provisions contained in the restoration bill change this by allowing more reasonable Medicare reimbursements for these therapies.

Take, John Rapp, my constituent from Salt Lake City, Utah. Mr. Rapp, who is 71 years old, was diagnosed with prostate cancer last May. He was presented with a series of treatment options and decided to have BRACHY therapy because it was minimally invasive, he could receive it as an outpatient and it had fewer complications than radical surgery.

This new innovative therapy implants radioactive seeds in the prostate gland in order to kill cancer cells. The success rate of this therapy has been overwhelming.

So, what's the problem? Without my legislation, services such as BRACHY therapy would not be available in the hospital outpatient setting to future Medicare patients due to the way the outpatient prospective payment system is being designed. Life saving services such as BRACHY therapy would be reimbursed at significantly lower-reimbursement rates, from approximately about $10,000 to $1500, and, therefore, it would not be cost-effective for hospitals to offer this service. Fortunately, the provisions included in the omnibus spending bill change all of that—innovative treatments, such as BRACHY therapy, will now be available to future prostate cancer patients.

We must get the newest technology, to seniors as quickly as possible. Government bureaucracy should not stand in the way of seniors receiving the best care available. We must put Medicare patients first, not government bureaucracy. That is why my legislation is necessary and I am so pleased that it was included in the Medicare package.

Finally, I am pleased that this package also addressed the serious concerns of the community health centers. The community health centers community came to us because there were concerns about the financial hardship that the Balanced Budget Act would have imposed on these health centers and their patients. I worked hard with Finance Committee Chairman ROTH, Senator GRASSLEY, and Senator BAUCUS to resolve this important issue. I believe that the conference committee came up with a good solution, however, I intend to monitor this situation closely over the next couple of years.

Mr. President, there are numerous other provisions in this restoration package that I will not take the time to comment on now, but they are equally important. I want to commend the leadership in the Senate and House for working to put together this important measure that will clearly help millions of Medicare beneficiaries throughout the country.

THE DAKOTA WATER RESOURCES ACT

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss an important piece of legislation for my State of North Dakota. S. 623, the Dakota Water Resources Act, is legislation I introduced in the last Congress and early in this Congress to re-direct the existing Garrison Diversion project. This bill is designed to meet the contemporary water needs of the State of North Dakota, substantially reduce the cost of the project, and require compliance with environmental laws and our international treaty obligations with Canada.

North Dakota has significant water quality and water quantity needs that must be addressed. In many parts of my state, well water in rural communities resembles weak coffee or strong tea. It turns the laundry gray after the first wash, and in many places is unfit even for cattle to drink. This bill is designed to address those situations and help provide clean, reliable water to families and businesses across North Dakota.

This bill was favorably reported from the Senate Energy Committee earlier this year, after hearings were held in this Congress and in the previous Congress. During consideration in the Energy Committee, several amendments were adopted that reduced the cost of the bill by $140 million and strengthened environmental protections in the bill. I should also note that this bill reduces the cost of constructing the currently-authorized project by about $1 billion.

The bill is now pending on the Senate calendar, and was packaged with a group of other bills reported by the Energy Committee to be considered by this body. Unfortunately, when the Senate attempted to consider this legislation in recent days, objections to its consideration were registered by other Senators from another state who had concerns about the bill. In response, Senator Dorgan and I have worked with those Senators to address their concerns. We have engaged in those discussions in good faith, believing that if we continued to work with other states we would be able to address their concerns.

Unfortunately, those discussions have not yielded the results we were hoping for that would have allowed the bill to pass the Senate. Enacting this legislation will help my state overcome the tremendous water needs that are well documented, and I will continue to work in good faith with other Senators to pass this important bill. I am willing to address the concerns of other states, but it must be a two-way street. I look forward to our discussions under the auspices of the Energy Committee in February to resolve those issues.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Thursday, November 18, 1999, the Federal debt stood at $5,693,813,174,823.97 (Five trillion, six hundred ninety-three billion, eight hundred thirteen million, one hundred seventy-four thousand, eight hundred twenty-three dollars and ninety-seven cents).

One year ago, November 18, 1998, the Federal debt stood at $5,586,312,000,000 (Five trillion, five hundred eighty-six billion, three hundred twelve million).

Five years ago, November 18, 1994, the Federal debt stood at $4,752,722,000,000 (Four trillion, seven hundred fifty-two billion, seven hundred twenty-two million).

Twenty-five years ago, November 18, 1974, the Federal debt stood at $481,413,000,000 (Four hundred eighty-one billion, four hundred thirteen million) which reflects a debt increase of more than $5 trillion—$5,212,400,174,823.97 (Five trillion, two hundred twelve billion, four hundred million, one hundred seventy-four thousand, eight hundred twenty-three dollars and ninety-seven cents) during the past 25 years.

VIEQUES ISLAND TRAINING FACILITY

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about a very important issue that threatens to undermine the readiness of our Navy and Marine Corps units that are scheduled to deploy to the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf in February. That issue is the current situation on the Puerto Rican Island of Vieques where the Navy is being prevented by unrestrained civil disobedience from conducting training critical to its preparations for deploying into a possible combat environment.

Two weeks ago, I and four of my colleagues introduced Senate Resolution 220, that would express the Sense of the Congress that the Secretary of the Navy should initiate the required training for the Eisenhower Battle Group and the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit on the island of Vieques, and that the President should not deploy these forces unless the President determines that they are free of serious deficiencies in their major warfare areas.

Over the past two weeks there have been discussions between the Federal government and the Government of Puerto Rico to try and reach an accommodation that would resolve the current impasse between the Navy and the people of Vieques. Unfortunately, these discussions have not born fruit and there is no resolution in sight. The simple fact is the President needs to act to resolve this impasse.

