

aspects of the entertainment arena. When I think of movies such as the recent "October Sky," which tells the story of three young boys growing up in Coalwood, West Virginia in the late 1950s, with a dream to build and launch their own homemade rockets in the hopes of winning the National Science Fair's college scholarship awards, I realize that there, too, are wholesome stories to be told. The kind that inspire and motivate youth to push beyond their daily homework assignments and to shoot for the stars. To find a mission in life, once thought impossible, and tackle it. The kind of movie that all parents ought to take their children to see. There are some good movies.

We have learned from the recent events the ease with which a youngster can access dangerous information, dial up polluted Web sites advertising recipes for bomb making and solicitations for joining hate groups. Likewise, we know that violent video games in the home and at the arcade confuse or override a child's moral sense of right from wrong by rewarding them with points for shooting their enemy dead. Until we find solutions to curb or counteract this madness spewing forth from the TV set, the radio, and cyberspace, we, as a community, must demonstrate greater vigilance and care, and think twice before giving our children free rein of the remote control or leaving inquisitive young minds unattended in the wilderness of cyberspace.

Seemingly, in the blink of an eye, we have witnessed the true demise of part of the American dream. The once peaceful and serene schoolhouse has been marred by episodes of violence and bloodshed, with precious young children falling victim—children who may have grown up one day to be great teachers, great physicians, great lawyers, great architects, great physicists, businessmen and women.

There is no one-step solution to ending schoolyard slaughters, but it is my strong hope that this National Commission will provide answers to the many whys and hows infesting America's psyche, and begin to remedy this harrowing problem once and for all. Let us all work together to ensure that the tragic events of Columbine are not revisited in another American neighborhood.

I took a piece of plastic clay
And idly fashioned it one day
And as my fingers pressed it still
It moved and yielded to my will.
I came again when days were past,
The bit of clay was hard at last.
The form I gave it, it still bore,
And I could change that form no more.

I took a piece of living clay
And gently formed it day by day.
And molded with my power and art
A young child's soft and yielding heart.
I came again when years were gone,
He was a man I looked upon.
He still that early impress wore,
And I could change him nevermore.

Our children, the home, that is where we got off the track. That is where we are going to have to get back on the track—the home.

I yield the floor.

Mr. SESSIONS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ASHCROFT). The Senator from Alabama is recognized.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, one of the great delights in the Senate is being able to listen to Senator BYRD, on a number of occasions, share his wisdom with us. I think the story of the Roman legion and others he has shared with us are not unimportant. They go to the very heart of the decline in discipline and order in America today, and it is deeper than most people think.

I have often thought what good does it do to have a \$500 text book if a 14-year-old won't read it, would even scoff at the thought of reading it, and has no intention of reading it or paying attention to the teacher, who we are paying and encouraging to try to teach. It does go back to the home. The home is also being undermined, I think, by the popular culture, as Senator BYRD suggests. It is difficult to conceive how we can have any moral order not founded in religion.

I suggest that we really don't need to amend the First Amendment. We really need to have it enforced as it is written. It says that Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of a religion. In other words, Congress can't establish a religion. That is us. Congress cannot establish a religion or prohibit the free exercise thereof. Congress can't prohibit the free exercise of religion. I think we need to get back to the first 175 year's interpretation of the plain words of that amendment, and little children might be able to have a prayer in the morning. I don't think it hurt me. I think it was a benefit. As a matter of fact, I know the Senator knows Judge Griffin Bell, former Attorney General under President Jimmy Carter. He was asked once at a big bar meeting what he thought about the litmus test President Reagan was applying to judges. I think he shocked everybody in the room when he stepped up to the microphone and said, "Well, we need a litmus test. Nobody ought to be a Federal judge who doesn't believe in prayer at football games." I have thought a lot about that. Maybe that had a lot of insight to it.

Y2K ACT

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, tomorrow we will be having a critical vote in the morning. It will be a vote on cloture to the Y2K legal reform bill that will be coming up. It is being subjected to a filibuster, unfortunately, by members of the minority. I hope that in the morning the agreements can be

reached so that that vote will result in our ability to proceed with the bill and that we could make some progress.

