

and DASCHLE to forbid meatpackers from engaging in these anticompetitive buying practices. While my legislation is just one of many steps that should be taken to bolster our laws to protect true market competition, I believe Congress should move to address this issue in earnest.

Former President Eisenhower once said, "farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil and you're a thousand miles away from a farm." Because we live in a country where the food is safe and affordable, and the environment is not taken for granted, perhaps some have forgotten President Eisenhower's simple yet honest-to-goodness words.

So today, let us not overlook the critical role farmers and ranchers play in weaving the economic, social, and environmental fabric of this country. Instead, I join all Americans to salute farmers and ranchers on National Agriculture Day. And I invite all Americans to support efforts to ensure a brighter future for the families who put food on our tables every day.

#### CONDEMNATION OF THE TALIBAN'S WAR ON GLOBAL CULTURE

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise today to condemn an act of mindless destruction by a regime known for its intolerance. I am referring to the reported destruction of the two ancient statues of Buddha carried out by the Taliban government in Afghanistan and the Taliban's call for complete elimination of all artifacts in the region.

The Bamiyan Buddha statues were priceless artifacts. They stood for centuries as guardians of the silk route that connected the ancient Greek and Roman Empires to Asia. Once one of the most cosmopolitan regions in the world, Afghanistan is now one of the most intolerant and repressive nations due to the actions of the ruling Taliban faction. The destruction of these 1,500-year-old statues was ordered and carried out for fear that they would be used for idol worship. Destroying those creations because of an irrational fear motivated by intolerance of other cultures and religions should be condemned by thoughtful people everywhere.

The country of Afghanistan and the global community has lost two of its greatest treasures, and the world is poorer for it. We cannot tolerate the willful destruction of international treasures that are a part of the world's heritage.

People of all faiths and nationalities, including Muslim communities around the world, have condemned this action. It is imperative that the United States Senate join the people and governments around the world in condemning these senseless acts of destruction, and

call on the Taliban regime to immediately cease the destruction of other Pre-Islamic relics.

#### PRESCRIPTION DRUG SOLUTION MUST BE A PRIORITY

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, few issues have caught the public's attention more than prescription drugs, and few are more deserving of Congress' attention.

We live at a time when we can clearly discern remarkable benefits from all manner of drugs. It is nothing short of miraculous when we consider the relative ease and success of today's treatment of common disorders, as compared with that of only two or three generations ago.

When World War II began, for example, penicillin and other similar antibiotics were known only to a small number of scientists. At the conclusion of the War in 1945, penicillin was widely available, used not only for battle wounds but for infectious diseases in the general public as well. Patients with high blood pressure or high cholesterol levels were, at best, only partially and inadequately treated in the 1940s and 1950s. Now success is the rule, rather than the exception. Calvin Coolidge's son died in 1924 as a result of a blister and a skin infection after playing tennis at the White House. An infection such as that today would be treated as simple, outpatient therapy.

While these examples are noteworthy and provide us with a valuable perspective of times gone by, the hard, cold fact is that many of these modern miracles are still out of the reach of too many American citizens. They simply cannot afford the drugs that might so often prove lifesaving, because of either no insurance or lack of drug coverage within their insurance.

Recent studies indicate that if you go to virtually any other industrialized democracy, the cost of prescription drugs is about half what it is in the United States. We pay about double what anybody else in the industrialized world pays. That to me is so utterly unacceptable and unfair.

When Medicare was created 35 years ago, its benefits were based on private sector coverage, which rarely included prescription drugs. Now, however, virtually all private sector plans include coverage for prescription drugs, while Medicare does not. As a result, many millions of Americans, both Medicare age and younger have either inadequate or no prescription drug insurance at all. A byproduct of no coverage is that these patients wind up paying the highest rates of anyone—an average of 15 percent more than those with insurance. Many of these uninsureds, including the seniors often called "The Greatest Generation" are not filling prescriptions because of their cost, choosing between food and medicine.

Or they split pills in half to make them go farther. This is shameful. These are very real every day problems that beg for help.

