

they are supported by two-thirds of the American people as well as many state and local governments.

In Minnesota, needle exchange programs are an important component of efforts to decrease the transmission of HIV and to end drug use. Minnesota has two successful needle exchange programs. One program, Women with a Point, has exchanged approximately 63,000 syringes in the past 18 months while providing on-site HIV testing, referrals for chemical abuse recovery programs, information on risk reduction techniques and Hepatitis C, and case management for HIV positive injection drug users. The other, Minnesota AIDS Project, has also exchanged thousands of needles and provided users with HIV testing, needle disinfection kits, numerous services for HIV positive individuals, and information about risk reduction techniques.

We must face the reality that the second most frequent reported risk behavior for HIV infection is injecting drug use. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate that approximately one-third of AIDS cases in the United States are directly or indirectly associated with injecting drug use. Moreover, according to a report in the American Journal of Public Health, 50 percent of new HIV infections are occurring among injection drug users.

We know that lowering the rate of injection-related HIV infections requires increasing the availability of drug treatment and increasing access to clean needles. We have scientific evidence that broad implementation of needle exchange programs would aid us in our battle against HIV.

In other words, we have scientific evidence that legal impediments to clean needle possession encourage high-risk behavior and do nothing to reduce drug use. We should not therefore be passing legislation that further hinders the establishment and expansion of needle exchange programs. We should instead of pushing for the removal of the Federal ban on funding—not enacting legislation that prohibits local governments, like the District of Columbia, from adopting good public health practices, practices that have been shown in communities across the United States to reduce the circulation of contaminated needles and the rate of HIV infection.

My colleagues in the Senate, President Clinton has threatened to veto this conference report because of its unwarranted intrusion into the public health of the citizens of the District of Columbia. And he is right. Colleagues, I ask you to avoid that veto, and to send this report back to the conference committee so this intrusion can be eliminated. Please join me and vote "no" on this conference report as it now reads.

EMPOWERMENT ZONES AND ENTERPRISE COMMUNITIES ACT

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I rise today to let my colleagues know that I am a cosponsor of S. 1473, the Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities Act. I believe this bill is an important step in the right direction, though I still have serious concerns about the discrepancy of funding levels between rural and urban Empowerment Zones.

First, let me say I strongly support the Empowerment Zones/Enterprise Community concept. Areas that are designated as Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities combine tax credits and social service grants to promote long-term economic revitalization. These communities take a grassroots approach to revitalization by building partnerships with local government, non-profit groups and the private sector—thus allowing the federal government to support the work done on a local level.

The problem, Mr. President, is that Round II Empowerment Zones are not fully funded and are not receiving the same tax benefits as Round I Empowerment Zones. Will Rogers once said, "I don't make jokes. I just watch the government and report the facts." I'm afraid this holds all too true for those who have struggled to see the Round II Empowerment Zones live up to their expectation. When the Griggs/Steele Empowerment Zone in eastern North Dakota was designated a Round II Empowerment Zone last year, the federal government made a commitment to help leaders in these communities create jobs and economic opportunity. Unfortunately, however, this Empowerment Zone still hasn't received one dime of federal funding. Those who live in the Griggs/Steele Empowerment Zone are now beginning to question the commitment of the federal government to make good on its promises.

I am co-sponsoring this bill because I think Congress has a responsibility to do the right thing and fully fund Round II Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities throughout this country. Having said that, I am very concerned about the discrepancy in funding between rural and urban areas. Like far too many proposals we debate here in Congress, this bill disproportionately grants much more funding for urban areas than rural areas. Of the \$1.75 billion this legislation would provide over 9 years, urban areas receive almost 86% of the total funding. Although I recognize that we've made some progress and narrowed the gap that existed between rural and urban areas in the original proposal, I hope we can do more to help rural areas of this country currently facing so many challenges to economic prosperity.

Despite my concerns about the bill on these grounds, I am cosponsoring this legislation because I recognize

that Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities need this funding in a timely manner to accomplish the economic revitalization the federal government promised. I will continue to work to ensure that rural Round II EZ/ECs receive the full funding and tax benefits they deserve.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Tuesday, September 21, 1999, the Federal debt stood at \$5,634,836,758,964.63 (Five trillion, six hundred thirty-four billion, eight hundred thirty-six million, seven hundred fifty-eight thousand, nine hundred sixty-four dollars and sixty-three cents).

One year ago, September 21, 1998, the Federal debt stood at \$5,510,750,000,000 (Five trillion, five hundred ten billion, seven hundred fifty million).

Five years ago, September 21, 1994, the Federal debt stood at \$4,685,969,000,000 (Four trillion, six hundred eighty-five billion, nine hundred sixty-nine million).

Fifteen years ago, September 21, 1984, the Federal debt stood at \$1,566,880,000,000 (One trillion, five hundred sixty-six billion, eight hundred eighty million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$4 trillion—\$4,067,956,758,964.63 (Four trillion, sixty-seven billion, nine hundred fifty-six million, seven hundred fifty-eight thousand, nine hundred sixty-four dollars and sixty-three cents) during the past 15 years.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 11:40 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Hanrahan, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills and joint resolutions in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 468. An act to establish the Saint Helena Island National Scenic Area.

H.R. 834. An act to extend the authorization for the National Historic Preservation fund, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1231. An act to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to convey certain national forest