best interests. We all want to ensure that our children and American consumers can continue to have access to abundant, safe agricultural products. It is in the best interests of consumers and agricultural producers that decisions on pesticide use are based on sound scientific analysis—sound scientific analysis. That was the intent of the law which passed, with strong bipartisan support, 3 years ago. In 1996, Congress passed the Food Quality Protection Act to ensure the safety of our Nation’s food supply. It passed with the overwhelming support of the agricultural industry and was seen as a much-needed modernization of laws governing all pesticide use.

As written and signed by the President, the FQPA requires the EPA to reassess all of the Nation’s pesticides, using a more rigorous, more modern approach, into account, and allowing greater margins of safety. The FQPA also requires that these standards be based on hard data and sound science, not arbitrary assumptions or computer models.

The EPA, as written, required that it answer the questions on pesticide uses are based on scientific data; it streamlined the process for evaluating new pesticides; and it provides Congress with hard data and sound science, not arbitrary assumptions or computer models. The FQPA frequently prefers this approach, partly as a result of not having the resources or the time to focus. But this is not what Congress intended in 1996. We did not intend for farmers to lose the use of safe and effective pesticides. We did not intend for public health officials dealing with pest control issues to lose the products that help them protect the public.

The second issue, one that continues to be a concern for Members to be back in their States and with their families. I am looking forward to that, as I am sure many of my colleagues. But it is a good time for us to reflect on what we have done and what we have failed to do in the last several months.

Each of us is elected with a responsibility to come to Washington and try to respond to some of the challenges facing families and individuals and businesses across America. I am sad to report at this moment we have little to show for our efforts this year. The Columbine shooting, which focused the attention of America on violence in our schools, rallied the Senate in a rare bipartisan fashion to deal with violence in schools. We passed the Juvenile Justice Act, which had sensible gun control provisions contained in it, and tried as well to attack this culture of violence which is becoming more dominant in our society.

If you will recall, it was a tie vote, 50-50. The tie was broken by Vice President Gore, the bill passed, it went over to the House, and was hopelessly mired down by the efforts of the gun lobby because of their resistance to any changes in gun control. So we are here today, the first part of August, with literally nothing to show for this whole issue of school safety. By the time we return, our kids will be back in school, another school year will have started, and this Congress will have failed to react to a problem that is on everyone’s mind.

The second issue, one that continues to haunt us, is the issue of the Patients’ Bill of Rights. Yesterday, I was in Bloomington, IL, and met with a group of doctors and nurses at hospitals to talk about what is happening with health insurance. How families feel so helpless when health insurance clerks are making decisions that doctors should make. When we tried to address it on the floor, sadly, we were defeated by the health lobby, a lobby which continues to spend millions of dollars to overcome our efforts on behalf of patients and families. That, again, is another issue with which we failed to deal.

Finally, of course, we will be talking a lot this week about the tax break as well as the whole question of the budget. There are many of us who think the action by the Senate last week was not a very wise one. We have a chance now, if our economy recovers and continues to grow, to generate a surplus. Then we have to decide what to do with it. First and foremost, I think we should do no harm to this economy. The economy must keep going forward, creating jobs and businesses and new housing starts. Yet Alan Greenspan, the Federal Reserve Chairman, warns Congress on a weekly basis not to pass the Republican tax cut package, a $360 billion tax cut primarily for wealthy individuals, which could fuel the fires of inflation and raise interest rates, jeopardizing home mortgages, business loans, and family farmers, who are trying to stay in business.

First and foremost, we ought to be cautioned that Alan Greenspan, who has no partisan interest in whose ox is gored in this battle, has warned us do not do it. Second, even when I go home and speak to the most conservative Republicans in my home State of Illinois, they say: If you have a surplus, Senator, for goodness’ sake, the first thing you ought to do is get rid of the national debt, the $5.7 trillion we have to pay on, or to build new highways or mass transit, or to build new highways or mass transit, or to build new highways or mass transit.

Finally, of course, we will be talking about health care. We passed the Medicare part A. We have a chance now to pass the Medicare part B, which could well be a very wise one. We have a chance now to pass the Medicare part B, which could well be a very wise one. We have a chance now to pass the Medicare part B, which could well be a very wise one. We have a chance now to pass the Medicare part B, which could well be a very wise one.
If we are going to do that and reduce the debt, we can do it in a fashion that is fair to everyone or do it in a way that preserves Social Security and Medicare. Many senior citizens are not even aware of the fact the Medicare system is in trouble. Yet it is. They would like to see Medicare expanded, no money for Medicare, no money for Medicare out of this surplus. Do you know what that means? Senator who are striving to be independent and healthy will not get a helping hand when they should. That is what this budget and tax debate has been about.

 Sadly, that is where we find ourselves as we head toward the August recess—our failure to enact the juvenile justice bill to make our schools safer; our failure to enact the Patients' Bill of Rights; our failure to enact a bill that would allow people who are uninsured in America who have health insurance can believe they have a doctor they can trust and a doctor who is making decisions for them and their family; our failure to enact a bill to deal with our surplus which is responsible, a bill that will not jeopardize the economy, a law which, in fact, will make sure we reduce our debt and reduce these interest payments which we have to pay; and something that deals with the whole question of the solvency and future of Social Security and Medicare.