To share a few comments on it, the computer industry is critical to America's growth, prosperity and ability to be competitive in the world market. It is one of our major exports. People come here from all over the world to learn about computers. Our design and technology has created a huge number of jobs that have been very helpful to America, and we are exporting around the globe large product in that area, which helps us with our balance of payments, which is not good in general.

In addition, and maybe even more important, high tech computer equipment is increasing our productivity as a nation. As a matter of fact, Alan Greenspan has raised the question in several moments of testimony I have been present to hear in the last 2 years as to how it is possible that we can have an increase in wages much higher than the increase in inflation, the cost of goods and services. If salaries are going up, why isn't inflation going up? He has been afraid and expressed his fear that if we keep raising wages—and I hope we can just keep raising wages, but his concern was it would drive inflation. But it has not. He has speculated in recent speeches and testimony, and many people have expressed the view that this is because of the impact of high technology, the computers. Now, a worker can produce so much more today than he could a few years ago because of the benefits of this high tech ability. So it is a critical thing for us as a Nation.

We want to be able to pay higher and higher wages. We want our productivity to continue to go up, but we don't want to create inflation at the same time. So this is a big deal. So we have this glitch, this year 2000 bug; when the numbers all become zeros out there, there is a concern, a very real concern, that a lot of computers are not going to work well, that whole systems may be in trouble—maybe a bank, maybe a grocery store in a checkout computer line, and things such as telephone systems and others could be in serious jeopardy and cost a lot of money. If it causes that, we have problems.

We are a combative society. It is a good thing for us sometimes, and sometimes it is not so good. The recent conference of the American Bar Association—and I made one comment previously on this. I suggested this was an official position of the ABA. I didn't mean to say so, but I think I suggested that. There was a seminar at the American Bar Association, and experts expressed great concerns about the impact of this litigation. We have received information that 500 or more

law firms are already preparing seminars on how to handle the flood of litigation that is coming. It has been estimated that the legal costs of Y2K lawsuits could exceed that of asbestos, breast implants and tobacco all combined.

How could this be? Well, there are computer systems in every town in America. Every small town has them, and certainly the bigger towns have even bigger systems. If those systems cause a store to mess up, their stock inventory to mess up, or the phone system not to work, and those sorts of things, then we have a real problem. Somebody could file a lawsuit.

Now, we have a problem with filing lots of lawsuits. Let me share this story with you. A number of years ago, asbestos companies continued to sell asbestos after they had a reasonable basis to know that breathing asbestos by workers could make them ill. They should not have done that. They should have been held liable for that. Lawsuits were filed. To date, 200,000 asbestos lawsuits have been concluded, 200,000 more of them are pending, and it is estimated that maybe another 200,000 asbestos cases will be filed.

But the real tragedy—and as a lawyer who loves the law, I have to say this is a very real tragedy—was that only 40 percent of the money paid out by the asbestos companies actually got to the victims. Costs ate up 60 percent of that. These cases took years to conclude. Individuals who had been victimized died before they ever got a dime. Sometimes even their wives died before their heirs received any benefits. It was not a good day for litigation in America.

One more thing: Seventy-percent of the asbestos companies are in bankruptcy today.

Don't tell me that if we unleash a flood of lawsuits in every county in America against the greatest, most innovative, creative industry this Nation has perhaps ever created, we can't damage that industry; indeed, we have the capacity to bankrupt. It is a threat to our national economic vitality, in my opinion, and we need to do something about it.

Senator MCCAIN and Senator HATCH have been working on this legislation. They have done everything they can to develop a bill with which both the Democrats and the Republicans can live. It will require that a computer company be given notice of the problem and have a chance to fix it before a lawsuit can be filed. Just give them a chance to fix it. They have to fix it.

Arbitration: If there is a disagreement, there will be compensation for damages, but it limits punitive damages to three times the actual lost, or \$250,000, whichever is greater.

