. . . stimulating spending and making members feel secure would be more effective than reducing corporate tax rates as a way to boost economic growth.

In fact, we all know our economy, this free market, is all about the consumer. If consumers do not buy, companies will not have revenue. If companies do not have revenue, they will not be able to invest, nor will companies need employees to be in those jobs to produce. If they do not invest, if they are not creating jobs, our economy will not grow out of this economic sluggishness.

The technology sector, which was once the leading force behind economic growth and productivity, is now the most significant detractor, getting hit the hardest by the contractions in spending and investment. There has been a 19-percent drop in technology spending, including a 45-percent drop in personal computer orders and a 14.5-percent drop in software and equipment spending.

Other sources of capital and growth have dried up as well. Banks continue to limit their exposure to the high-technology sector and tighten lending standards, cutting off resources at a time when money is already scarce. Venture capital has all but disappeared from this sector. First-round venture capital funding has already fallen $1.84 billion, down 87 percent from the previous year during the second quarter of 2001.

This has all led to widespread layoffs within the tech sector over this past year. Job cuts in the high-tech industries of telecommunications, computers and electronics—those job cuts are up 13 times over what they were last year.

Through the end of August, high tech accounted for nearly 40 percent of the 1.1 million job cuts so far in 2001.

Just to put that in perspective, that is 4 times more, 4 times greater than the entire post-attack airline industry layoffs—over 400,000 jobs lost in the tech sector versus, obviously, a great concern over 100,000 jobs lost in the airline industry sector. The total tech job sector cuts in August alone exceeded all of the cuts for the year 2000.

This technology sluggishness is clearly harmful for our future. Technological advancements are how America and our economy will compete and succeed internationally, and technological sector growth and rapid advances in productivity have been the base of our economic growth in the past and will be a vital key to our competitiveness in the future. As we look at technology in the future, whether it is computers, whether it is clean coal technology, whether it is fuel cell technology, these are important for future competitiveness, our quality of life, and good jobs in the future.

The lifeline to our economy, consumer spending, has been seriously dampened by the terrorist attacks which occurred on September 11, 2001. That is why I would like to bring the attention of my colleagues back to a bill I introduced in March of this year, the Educational Opportunity Tax Credit of 2001. This proposal will provide a $1,000-per-child computer purchase tax credit which families can also use, not just to buy computers but printers, monitors, educational software, or Internet access. However, this tax credit would not apply to tuition at a private school. This would provide the exact type of boost both consumer spending on durable goods and the technology sector need. Maybe we could limit this tax credit to 1 or 2 years. Even with that limitation I would estimate it would provide upwards of $20 billion in new consumer spending.

Think of parents who have a child in school. If they could buy their son or daughter a computer or some peripherals, a printer, they would say: Gosh, if I do it this year or next year, I will get a tax break for it. That will induce that spending.

It clearly would induce computer and technology spending, especially if it is available for 2 years, thus propelling the technology sector while also improving educational opportunities for students. The fact is, experience shows that even a small, temporary reduction in taxes can bring about huge increases in computer sales.

In South Carolina, they had a sales tax holiday on computers for just 3 days. CPU sales increased more than tenfold; 1,060 percent in those 3 days.

In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania they eliminated the sales tax on computers for 1 week. CPU sales increased sixfold; 615 percent in that time.

My Educational Opportunity Tax Credit would not just impact computer sales but also software makers, Internet access providers, printer, monitor and scanner manufacturers as well.

In South Carolina they realized a 664-percent and 700-percent increase in monitor and printer sales, respectively, with only a 5-percent tax break. We know that consumer spending accounts for two-thirds of all economic activity, which is largely flat and has been flat this summer and weakening in the last report in our economy.

The Education Opportunity Tax Credit represents the right solution for our economy. No. 1, it increases consumer spending on computers and related technology. No. 2, it injects $20 billion into the weakest and one of the very important links in our economy. No. 3, it provides previously out-of-reach education and technology opportunities for families.

As I said before, I am willing to work with my colleagues in addressing the best way to implement this proposal. We can shorten the applicable timeframe from the original bill. We can look at a different credit level to make sure we get the maximum economic impact for minimum fiscal impact to the Treasury. But I am convinced that combining consumer-oriented tax cuts with appreciation of what is really going on in the technology sector can improve consumer confidence, accelerate consumer spending, and provide the technology sector the revenues they need to reinvest and return our economy to strong growth and also provide more good paying jobs for the people of America.

Mr. President, I yield the remainder of my time, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JOHNSON). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BINGAMAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I understand we are in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are in morning business.

