

this body, we can get it to the President for his signature. It is an important signal to send across the country, and we are not going to block it.

There are a lot of ways in this body that you can block something—that you can put it forward and say you are for it but you are blocking it. I hope this would be one that we could say we are going to pass for the 25 million American married couples.

For those in South Dakota, 75,114 are penalized, and for those in Nevada 146,142 are penalized—I see my colleagues from South Dakota and Nevada—I hope they can say to them: We shouldn't be penalizing you.

We have the wherewithal to change this, and let's change it.

Thank you very much, Mr. President. I hope we will have a vote on a true marriage penalty tax bill before April 15 comes and goes. There will be other of my colleagues on the floor later on to address this issue as well.

I yield the floor.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### EXPORT ADMINISTRATION ACT OF 1999

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now proceed to the consideration of S. 1712, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1712) to provide authority to control exports, and for other purposes.

The Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Senator GRAMM is not here. The manager of the bill for the Democrats, Senator JOHNSON, has graciously consented so that I can say a word or two about this legislation.

I rise to speak about an issue that is of particular interest to me and our national economy. The issue I wish to discuss is export controls. As I stated previously, it is critical that the Congress support the engine of our thriving economy while still protecting the integrity of our national security.

Today in America consumer confidence is at a record high. Unemployment is at a 30-year low. New home sales set a record last year. The rate of inflation is less than 2 percent. The stock market has been surging, and corporation profits are better than analysts dreamed.

It was announced last month that we are experiencing a record 107 months of economic expansion. This is all proof that Congress and the administration has done a stellar job in steering the country in the right direction. And yet, thus far, we have been unable to pass

legislation to update our export controls. The Bureau of Export Administration and the Defense Department are still conducting business under cold war era regulations. The economic and political world has changed dramatically. That is why I am so pleased that this bill has come to the floor today.

Last year, I met with Senators GRAMM, ENZI, and JOHNSON, in my office, to discuss export controls. They informed me that The majority leader pledged to them that the Export Administration Act would come to the floor before the end of 1999.

Everyone tried, but as happens a lot of times at the end of the session, it was unable to be brought to the floor. That is not because the Senators I visited with—ENZI, GRAMM, and JOHNSON—didn't try. These three Senators, for whom I have the greatest respect, have all worked hard and in good faith to bring all parties to an accommodation.

When this bill passed out of the Banking Committee, it had the full support of the committee and the business community, while still protecting our Nation's national security. I am afraid with the addition of many of the amendments in the so-called managers' package that this bill is losing support both from the business community and the national security interests. I hope we can work something out and not have to adopt the managers' amendment as it is written.

In January of last year, along with the distinguished majority leader, I, Senator DASCHLE, and a group of Senate Democrats, got together to form a high-tech working group. This group came about because we as Democrats realize the importance of high tech to the Nation's economy. Senator JOHN KERRY, through his leadership capacity, has worked very hard in this regard.

We also recognize that Congress can have a large impact on the growth, or potential growth, of this sector of our economy. Our initial goal was to educate our caucus on the high-tech issues. Because of the generation gap between those who run this industry and most Members in the Senate, this took a little time. However, we got to speed very quickly. We toured sites all over the United States, including high-tech sites in Maryland, Virginia, and Silicon Valley.

As with many issues, I often hear that Congress would best serve the public and industry by doing nothing at all. One of the areas most believe we can be of help is in the area of export controls of high-performance computers. There are currently a number of U.S. products that cannot compete with national competitors due to export control limitations, not because of national security interests but because of the slow review process here in Congress.

In June of 1999, and then in January of this year, with the urging of Senator DASCHLE, myself, and other Senators, the administration agreed to ease the level of controls which were referred to as MTOPS—million theoretical operations per second.

We, as well as those in the computer industry, were elated. There is a 6-month congressional review period for raising the level of MTOPS. The Banking Committee bill reduces the review from 180 to 60 days. By the Senate Banking Committee agreeing to the shortened review period of 60 days, the committee recognized a few important things:

No. 1, 180 days is too long for an industry whose success depends on its ability to beat its foreign competition to the marketplace;

No. 2, a shorter time period gives the Congress adequate time to review the national security ramifications of any changes in the U.S. computer export control regime.

While this is a good step in the right direction, I, along with Senators BENNETT, DASCHLE, KERRY, MURRAY, BINGAMAN, KENNEDY, and BOXER, believe that further reduction of this to 30 days makes more sense.

The high-performance computers we are talking about have a 3-month innovation cycle. Therefore, if 60 days are taken up in Congress, on top of the turnaround time for new regulations at the administration, the innovation cycle is long overdue.

There is no precedent for such a long review period. Even the sales of items on the munitions such as tanks, rockets, and high-performance aircraft only require a 30-day review period. The reality of the situation is that by limiting American companies to this degree we are not only losing short-term market share, but we are allowing foreign companies to make more money and, in turn, create better products in the future. This could lead to the eventual loss of our Nation's lead in computer technology, which has propelled the United States to the good economic standing we see today.

This amendment is critical to our Nation's economy and the success of our high-tech industry.

#### AMENDMENT NO. 2883

(Purpose: To amend the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal year 1998 with respect to export controls on high performance computers)

Mr. REID. I send this amendment to the desk for Senators REID of Nevada, BENNETT, DASCHLE, KERRY of Massachusetts, MURRAY, BINGAMAN, KENNEDY, and BOXER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID], for himself, Mr. BENNETT, Mr. DASCHLE, Mr. KERRY, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. BINGAMAN, Mr.