

S. 655, which is similar to the bipartisan measure I coauthored with Senator Ford during the last Congress, adopts a distinct flood vehicle category and improves upon the definition initially proposed by the task force.

Mr. President, I am sure my colleagues are aware that the State of Illinois, which initially adopted the task force's recommended flood definition, subsequently revised it based on anti-consumer results. Illinois found that branding "any vehicle that has been submerged in water to the point that rising water has reached over the door sill or has entered the passenger or truck compartment" caused too many vehicles to be unnecessarily branded as "flood" vehicles. Vehicles that were significantly devalued and lost their manufacturers warranty when the only damage the vehicle suffered was wet carpets or wet floor mats.

S.655 is a good example of the need to balance competing consumer interests when establishing uniform titling definitions. Instead of unnecessarily and inappropriately branding vehicles with mere cosmetic damage, this legislation rightly brands as "flood" those vehicles which sustain water damage that impairs a car or truck's electrical, mechanical, or computerized functions. It also requires the "flood" designation for vehicles acquired by an insurer as part of a water damage settlement. This measure also includes an independent flood inspection as recommended by a working group of the National Association of Attorney's General.

Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to heed the call of used-car buyers and provide them with a reasonable and workable title branding measure. One that includes all of the minimal definitions needed to protect them from title fraud and automobile theft.

#### THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Wednesday, May 19, 1999, the federal debt stood at \$5,593,797,968,334.37 (Five trillion, five hundred ninety-three billion, seven hundred ninety-seven million, nine hundred sixty-eight thousand, three hundred thirty-four dollars and thirty-seven cents).

Five years ago, May 19, 1994, the federal debt stood at \$4,588,987,000,000 (Four trillion, five hundred eighty-eight billion, nine hundred eighty-seven million).

Ten years ago, May 19, 1989, the federal debt stood at \$2,780,326,000,000 (Two trillion, seven hundred eighty billion, three hundred twenty-six million) which reflects a doubling of the debt—an increase of almost \$3 trillion—\$2,813,471,968,334.37 (Two trillion, eight hundred thirteen billion, four hundred seventy-one million, nine hundred sixty-eight thousand, three hundred

thirty-four dollars and thirty-seven cents) during the past 10 years.

#### NATIONAL MARITIME DAY

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to recognize that today is National Maritime Day, when the Nation pays tribute to the American Merchant Mariners who have given their lives in the service of their country. Throughout the history of the United States, our U.S.-flag Merchant Marine has always been there, providing the support that time and again has proven to be essential to victory. It is with the most profound gratitude for the service and sacrifice of America's Merchant Marine veterans that we reflect upon the importance of our U.S.-flag fleet on this day.

On April 29, 1999, I was privileged to be given a very special memento by a group of Merchant Marine Veterans of World War II. It was a patch, of the kind worn by Merchant Mariners during World War II, and it was designed in 1944 by Walt Disney Studios. Walt Disney's people created a mascot for the Merchant Marine, called "Battlin' Pete," and the patch shows Pete knocking out an Axis torpedo.

The presentation was made to express the veterans' gratitude for a very important piece of legislation that the Senate passed last year. Last year's veterans' benefits bill ensures that those American Merchant Marine veterans who served our country in World War II between August 16, 1945—the day that hostilities were officially declared at an end by President Truman—and December 31, 1946—the cut-off day for World War II service for all other service branches—receive honorable discharges for their service and are eligible for veterans' burial and cemetery benefits. This is the least we can do for these deserving veterans. I was privileged to introduce legislation during the 105th Congress seeking that change, and it was later incorporated into the veterans' benefits bill.

The overwhelming majority of World War II Merchant Mariners were previously awarded veterans status. Now, those who served in harm's way through the war's final days are also being recognized. Although Japan officially surrendered in August of 1945, harbors in Japan, Germany, Italy, France—indeed, across the world—still were mined. Twenty-two U.S.-government-owned vessels, carrying military cargoes, were damaged or sunk by mines after V-J Day. At least four U.S. Merchant Mariners were killed and 28 injured aboard these vessels. Even as Americans at home were celebrating victory, American Merchant Mariners carried on as they have always done—bravely serving their country with pride and professionalism.

I am proud that, at that April ceremony, the first honorable discharges

for this previously forgotten group went to two Merchant Marine veterans from my home state of Mississippi: Mr. Robert Hoopes and Mr. Louis Breaux. Also, I was pleased that Mr. Joseph Katusa, National Chairman, Merchant Marine Fairness Committee, received his honorable discharge. The ceremony was attended by my good friend and colleague, Congressman BOB STUMP, Chairman, House Veterans' Affairs Committee; Mr. Rudy de Leon, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness; Admiral Jim Loy, Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard; and Mr. George Searle, National President, American Merchant Marine Veterans. I would like to thank them for participating in the ceremony and acknowledging the service of Mr. Breaux, Mr. Hoopes, and Mr. Katusa, and the role that these, and all, Merchant Marine veterans played in preserving freedom.

As we mark National Maritime Day, it is important to note that our country's Merchant Mariners continue to stand ready to serve. In fact, the leaders of the major maritime labor unions—the Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association; the International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots; the National Maritime Union of America; the American Maritime Officers; and the Seafarers International Union of North America—recently expressed their readiness to support America's military effort in the Balkans. Recent reports that Greek seamen are refusing to support that effort is a reminder of why the United States requires its own highly capable Merchant Marine.

Mr. President, I will treasure that patch of "Battlin' Pete" from the Merchant Marine Veterans of World War II. It will always remind me of the importance of National Maritime Day, and of the sacrifices that America's Merchant Mariner veterans have made in the service of their country. For those who braved the Murmansk run; for those who served through the conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf; for those who today stand ready to sail into harm's way with our Armed Forces; we salute you on this day.

#### EXPRESSION ON VOTES

Mr. BROWBACK. Mr. President, I regret that due to family business which took me out of the country, I was unable to cast several recorded votes during yesterday's session. While my vote would not have altered the outcome of any of the motions, I would like to express how I would have voted had I been able:

On vote No. 120, a Cloture Motion regarding the motion to proceed to consideration of S. 96, Y2K liability legislation. I would have voted "AYE." It is high time we move to consideration of this important legislation. The turn of the millennium is fast approaching and