

WIC FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the Department of Defense authorization bill that we will resume on Monday contains a "buried gem." This is an amendment that several Senators from both sides of the aisle have been working on for some time. In addition, many members in the other body also have been very supportive of this effort in general.

This "buried gem" is a provision that will allow military personnel and dependents stationed overseas to participate in a program very similar to the WIC—the Women, Infants and Children—nutrition program. The WIC program in this country has enjoyed full, bipartisan support for many years, and this new provision provides that our forces abroad will be entitled to benefit from a very similar program with eligibility calculated under very similar rules.

The chairman of the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee, Senator LUGAR, and the ranking member, Senator HARKIN, along with the chairman of the nutrition subcommittee, Senator FITZGERALD, worked together with me and other members of the Committee on this WIC in the military issue. We received valuable input on this recent amendment from the DOD and the military liaison offices, as well as from the Department of Agriculture. We are grateful for that assistance.

I know that many of us worked together last year on this issue also. Last year, I introduced the bill, Strengthening Families in the Military Service Act of 1999 (S. 1162), which was designed to provide WIC benefits to military personnel and to certain civilian personnel, stationed overseas.

In my floor statement on May 26 of last year, I noted that "if it makes sense to allow those stationed in the United States to participate in WIC, it makes sense to allow those stationed overseas to have the important nutritional benefits of that program. Why should families lose their benefits when they are moved overseas?"

A former staff person, Janet Breslin, who worked for me as Deputy Chief of Staff of the Senate Agriculture Committee and now is stationed in Japan with her husband, sent me a note saying:

WIC can make all the difference to an at-risk baby or pregnant mother. There is a specific need here in Okinawa. Our young families make the long trip to Japan to represent their country. They are separated from family and friends back home. Because we have limited base housing, some are forced to live off-base for months or a year. During this time the family faces the high cost of living in Japan, especially high utility fees and food costs. For many, huge phone bills home put many families in a financial pinch.

If these at-risk families were in the United States, they would qualify for WIC, which would provide nutritious dairy and other

food products for the family. However, due to a legal quirk, WIC is not available for Americans on overseas military bases.

This effort, by you and others, would help reduce the pressure on these young families, improve the health of mother and baby, and enhance the quality of life for Americans serving their country halfway around the world.

Janet perfectly summarized why we should provide WIC to our military personnel overseas.

My bill, and the amendment included in the DOD bill, provide that the Secretary of Defense will administer such a program under rules similar to the WIC program administered by the Secretary of Agriculture within the United States.

For 26 years the WIC program has provided nutritious foods to low-income pregnant, post-partum and breast-feeding women, infants, and children who are judged to be at a nutritional risk.

It has proven itself to be a great investment: For every dollar invested in the WIC program, an estimated \$3 is saved in future medical expenses. WIC has helped to prevent low birth weight babies and associated risks such as developmental disabilities, birth defects, and other complications. Participation in the WIC program has also been linked to reductions in infant mortality.

These same benefits should be provided overseas to military families who are serving our country, living miles from their homes on military bases in foreign lands, and whose nutritional health is at risk. If they were stationed within our borders, their diets would be supplemented by the WIC program, and they would receive vouchers or packages of healthy foods, such as fortified cereals and juices, high protein products, and other foods especially rich in needed minerals and vitamins.

My staff has been in direct contact with military officials on this matter and they have expressed a strong desire for this reform. I know that many Vermonters stationed overseas want WIC benefits to be offered at their bases. We should not turn our backs on these Americans stationed abroad.

My bill last year, and this amendment, disregard the value of in-kind housing assistance in calculating eligibility which increases the number of women, infants and children that can participate and makes the program similar to the program in the United States. This is the correct approach—let's not shortchange our service personnel stationed overseas.

The average monthly food cost would be around \$30 to \$35 for each participant, based on Department of Defense estimates of the cost of an average WIC food package in military commissaries. As many as 40,000 to 50,000 persons could be eligible for this program, but it is uncertain how many of those would apply. In the United States, 80

percent of those who are eligible actually apply.

Administration costs—which include medical, health and nutrition assessments—are likely to be about \$10 per month per participant. We know from experience that each dollar spent on WIC is a very wise investment, which is why I am very pleased that this amendment was accepted today.

I want to thank several Senate staff members who have worked on this issue, including Ed Barron and Elizabeth Darrow on my staff, Dave Johnson and Carol Dubard with Chairman LUGAR, Mark Halverson and Lowell Unger with Senator HARKIN, and Terry Van Doren with Senator FITZGERALD. Joe Richardson of CRS was also very helpful, as he has been over the years.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Wednesday, June 14, 2000, the Federal debt stood at \$5,643,728,718,133.89 (Five trillion, six hundred forty-three billion, seven hundred twenty-eight million, seven hundred eighteen thousand, one hundred thirty-three dollars and eighty-nine cents).

One year ago, June 14, 1999, the Federal debt stood at \$5,608,265,000,000 (Five trillion, six hundred eight billion, two hundred sixty-five million).

Five years ago, June 14, 1995, the Federal debt stood at \$4,905,557,000,000 (Four trillion, nine hundred five billion, five hundred fifty-seven million).

Ten years ago, June 14, 1990, the Federal debt stood at \$3,122,390,000,000 (Three trillion, one hundred twenty-two billion, three hundred ninety million).

Fifteen years ago, June 14, 1985, the Federal debt stood at \$1,766,279,000,000 (One trillion, seven hundred sixty-six billion, two hundred seventy-nine million) which reflects a debt increase of almost \$4 trillion—\$3,877,449,718,133.89 (Three trillion, eight hundred seventy-seven billion, four hundred forty-nine million, seven hundred eighteen thousand, one hundred thirty-three dollars and eighty-nine cents) during the past 15 years.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

JOHN JAMES DALEY

• Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to an extraordinary Vermonter, John James Daley, who passed away last night at the age of 76. Mr. Daley leaves behind a devoted wife, a loving family and a grieving community which will miss his leadership and example.

Jack, as he was known, was born in my hometown of Rutland, Vermont on June 21, 1923 to John M. and Bridget C. Daley. He attended Norwich University