 When I look at this Congress, it is sad, with all the talent we have on both sides of the aisle, Republican and Democrat alike, that we have been unable to come to any conclusion where we can go home in the month of August and point with pride to what we have accomplished.

 Unfortunately, there is little we can point to.

 Mrs. BOXER. Will the Senator yield for a question?
 Mr. DURBIN. I would be happy to yield to the Senator from California for a question.

 Mrs. BOXER. I thank the Senator for crystallizing where we are. When the Senator says we will go home and there is nothing we can point to, he is right. What happened to the juvenile justice bill and all the sensible gun control measures? Every day we wake up to some other horrible incident, and we are doing nothing to protect our children and our people from gun violence. It strikes me that the same thing happened with the Patients' Bill of Rights—nothing. The kind of sham bill that came across this place and passed isn't going to make any lives better.

 But then, it seems to me, when our colleagues on the other side of the aisle do something, they do something bad. My friend was alluding to it. I just want to ask a couple questions on that point.

 Is it not a fact that the tax bill which we passed did not allocate one slim dime for any measure that preserved Social Security and Medicare? Mr. DURBIN. That is a fact. It has been a sad commentary that we know in the year 2015, if I am not mistaken, the Medicare system, as we know it—this current system—is going to go bankrupt, be insolvent. Many seniors have additional benefits to help them stay healthy and independent, like the prescription drug program which we support. When we made an effort on the floor, in a vote just last week we could not rally any support from the Republican side of the aisle for the prescription drug program so that seniors can stay independent and healthy. That, I think, is a shame.

 I would like to go home this August and say to seniors and those of us soon to be in the program: We have done something positive. You can live a longer, more independent, and healthier life. But we can't even point to that. Instead, the Republicans suggest we can give tax cuts to wealthy people and substantial tax breaks to certain businesses.

 Mrs. BOXER. I want to pick up on that Medicare question. Because when my friend said seniors want to live fuller lives, this is so true. That is where we are now. We have come such a long way with our health research and our ability to take certain prescription drugs that help us live fuller lives; that when we look out into the future, with the demographic changes that are coming, this is our biggest challenge. How do we make sure that when we pass age 60, 65, 70, 75, we are living full lives?

 This tax bill turns its back on this whole matter by doing zero for Medicare. They can say: Oh, we left a whole lot of money over here, and we can possibly use it, but the fact is, it is zero for something we know is coming down the road at us and something that is very important.

 So it seems to me—and I would just ask my friend to comment; then I will yield the floor—that when we go home, assuming this Republican tax bill continues to roll—and from what we can tell it may well continue to roll right through—what will have been done will be bad for Medicare, bad for paying down the debt, and threatens this economy. Just listen to Alan Greenspan. He is the one my friends from the other side of the aisle have followed very religiously.

 Suddenly, Alan Greenspan gets up and says: You better not now. Don't stimulate this economy now. You could threaten recovery. They roll right over Alan Greenspan, and they are going to roll right over us. So we are going to go home and say: We didn't do what they should have done on juvenile justice, sensible gun control, HMOs—fighting against them—and what they did do threatens this economic recovery and does nothing for Medicare. It is a bad deal all the way around.

 The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAPO). The time of the Senator has expired.

 Mrs. BOXER. I ask for 1 additional minute.

 Mr. DURBIN. I ask for 1 additional minute.

 Mrs. BOXER. I ask for 1 additional minute in morning business.

 The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

 Mr. DURBIN. In response to the Senator from California, I agree with her. The sad thing is, if we give these tax cuts to the wealthiest among us, as proposed by the Republican bill, we are going to ultimately shortchange, in the outyears, some critically important programs for America, such as education.

 Think about it. As we go into the 21st century, with all the demands on our children, what they need to learn to be competitive and succeed is the very best educational system. The Republicans, with their tax bill to create shortfalls in spending on education, are really shortsighted.

 So as you look at it, here we stand on the third day of August, about to adjourn at the end of this week, with precious little to point to. We have been here for months. We have not listened to the American people. We have not responded to them. As we go home, I hope that we can build up some bipartisan approach as we conclude this year to address safety in schools, the Patients' Bill of Rights, and a sensible approach to using any budget surplus that is good for the long-term needs of America.

 I thank the Senator from California for joining me on the floor.

 Mrs. BOXER. I thank my friend, Mr. Reed. Under the previous order, the Senator from Rhode Island, Mr. REED, is recognized for up to 10 minutes.

 The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

 Mr. REED. I ask unanimous consent that a fellow in my office, Ms. Barbara Murray, be granted floor privileges during the pendency of my discussion on the child care quality incentive bill. The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

 (The remarks of Mr. Reed pertaining to the introduction of S. 1475 are located in today's RECORD under “Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.”)

 Mr. REED. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

 The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

 The legislative assistant proceeded to call the roll.

 The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.