I strongly believe that all Medicare beneficiaries deserve affordable coverage and financial protection as prescription drugs costs grow at double-digit rates. Astronomical drug prices have come hand-in-hand with the great improvements in drug therapy. Spending for prescription drugs in the United States doubled between 1990 and 1998. In each of the 5 years between 1993 and 1998, prescription drug spending increased by an average of 12.4 percent. In 1999, the drug spending increase was 19 percent and just last year we saw another double digit increase. My office recently completed a three-year statewide survey of prescription drug prices in South Dakota, using a sample of the most heavily prescribed drugs for seniors. I was astonished to find that over 60 percent of the drugs' prices grew at a pace that exceeded the cost-of-living adjustment provided by Social Security, which many Medicare beneficiaries rely on to meet their daily financial needs. In fact, 30 percent of the drugs increased at a pace that was double that of the COLA.

In response to evidence such as this, along with having heard from thousands of concerned South Dakotans affected by skyrocketing drug prices, I have recommitted myself to finding a solution for the prescription drug needs of all Medicare beneficiaries. As such, I have reintroduced two bills that comprise the main pillars of my prescription drug plan: the Prescription Drug Fairness for Seniors Act of 2001, and the Generic Pharmaceutical Access and Choice for Consumers Act of 2001. I don't proclaim these proposals to be the magic bullet that solves all of our nation's prescription drug concerns but they are sensible, financially reasonable approaches that should be a part of an overall prescription drug plan for Medicare beneficiaries. The Fairness bill would provide Medicare beneficiaries access to prescription drugs at the same low prices that drug manufacturers offer their most favored customers. As well, I strongly believe we cannot develop a financially feasible prescription drug benefit without maximizing the utilization of generic drugs. My proposal would increase access and choice in Federal programs by encouraging greater usage of generic pharmaceuticals as a safe, less costly alternative to an often expensive brand-name pharmaceutical. Generic pharmaceutical drugs have been shown to save consumers between 25 percent and 60 percent on their average prescription drug and this plan would greatly benefit many of the most vulnerable members of society.

I do believe Congress needs to create a universal, voluntary drug benefit in the Medicare program, one that provides all Medicare beneficiaries with

affordable coverage for drug costs. Perhaps most importantly for South Dakota's Medicare beneficiaries, the plan must ensure access for beneficiaries in rural and hard-to-serve areas including incentives to rural pharmacies and the private entity serving those areas to ensure rapid delivery of prescription drugs.

I believe that these efforts are both comprehensive and achievable in the 107th Congress, and I will work closely with my colleagues to accomplish my personal goal of ensuring access to affordable prescription drugs for all Medicare beneficiaries both in South Dakota and around the Nation.

#### THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Monday, March 19, 2001, the Federal debt stood at \$5,729,611,586,294.55, five trillion, seven hundred twenty-nine billion, six hundred eleven million, five hundred eighty-six thousand, two hundred ninety-four dollars and fifty-five cents.

Five years ago, March 19, 1996, the Federal debt stood at \$5,058,839,000,000, Five trillion, fifty-eight billion, eight hundred thirty-nine million.

Ten years ago, March 19, 1991, the Federal debt stood at \$3,447,165,000,000, three trillion, four hundred forty-seven billion, one hundred sixty-five million.

Fifteen years ago, March 19, 1986, the Federal debt stood at \$1,982,540,000,000, one trillion, nine hundred eighty-two billion, five hundred forty million.

Twenty-five years ago, March 19, 1976, the Federal debt stood at \$599,190,000,000, five hundred ninety-nine billion, one hundred ninety million, which reflects a debt increase of more than \$5 trillion—\$5,130,421,586,294.55, five trillion, one hundred thirty billion, four hundred twenty-one million, five hundred eighty-six thousand, two hundred ninety-four dollars and fifty-five cents, during the past 25 years.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### A TRIBUTE TO GRACE COLE

• Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I'm sad to inform my colleagues that on Saturday, March 17th, Washington State lost a great advocate for families, and I lost both a good friend and mentor, with the passing of Grace Cole.

At this difficult time, my heart goes out to her family including her two brothers, four sons, four daughters in law, and six grandchildren. I want them to know what the rest of us have known for years: Grace Cole made a difference. We are proud of her and grateful for all she did. And even though she's no longer with us, her activism and her passion live on in the men and women she led into public service.

