centennial celebration one hundred years ago, the Middlebury Register characterized it as the "day of days for the undergraduate." Today, a century later, is most certainly our day of days and one that we will celebrate and remember forever with great pride, for as Emerson noted, "The reward of a thing well done, is to have done it."

Middlebury College began in 1800 under the direction of President Jeremiah Atwater in a small building with only seven students. As we see almost 200 hundred years later, more than 2000 students larger, under the direction of President John McCardell, much has changed.

Built for only \$8,000, Painter Hall, constructed between 1814 and 1816, is currently the oldest building on campus. Although it stands the same today, the environment and the atmosphere around it do not.

Admittance into Middlebury in 1815 used to consist of a forty-minute oral examination in Latin, Greek and arithmetic. Remembering back four years ago, I could only wish the process was as simple.

But today, thanks to the efforts of many, Middlebury is blessed with a stronger, more diverse student body than it has ever had.

We have seen the number of applicants to Middlebury grow steadily over the past four years.

We have seen the number of minorities on campus grow over the past four years.