That is the general framework of what the bill contains—a reasonable attempt to get compensation and to

focus on fixing the problem so that this country's commercial activities can continue in a very efficient way to put our money on fixing the problem and not on lawyers and lawsuits. If we fail in this, if we allow this to happen, somebody is going to bear the responsibility for it. Members who vote against this bill, who are not giving it a chance to work and are not willing to face up to this are going to have to bear a heavy responsibility.

We have to have real reform, too. If it is not going to go halfway, we might as well not try it.

By the way, 80 lawsuits have already been filed. We had testimony in the Judiciary Committee. The Senator from Missouri, who is presiding now, is a member of that committee. The witness liked the lawsuits. He won a couple of million dollars. I asked him how long it took. He said 2 years. I don't know how he won before he ever had a Y2K problem. But he won. I am thinking, there were just a few lawsuits filed at that time. It took him 2 years. What if you have hundreds of thousands of lawsuits clogging the courts? How can anybody get any legitimate compensation? It is going to be jackpot justice. One jury is going to give somebody \$10 million, one is going to get zero, and that is not a way to handle it.

This bill for this one Y2K problem will provide a national framework, because this is clearly interstate commerce, in settling these matters and trying to give the computer industry a chance to fix the problem and to get our industries' computer systems working.

I am really concerned about the vote tomorrow. It is a critical vote for the American economy. Those who fail to realize that could damage our country.

The vote will be coming up in the morning and everybody should be aware of it.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 344

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I would like to briefly explain my reasons for voting in favor of amendment No. 344, offered by Senators HATCH and CRAIG, to S. 254, the juvenile justice bill. I am extremely disappointed that the amendment does not close the loophole permitting sales of firearms at gun shows without background checks. I supported, and continue to support, the amendment offered by Senator LAUTENBERG, that would close the gun show loophole once and for all. I regret that the Hatch amendment does not go as far as that of my colleague from New Jersey.

Nonetheless, I recognize that there are not yet the votes in the Senate to pass the Lautenberg amendment and I do not wish to overlook the positive crime-fighting proposals that the Hatch amendment makes. These include establishment of the CUFF

("Criminal Use of Firearms by Felons") program, which will provide \$50 million for tougher enforcement of existing gun laws, and expansion of the Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative, to facilitate the identification and prosecution of gun traffickers. The Hatch amendment also sets tough penalties for gun offenses involving juveniles and seeks to facilitate background checks for gun purchases. These are important, worthy provisions, and they are the reason for my voting in favor of the Hatch amendment.

KOSOVO

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I have come to the floor of the Senate several times in the last 2 weeks to talk about Kosovo. When the majority leader was talking about our crowded schedule, I couldn't help but thinking to myself that we need to find the time on the floor of the Senate to have a thorough discussion and debate about Kosovo and what is happening there.

This weekend in Korisa, as a result of airstrikes, somewhere in the neighborhood of about, I think, 70 or 80 innocent people were killed. Now, it is quite unclear whether or not we made the mistake, or whether or not the Serbs somehow brought people back to this town and used them as human shields—and they have done that.

But I come to the floor of the Senate to make two points. One, about 2 weeks ago, I said I thought we should have a pause in the bombing. I did not make it open-ended. I made it crystal clear that we would communicate to Milosevic that if he used this 48-hour period of time to repair radar systems, to resupply military, and if he did not stop the slaughter and if he did not remove troops, we would immediately begin to bomb again. But I felt it was critically important to do that because of the momentum of the G-8 countries going to the United Nations and a possible diplomatic solution.

I wish we had done that because then there was the bombing of the Chinese Embassy and all that has happened since. I just want to make the following point: I then came to the floor again last week and called for a temporary pause in the bombing, and I do so again this week. I do not want to engage in moral equivalency. I did not want this century to end this way. I did not want Milosevic to be able to get away with what he has been able to get away with, which has been the murder of innocent people, noncombatant civilians.

But, by the same token, it troubles me when I read reports that we don't use Apache helicopters for fear that we would be flying too low and we could see some of our Americans shot down and killed. I have that same concern.

When I first voted for airstrikes, I assumed we would be prosecuting the war