Well-known and well-loved in Shoreline, in Olympia, and among families and educators throughout our State, Grace Cole set a new standard for public service with strong words and a soft heart. She led the way for advocates like me to follow her from the local school board to the Washington State legislature. And most important, she made a difference for thousands of families throughout our state by standing up for education, the environment and social justice.

Mr. President, today moms and dads who serve their communities in Washington State know they can go on to serve at the State and Federal level. Years ago, however, that path wasn't so clear. Grace Cole blazed that trail and then helped others like me follow her into public service. When I look at the Washington state legislature, I see the impact Grace Cole has made.

I first met Grace in the early 1980s when I started attending Shoreline School Board meetings. During her many years of service on the school board, Grace was a strong and honest voice who always came down on the side of our children.

When I decided to run for the Shoreline School Board, Grace encouraged me and counseled me. During the time I served with Grace on the school board, she always made sure we were acting in the best interests of those we served. Grace knew just what to say, and on many occasions, her wise words helped ease tense moments.

In 1983, Grace was appointed to the House of Representatives. She was reelected seven times and retired in 1998. As long as Grace served in the House, I knew Washington's children had a strong advocate.

In 1987, I decided to run for the Washington State Senate. Once again, Grace was there for me as a counselor, a supporter, and a friend. Even though she was running for reelection at the same time, Grace took the time to make sure that I and others could follow in her footsteps. That is the way Grace was. She set a path and helped us follow it.

Grace Cole also set a new standard for what it means to be an outstanding school board member. In fact, new members of the Shoreline School Board are often measured by the "Grace Cole Standard." I've heard people say of new members, "She'll be great—just like Grace Cole." In 1998, the Shoreline School Board honored Grace with its first Distinguished Service Award.

What made Grace Cole such an icon? First, she knew how to lead. She listened to all sides, helped bring people together, and knew how to put people at ease. She was also a community builder. She worked side-by-side with other parents to pass school levies. She put labels on letters and walked through neighborhoods knocking on doors to ensure voters would go to the polls.

Most of all, Grace was compassionate and caring. Her passion for children drove everything she did. I remember her bill in the state legislature to outlaw spanking in schools. It seemed like such an uphill battle, but Grace would always say, "Kids need to learn by example." She said that over and over again for years until her bill finally passed. The bill's opponents eventually went along because they realized that Grace Cole would never give up on something she believed in.

In the State legislature, Grace won the respect of all lawmakers on both sides of the aisle. I knew that her time in the House was a personal sacrifice for her. She had to leave her family in Shoreline to work long hours in Olympia, then return home to attend community meetings and to help others. During all her public service though, Grace made sure to always put her kids first.

For me, Grace was a perfect example of selfless community service. Today's leaders are too often judged on how much press they get or how "visible" they are. Grace was the person who worked behind the scenes to make people's lives better.

I will miss Grace. She always knew the right thing to say, and she was never afraid of tough votes. She didn't have to be. She knew to do the right thing. Grace showed me and countless others the path to public service. Over the years, so many have followed her—starting in PTA, serving on the school board, and then going to Olympia to fight for their communities.

I know that at this difficult time her four sons and their families feel tremendous sorrow. We all do, but through her work Grace left us so much to be proud of: a strong community of good schools, good neighborhoods, and good friends.

Grace had such a strong and positive spirit that I have a feeling wherever she is, she's organizing a coffee get-together to make sure everyone is doing the right thing. If there are envelopes to lick, phone calls to make, or laws to write, I am sure Grace is making sure it gets done.

I feel fortunate to have known Grace. I am proud to call her a mentor and guide, and I will miss her greatly. ●

#### RECOGNITION OF NORMA LEA MIHALEVICH

• Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I rise to make a few remarks regarding the tremendous contributions Norma Lea Mihalevich has made to her community, her state, and to public education.

It isn't often that we can recognize someone who has devoted her life to public service, but Norma Lea Mihalevich has done just that. As a lifelong resident of Pulaski County in Missouri, Norma Lea has spent the