Today, the Armed Forces are at risk of reaching unacceptably low levels of

preparedness. Last week we learned that two Army Divisions are not ready to execute the National Military Strategy without unacceptable risk to the personnel in those units.

If the required training for the Eisenhower Battle Group and the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit is not conducted in December, in February these two units will be unable to deploy without serious deficiencies in their warfighting capabilities. We cannot allow this degradation in the readiness of our Armed Forces to occur if we intend to maintain our position as a world leader, and honor our commitment to our military personnel to reduce the risk they incur when they sail into harm's way. As Vice Admiral Murphy, Commander of the Sixth Fleet of the Navy, recently testified before the Armed Services Committee, the loss of training on Vieques would ''cost American lives.'' Over the past several weeks, the Armed Services Committee has held a series of hearings on the important issue of Vieques. Over the course of these hearings, I have become increasingly convinced that it would be irresponsible to deploy our naval forces without the training that takes place at the Vieques facilities.

On Tuesday, September 22, 1999, the Readiness and Management Support Subcommittee, under the leadership of Senator INHOFE, held a hearing to review the need for Vieques as a training facility and explore alternative sites that might be utilized. At that hearing both Admiral Fallon, commander of the Navy's Second Fleet, and General Pace, commander of all Marine Forces in the Atlantic, testified that the Armed Forces of the United States need Vieques as a training ground to prepare our young men and women for the challenges of deployed military operations.

On October 13th, the Seapower Subcommittee, under the leadership of Senator SNOWE, heard from Admiral Murphy, commander of the Navy's Sixth Fleet and the commander who receives the naval forces trained at Vieques, who stated that a loss of Vieques would ''cost American lives.''

Earlier this month, after the release of the report prepared by the Special Panel on Military Operations on Vieques, the so-called Rush Panel, I held a hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee to discuss with Administration and Puerto Rican officials the recommendations of that report, and to search for a compromise solution that addresses the national security requirements and the interests of the people of Vieques. In outlining the need for Vieques at that hearing, Secretary Danzig, the Secretary of the Navy, stated that only by providing the necessary training can we fairly ask our service members to put their lives at risk. Admiral Johnson, Chief of Naval Operations, stated that the Eisenhower Battle Group would not be able to deploy in February without a significant increase in the risk to the lives of the men and women of that battle group unless they are allowed to conduct required training on Vieques. Finally, General Jones, Commandant of the Marine Corps, testified that the loss of training provided on Vieques ''will result in degraded cohesion on the part of our battalions and our squadrons and our crews, decreased confidence in their ability to do their very dangerous jobs and missions, a decreased level of competence and the ability to fight and win on the battlefield.''

At that hearing, I asked Admiral Johnson and General Jones ''Is there any training that can be substituted for Vieques live fire training between now and February that will constitute, in your professional judgment, a sufficient level of training to enable you to say to the Chairman of the Joint chiefs of Staff, the Eisenhower Battle Group and the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit are ready to go.'' In response they stated ''no, sir, not without—not without greatly increasing the risk to those men and women who we ask to go in harm's way, no, sir.''

I remain convinced that the training requirement is real and will continue to directly effect the readiness of our Carrier Battle Groups and Marine Expeditionary Units. As General Shelton recently testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee, the training on Vieques is ''critical'' to military readiness. He further stated that he ''certainly would not want to see our troops sent into an area where there was going to be combat, without having had this type of an experience. We should not deploy them under those conditions.''

All of the military officers with whom we have spoken on this issue have informed us that the loss of Vieques would increase the risk to our military personnel deploying to potential combat environments. The Rush Panel, appointed at the request of the Resident Commissioner from Puerto Rico and the direction of the President, recognized the need for Vieques and recommended its continued use for at least five years.

What we have learned in these hearings is that Vieques is a unique training asset, both in terms of its geography with deep open water and unrestricted airspace and its training support infrastructure. The last two East coast carrier battle groups which deployed to the Adriatic and Persian Gulf completed their final integrated live fire training at Vieques. Both battle groups, led by the carriers U.S.S. *Enterprise* and U.S.S. *Theodore Roosevelt*, subsequently saw combat in Operations Desert Fox (Iraq) and Allied Force (Kosovo) within days of arriving in the respective theater of operations. Their success in these operations, with no loss of American life, was largely attributable to the realistic and integrated live fire training completed at Vieques prior to their deployment.

According to Article II, section 2, of the Constitution of the United States, the President is the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Armed Forces. As such, he bears the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the men and women in uniform he orders into harm's way, receive the training necessary to perform their mission with the least risk to their lives.

I am encouraged that the President has tried to resolve this matter with the Governor of Puerto Rico in such a way that would allow the Navy to conduct the necessary training. However, I am disappointed that the President and the Governor have been unable to achieve such a resolution.

Mr. President, as long as we are committing our nation's youth to military operations throughout the world; and as long as Vieques is necessary to train these individuals so that they can perform their missions safely and successfully; it would be unconscionable to deploy these forces without first allowing them to train at this vital facility.

Mr. President, the Eisenhower Battle Group and the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit will soon deploy to the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf. In order to do so safely, they must begin preparations to conduct the necessary pre-deployment training on the island of Vieques in December.

The time has come for the President to make a decision to protect our national security and the safety of our men and women in uniform. He must decide to allow the Navy and the Marine Corps to conduct this training, and to notify the Secretary of the Navy and the Governor of Puerto Rico of his decision.

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 two withdrawals and sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

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

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 4:00 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Ms. Niland one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate: