

the Navy bands' hearing conservation program, specially designed plugs are handed out even before a musician gets an assignment.

In the meantime, despite many people's refusal to admit they need help, sales of hearing aids are booming. Nearly 2 million were purchased last year, almost 25 percent more than in 1996, at a cost of \$600 to \$3,100 each. The most expensive are individually programmed digital devices capable of processing sounds 1 million times per second. When fitted within the ear canal, they are literally invisible.

One buyer in 1997 was President Clinton, who attributed his situation to an adolescence spent playing in school bands and rocking at concerts. According to staff members, the country's most prominent baby boomer wears his hearing aids sporadically. He is most likely to insert them for ceremonies or political gatherings, where he finds it harder to distinguish sounds.

Stephen Wells, a Washington lawyer who recently received bad news of his own, is weighing his options. Because of a childhood spent around tractors and harvesters on his family's Idaho farm, his right ear measures only borderline. And that's his better ear.

"My wife has been saying for a long time that I ought to see about a hearing test," said Wells, 51. He compares hearing aids to glasses in function but is uncertain how well they'll work for him day to day. "I expect that I will at least try them."

SAY AGAIN?

A number of conditions may disrupt the hearing process and lead to hearing loss. How the ear works and what commonly causes damage:

How the ear hears

1. The outer ear collects sound waves and funnels them into the ear canal.
2. Sound waves strike the eardrum, causing it to vibrate.
3. Three tiny bones conduct the vibrations to the cochlea in the inner ear.
4. Tiny nerve endings in the cochlea, called hair cells, become stimulated. They transform the vibrations into electro-chemical impulses.
5. These impulses travel to the brain, where they are deciphered into recognizable sounds.

Noise-induced hearing loss

Such loss is caused by one-time exposure to extremely loud sound or sustained exposure to sounds at high decibels. Both damage hair cells in the inner ear.

Symptoms of hearing loss

The following are frequent indicators of hearing loss. Persons experiencing any of these symptoms should make an appointment with a hearing professional.

- Straining to understand conversations.
- Misunderstanding or needing to have things repeated.
- Turning up TV or radio volume to a point where others complain.
- Having constant ringing or buzzing in the ears.

Measuring sound

The loudness of sound is measured in units called decibels. Experts agree that continued exposure to noise above 85 decibels eventually will harm hearing. The scale increases logarithmically, meaning that the level of perceived loudness doubles every 10 decibels.

	<i>Decibels</i>
Softest audible sound:	0
Normal conversation:	40-60
City traffic noises:	80

Rock concert:	<i>Decibels</i> 110-120
Sound becomes painful:	125
Jet plane:	140

Source: International Hearing Society, League for the Hard of Hearing and National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Tuesday, March 9, 1999, the federal debt stood at \$5,650,748,864,597.49 (Five trillion, six hundred fifty billion, seven hundred forty-eight million, eight hundred sixty-four thousand, five hundred ninety-seven dollars and forty-nine cents).

One year ago, March 9, 1998, the federal debt stood at \$5,523,019,000,000 (Five trillion, five hundred twenty-three billion, nineteen million).

Five years ago, March 9, 1994, the federal debt stood at \$4,542,638,000,000 (Four trillion, five hundred forty-two billion, six hundred thirty-eight million).

Ten years ago, March 9, 1989, the federal debt stood at \$2,740,636,000,000 (Two trillion, seven hundred forty billion, six hundred thirty-six million).

Fifteen years ago, March 9, 1984, the federal debt stood at \$1,464,624,000,000 (One trillion, four hundred sixty-four billion, six hundred twenty-four million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$4 trillion—\$4,186,124,864,597.49 (Four trillion, one hundred eighty-six billion, one hundred twenty-four million, eight hundred sixty-four thousand, five hundred ninety-seven dollars and forty-nine cents) during the past 15 years.

CONFIRMATION OF MONTIE DEER TO HEAD INDIAN GAMING COMMISSION

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. President, I am pleased to announce the confirmation by the Senate last night of Mr. Montie Deer to become Chairman of the National Indian Gaming Commission—the federal regulatory body overseeing certain Indian gaming activities nationwide.

After a hearing in February of this year, the Committee on Indian Affairs reported Mr. Deer to the full Senate. Mr. Deer is a qualified and dedicated public servant who most recently was the United States Attorney in Kansas.

Since 1988, Indian gaming has become a source of much-needed revenue for Indian tribal governments to provide jobs, services and frankly, hope, where there is not much. There are now some 185 tribes operating some form of gaming operations, with annual revenues of nearly \$7 billion.

The National Indian Gaming Commission was created 11 years ago. This three-member agency has the responsibility to monitor and regulate certain forms of gaming conducted on Indian lands. The NIGC has the authority to

approve management contracts; conduct background investigations; approve tribal gaming ordinances; and review and conduct audits of the books and records of Indian gaming operations.

The NIGC also has the authority and the responsibility to enforce violations of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, NIGC regulations and approved tribal gaming ordinances. Those involved with Indian gaming understand the need for a strong, effective Commission—one that protects the integrity of games offered by tribes. As we did last session, the Committee on Indian Affairs will soon consider legislation to strengthen the Commission and ensure it has the resources it needs to fulfill its obligations.

A strong Commission is meaningless without strong leadership and last night the Senate acted to ensure that strong and effective leadership will be the order of the day.

DECEPTIVE MAIL PREVENTION AND ENFORCEMENT ACT

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I'm here to announce my strong support of Senator COLLINS' bill S. 335, the "Deceptive Mail Prevention and Enforcement Act." I chose to be an original co-sponsor of this bill after hearing from several constituents who were confused, irritated, and even outraged by the deceptive language that is all too often found in sweepstakes and other promotional mailings.

I think every one of us has received at least a few junk mailings which brazenly inform us that we have just won millions of dollars or that we are about to receive a car, a luxury cruise, or some other prize that sounds too good to be true. Well, the sad truth is that it almost always IS too good to be true.

To many of us, these promotional mailings represent nothing more than a minor annoyance and are easily tossed into the garbage without a second thought. But for many others, these mailings are nothing more than a cruel hoax, a trap designed to play on the hopes and dreams of trusting folks who were raised in a time when most people meant what they said and said what they meant.

As an example of the misleading and downright dangerous content found in many of these mailings, I'd like to read into the record a portion of a letter that was sent to me last year by a constituent of mine who resides in Columbia Falls, Montana. This gentleman writes,

My father is a resident in a nursing home. He is 84, and suffers from mild dementia aggravated by high-powered medications which treat his incessant headaches. (The magazine he subscribes to) endlessly sends him these misleading and deliberately-designed "You've Won!!!" bulletins that he cannot understand except to believe fervently that he's just got to go pick up his check for hundreds of thousands or even millions of dollars.