

initiatives and issues in the 106th Congress—pay and benefits reform for our servicemembers, military operations in the Balkans, and an end to the decade-plus downward trend of defense spending. In each instance, at any hour of day, or night, under Marie's direction, Committee administrative operations have been flawless. The gains we have made in support of our servicemembers during the past year are due in no small part to the professional acumen and personal commitment of Marie Dickinson.

It is no small feat to attain the distinction achieved by Marie. Less than one percent of the employees of the Senate serving today have thirty or more years of service. Having supported five consecutive Chairmen prior to me—Senators Stennis, Goldwater, Tower, Nunn, and THURMOND—and seven staff directors of the Armed Services Committee, Marie is only surpassed in her duration of service with the Committee by the venerable Senator STROM THURMOND.

Mr. President, I invite you and our Senate colleagues to join me and offer our sincere appreciation to Marie Dickinson for her outstanding and distinguished thirty years of services. I do so with the hope that Marie will continue her outstanding service as Chief Clerk of the Committee on Armed Services for many more years.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, today I am pleased to join our Chairman, Senator WARNER, in congratulating and thanking Marie Fabrizio Dickinson on the occasion of her thirtieth anniversary on the staff of the Committee on Armed Services. This is a remarkable milestone for Marie. The Armed Services Committee and the Senate are very fortunate to continue to be the beneficiaries of her tremendous dedication and devotion to duty. In our Committee's history, no other staff member has ever served longer. But this tribute is about much more than the number of her years in service.

A native Washingtonian, Marie was initially appointed to the Committee as a clerical assistant by Senator John Stennis in 1970. In 1986, she was named the Committee's Assistant Chief Clerk by Senator Barry Goldwater and in 1999 Senator Warner promoted her to Chief Clerk. Whether managing the myriad of details associated with military construction projects, editing the Committee's SALT II hearing transcripts, or administering the complexities of thousands of military and civilian nominations, Marie has consistently given her best to our Committee and performed with excellence.

One of the true hallmarks of Marie Dickinson's service on the Committee has been her ability to achieve success by working with quiet yet steadfast determination. If you ever need a living reminder of the timeless virtue of letting one's work speak for itself, look

no further than Marie Dickinson. Marie has earned the trust and respect of those around her not because of what she has said, but because of what she has been able to accomplish in her loyalty, unselfishness, and attention to detail.

Those who know Marie know that throughout her career on the Armed Services Committee she has demonstrated a strong commitment to maintaining the traditions of the Committee in general and in preserving the records of our Committee in particular. Many of us would certainly agree with these goals, but very few of us would be able to actually take the steps necessary day-in-and-day-out to safeguard the records that comprise the Committee's history. Marie's Herculean efforts to archive, research, compile and protect our Committee's record will insure that our Committee's important work is chronicled and documented for the historians of the future.

Marie Dickinson has dedicated her entire professional career to the work of the Armed Services Committee. It is very fitting that we take time today, on this her thirtieth anniversary, to pay tribute to and thank her for the significant and lasting contributions she has made to our work on the Committee and to the United States Senate. I hope, as I know Senator WARNER does, and all the other Committee Members and the staff do, that Marie will continue to serve with us for many more years.

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUE

Mr. HOLLINGS. Mr. President, in my over 33 years' experience as a Senator with over 30 years on Defense Appropriations, I have worked with a good eight to ten Chairmen of the Armed Services Committee and Defense Appropriations Subcommittee and, of course, their numerous counterparts from the House side. One constant thread of dedication and stability in our national defense has been DANIEL INOUE from Hawaii. His tremendous sacrifice for the security of this Nation was recognized with a Distinguished Service Cross. All of us engaged in World War II will tell you that the citation deserves Medal of Honor recognition, but it was not to be because he was a member of the Nisei fighters, the Japanese-American unit that had to fight the U.S. authorities first before it could fight the enemy. Now, in peacetime, Senator INOUE has been the stalwart for the strong defense of this Nation.

This week, the Ambassador of Japan, Shunji Yanai, presented Senator INOUE with the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun, one of the Japanese government's highest honors, citing in particular his work fostering good relations between the United

States and Japan. I can think of no one more deserving of this honor. Senator INOUE has demonstrated the same courage, character and leadership here in Washington that he did as a soldier. I offer him my heartfelt congratulations on this distinguished recognition.

MILITARY HEALTH CARE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2000

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, today, we begin a new effort to keep our promise of good health care for the nation's military retirees. We have an obligation to provide comprehensive health benefits to the men and women who put their lives on the line for our country. This bill is a solid start. The Military Health Care Improvement Act of 2000 will make a significant difference in the lives of our military retirees. Too often, today, those who have served our country with honor are left struggling to obtain and pay for health care in their retirement. That's not right.

The Act will extend existing medical demonstration programs to military retirees who are over the age of 65. It will also extend the Federal Employees Health Benefit Program Demonstration for Medicare-eligible beneficiaries, and it will enable the Secretary of Defense to expand the number of TRICARE Senior Prime sites.

The expansion of the National Mail Order Pharmacy Program will bring welcome relief to eligible beneficiaries, and the Pharmacy Pilot Program will reduce pharmacy enrollment fees and implement monthly or quarterly deductible payments. I hope that in addition, we will be able to expand this provision to include retail pharmacies as well.

The provisions for active duty family members are also an important aspect of this bill. Expanding the availability of TRICARE Prime Remote to military families will eliminate their co-payments and make the program more accessible and affordable to many more. Improvement of the health care services provided through TRICARE will help address the concerns of many retirees regarding access, availability and scheduling of appointments, claims filing, processing and payment, and national enrollment.

This bill is an important first step toward achieving the goal we share, and I look forward to working closely with my colleagues on the Senate Armed Services Committee and in the Senate to enact it.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Tuesday, February 22, 2000, the Federal debt stood at \$5,742,317,374,668.82 (Five trillion, seven hundred forty-two billion, three hundred seventeen million, three