THREAT OF GERM WARFARE AND BIOTERRORISM

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I rise to discuss an issue based on my observations over the past week, an issue clearly on the minds of many people, and that is the potential threat of germ warfare and bioterrorism. Over the weekend, there was a lot of discussion through the various media outlets about our broad vulnerability to terrorism in the United States of America, in part based on intelligence and in part based on the events of September 11.

Over the last week, many people have rushed to obtain antibiotics and gas masks to prepare for the threat of bioterrorism or germ warfare—the threat that is posed by germs, bacteria—if viruses fall into the wrong hands. Many people are concerned that given the powerful destructive ability of some of these viruses, they could used in a way that threatens not only all Americans, but all of civilization.

A lot of people called me over the weekend, recognizing my interest in this topic and recognizing I had participated in passing a bill called the Public Health Threats and Emergency Act which was passed in the year 2000.

People have asked if the threat of bioterrorism is real? The answer is yes, it is real. In fact, we have already seen the destructive use of bacteria by people in this country. In 1984, there was an outbreak in Oregon of salmonella poisoning from which over 700 people suffered some illness. This outbreak was caused by members of a religious cult placing living bacteria in the salad bars of 10 different sites across the State.

The ''bio'' part of biogerm warfare or biochemical warfare is the living organism, and that is what was inserted in the salad bars that caused the illness of about 700 people. We know germ warfare has been used, so the threat is real.

But before people attempt to respond to this threat by rushing out and buying items, we need to put the threat of bioterrorism in perspective. The overall probability of a bioterrorist attack is low. I do not know exactly what that number is. In fact, we cannot put a specific number on it, but the overall probability of a terrorist attack using biology, bacteria, living organisms—is low. However, it is increasing. It is now our number one or number two threat, and, at least to me, it is clear that we are highly vulnerable in the event such an attack takes place.

The consequences of such an attack, whether it is with anthrax, smallpox, tularemia, pneumonic plague, nerve agents or blister agents, is huge. Why? Because we are ill equipped. We are unprepared. However, in saying that, we have to be careful that we do not become alarmists. People will have nightmares, will not sleep at night, and the response should be the opposite.

We need to recognize there are things we can do right now, first and foremost, to develop a comprehensive biodefense plan capable of preventing a bioterrorist attack. Obviously, prevention should be our primary goal from the outset. We want to keep biological weapons out of the hands of people who are intent on destruction. At the same time we can be prepared—if these germs and agents fall in the hands of a potential terrorist—by preparing an effective response plan. Third, is the response, an area called consequence management, crisis management after such an assault takes place.

Yes, the threat is real, but very low—a tiny probability, but growing. Why do I say growing? Because on September 11 we witnessed a calamity the likes of which have never been seen before in the history of the world. It was unexpected and unfathomable—using planes as bombs. We know those events were carefully planned out over a period of years in a very sophisticated way that was obviously well financed. Therefore, I will say it is growing because we did not expect it, and because it has occurred several years after Khobar Towers and after the attack on the USS *Cole*. So there is an increasing threat of calamity and destruction.

This threat is rising, secondly, because of scientific advances in areas such as aerosolization. People talk about anthrax and how you cannot really aerosolize it—that is, breaking it down into defined particles so it can be inhaled into the lungs—because 10 years ago we tried to do it and could not do it. However, over the last 10 years there have been huge advances in this technology. Today we use nebulizers in hospitals to aerosolize particles to get medication deep into the lungs. We did not have that technology 10 to 15 years ago, but the technology has been developed.

Take perfume, for example. When one goes through a department store, one can smell the perfume around. The technology of aerosolization has progressed rapidly over the last 10 to 15 years. What we thought could not be done 10 or 15 years ago can be done today because of advances in technology.

Another example is airplanes spraying chemicals. They say: Oh, those crop dusters cannot do it, but there are some dry chemical crop dusters that might be able to spray agents.

I have mentioned these examples because science has changed and what we could not do years ago can be done today.

In addition, the scientific expertise related to biochemical warfare is there. A lot of people don't realize that during the 1980s, well after a general pact in 1972 was agreed upon by really the world, the Soviet Union set out in a very determined and aggressive way to develop biochemical weapons. The number one goal of this project was the development of pathogens that could kill. This was not a little, secret project. This project involved as many as 7,000 scientists whose professional being, through the 1980s in the Soviet Union, was to develop these pathogens and effective mechanisms for their delivery.

With the fall of the Soviet Union 13 years ago, those scientists all of a sudden became unemployed. With no employment available in the former Soviet Union, those scientists have gone elsewhere in the world. We do not know where they all are, but we do know that they spent their entire professional life studying how to develop the boichemical weapons that threaten us today.

I say that because it is not beyond the realm of possibility that those scientists can be either hired or bought. All of this is in the public record, and, again, I want to be very careful because I do not want to be an alarmist. On the other hand, people need to realize that from the technology and the scientific standpoint, the expertise is out there.

The third area, and the reason why I say the risk is rising compared to 10 years ago, is that the United States today has emerged as the sole superpower of the world. Without the cold war and the sort of balances and the trade-offs and the push and the pull, the United States has become the target of many people who resent us, who do not like us, who are jealous of us, and a lot of that fervor today will hit the surface, or was hitting the surface more than 10 or 15 years ago in the middle of the cold war.

So, the threat is real: low probability but rising.

Let me just close on an issue that has to be addressed, and that is this whole field of vulnerability. Why are we so vulnerable today? We have heard recently that the Federal Government has worked aggressively and compared to 4 years ago, there has been enormous improvement at the Federal level. We are investing money that was not being invested 4 years ago. We are organized. We have 12-hour push products that allow us to very quickly could get antibiotics and vaccine, although not enough vaccine. We have a delivery system that could be mobilized very quickly. All of this is good.

We also know that at the Federal level we are not nearly as coordinated as we should be. Treasury, Defense, Energy, and Health and Human Services are all doing something, but according to the GAO report that came out last week, we need better organization and better coordination to eliminate the duplication and to eliminate the possible conflicting messages that are sent from the Federal level. So, we can coordinate better.

I am delighted that Governor Ridge has taken on this overall responsibility because that is the first step toward better coordination.

What really bothers me, when I say the vulnerability is high in spite of low probability, is that our public health infrastructure has been woefully and inadequately underfunded over the last really 15 years to two decades.

If there were a bioterrorist attack using germ warfare, what would happen? Basically, you have to diagnosis, you have to have good medical surveillance, you have to be able to assimilate a response team, and you have to do in it a rapid fashion. That is done through our public health system. The difference between conventional weaponry and bioweaponry is that bioweaponry requires first responders that are not just the firemen and the policemen, which are so critical and whose courage was so well demonstrated 2½ weeks ago, but in addition the first responders have to be the physicians, nurses, and the people who are managing the public health systems today.

Most physicians have never been trained to recognize smallpox or to recognize the pneumonic plague that affects the lungs or to recognize tularemia or the various types of food poisoning. They have not been trained. When you see 100 cases of flu, you do not even think about pneumonic anthrax. So we need better training.

We have underfunded the public health infrastructure. Communities of fewer than 25,000 people are being served by public health units of which fewer than two-thirds have fax machines or an Internet connection. The ability to communicate between public health units once something is suspected or identified between the public health entities is absolutely critical. This communication infrastructure, at least from my standpoint, as a physician, as someone who has dealt in treating the immuno-compromised host through the field of transplantation for 20 years before coming to the Senate, is totally inadequate today.

There are four other things that we can do. The bill that we passed in this body last year, the Public Health Threats and Emergency Act, is a good first step. It addressed this prevention, it addressed this preparedness, and it

addressed this third category of consequence management.

Unless we support our public health infrastructure, we cannot minimize the vulnerability that is out there today by training those first responders, by making sure that coordination at the local level among various entities is intact. This coordination is not there today because we have underinvested. Finally we must make sure that there is coordination at the State level and then at the Federal level and then across the Federal level, and that there is appropriate coordination without duplication.

I will simply close by saying that now is not the time for individuals to go out and hoard antibiotics or to buy gas masks. Now is the time for us to come together and develop a comprehensive biodefense plan that looks first at prevention to make sure we have the adequate intelligence, the appropriate research in terms of viruses, in terms of vaccines, and in terms of methods of early detection; second to look at preparedness, to make sure we are stockpiling the appropriate antibiotics, that we have a sufficient number of vaccines, which we simply do not have today but we are working very hard to get; and third that our consequence management and crisis management could handle what is called the surge product, the rush of people to emergency rooms, in a straightforward way.

I am very optimistic. We are working very hard over the course of this week on how much money should be put into this effort. We had a good first step last year in the Public Health Threats and Emergency Act. I am very confident that the American public will be very well served by this body and by the administration as we look at this critical area of biodefense.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, we are in morning business, is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are in morning business.

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, earlier I was visiting with my colleague from the State of Idaho, who spent this weekend in his home State, and I briefly described to him my travels in North Dakota. All of us serving in this Congress, both the House and the Senate, discover and understand a different spirit in this country since the September 11 tragedies that occurred as a result of the acts of terrorists.

I was traveling down Interstate 94 in North Dakota, on kind of a lonely space of that road, without a building or town in sight. All I saw were prairies and fenceposts. In the middle of that vista was a single American flag, hoisted up on a fence cornerpost, gently blowing in the North Dakota morning breeze—one single American flag.

That morning, I was on my way to an event in Hettinger, ND. There were perhaps 80 to 100 people who came to this event in Hettinger, and the master of ceremonies asked that they open the events with the Pledge of Allegiance. Following the Pledge of Allegiance, it occurred to me that it was the first time I had heard the Pledge of Allegiance by a group of people in which it was something much more than reciting a pledge from memory. It was much more about a pledge than it was about memory.

All across this country, there is a sense of patriotism, a love of country, that has sprung from these tragedies of September 11, and that spirit invades in a good way the work of the Senate and the House as well. We have had more cooperation on a range of controversial issues in the last couple of weeks than I have seen in years in the Senate.

I say that as an introduction. We are now on a piece of legislation that is very important in a time of national security interests and in a time in which we have suffered these terrorist attacks. We have the Defense authorization bill before the Senate. It is stuck. We cannot seem to move it.

Why would we not be able to move something as important as a Defense authorization bill at a time such as this? Some Members of the Senate are insistent on, among other things, having an energy bill as an amendment to this bill, including the energy bill that was passed by the House of Representatives on this Defense authorization bill.

It is certainly the case we ought to pass an energy bill in this Congress. I don't think there is much debate about that. The Presiding Officer, the Senator from New Mexico, is the chairman of the Energy Committee on which I serve. We have been working for some long while to try to find common ground to write a new energy bill for our country. It takes on new urgency to write an energy bill, given what happened in this country on September 11, given the threat of actions by terrorists that could thwart the opportunity to have energy flow to places in this country that need it.

We need to do something with respect to not only energy security but energy supply and conservation and more. How do we do that? We don't do that, it seems to me, by simply taking a bill that was passed by the House of Representatives, and offering that as an amendment to a Defense bill in the Senate, especially in a circumstance where offering that as an amendment holds up a bill as vital to this country as the Defense authorization bill. I urge my colleagues to allow Members to move forward and deal with the amendments on the Defense authorization bill.

We have filed a cloture motion on the Defense authorization bill to be voted on tomorrow, but it is troublesome that we have to file a cloture motion to try to shut off a filibuster, in effect, on a Defense authorization bill at this time and in this place in this country. We ought to move as one with a new dedication of spirit and new determination to pass legislation as important as this, without hanging it up with extraneous amendments.

Let me talk for a moment about energy. The energy amendment some of my colleagues wish to offer to this Defense authorization bill is not germane to this bill. It has nothing to do with this bill. This bill is about the Defense Department and programs in the Defense Department. Is energy important? Absolutely. Energy is an important subject. There is a way to deal with energy policy in this country. All Members know we need to produce more: produce more oil and natural gas. We will do that. We all understand part of a comprehensive national energy policy is not only production, but it is also conservation. Some have this view that the only energy strategy that exists in America is to dig and drill. Just dig and drill and you will solve America's energy problem.

We need to produce more. I will support additional production. That is part of an energy policy we need. But we need conservation, efficiency, and we need to include renewables and limitless energy sources. All of those need to be part of a balanced energy program.

If we develop an energy policy and bring it to the floor of the Senate, which we should in my judgment, we can have a discussion about the different views of different Members of the Senate about how that mix ought to come together in an energy bill. It does not make sense, and in my judgment, does not help do what we need to do in the Senate to hold up a Defense authorization bill so one can try to offer an energy bill passed in the House of Representatives as an amendment to a Defense bill. That is not the right thing to do at this point.

How do we reconcile this? My hope is those who are holding up the Defense authorization bill will stop and say: Let's work together on a Defense authorization bill that makes sense for this country. We can do that.

We are going to be sending men and women into harm's way in this country. We probably already have. We certainly will in the future. Yet we are not willing to pass a Defense authorization bill without offering extraneous amendments? That is not fair. It is not the right thing to do.

I attended a ceremony in North Dakota on Friday in which I presented medals that had been earned by World War II veterans that they never received. Two were Bronze Stars for members of the 184th Division of the North Dakota National Guard. They fought 600 days in combat. They actually saved Guadalcanal. They got a letter from the Marine commandant saying they wanted to make them honorary marines. These were very brave,