Protecting our children should be a national priority. I urge my colleagues and others to support child abuse prevention efforts to protect our nation’s greatest resource, our children. Working together, we can help end child abuse.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Monday, April 2, 2001, the Federal debt stood at $5,745,399,258,826.83. Five trillion, seven hundred forty-five billion, three hundred ninety-nine million, two hundred fifty-eight thousand, eight hundred sixty-three dollars and eighty-three cents.

Five years ago, April 2, 1996, the Federal debt stood at $5,120,563,000,000. Five trillion, one hundred twenty billion, five hundred sixty-three million.

Ten years ago, April 2, 1991, the Federal debt stood at $3,464,021,000,000. Three trillion, four hundred sixty-four billion, two hundred fifty-one million.

Fifteen years ago, April 2, 1986, the Federal debt stood at $2,005,753,000,000. Two trillion, five billion, seven hundred fifty-three million.

Twenty-five years ago, April 2, 1976, the Federal debt stood at $998,291,000,000. Five hundred ninety-nine billion, two hundred ninety-one million.

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, I would like to congratulate the veterans community of Aberdeen on the opening, on April 11, 2001, of their new Aberdeen Community Based Outpatient Clinic. This important event brings the health benefits that our veterans so richly deserve closer to home.

I would like to commend Ron Porzio, the chief operating officer of the Veterans Administration Medical and Regional Office Center in Sioux Falls, the area veterans service officers, Brown County Veterans Service Officer Tom Gohn, veterans service organizations and the Aberdeen area veterans who have done such an outstanding job of making this project a reality.

I was pleased to hear that Avera United was named the provider for the new VA outpatient clinic in Aberdeen. Avera has made a solid investment in the community and the state, and it was only logical that the clinic should provide quality health care services to our veterans in the Aberdeen area. This is good news for veterans in northeastern South Dakota because they will be able to receive many medical services at the clinic without having to drive several hours to the Sioux Falls veterans hospital.

Congratulations also need to go to Avera St. Luke’s Hospital, Dr. Steve Redmond, Physician’s Assistant Kevin Vaughan, Clinic Administrator Leonard Severson, the clinic’s support staff, and CR Associates on their new partnership with the VA.

Veterans are our country’s heroes, and their selfless actions will inspire generations of Americans yet to come. Our country must honor its commitments to veterans, not only because it is the right thing to do, but also because it is the law. I will continue to lead efforts to ensure that our nation’s military retirees and veterans receive the benefits they were promised years ago. While I am pleased with some improvements in military health care funding in the past year, I am concerned that more needs to be done. Assuredly, I will continue to fight for military retirees and veterans programs throughout out this session of Congress.

HONORING THE CENTRAL BUCKS EAST CHOIR OF BUCKS COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, I would like to take a few moments to recognize an outstanding group of young people from Bucks County, PA. The Central Bucks East High School Choirs, under the direction of E. Scott Teaschner and the String Orchestra, under the direction of Eileen Teschner, have been recognized since the 1970s for a public performance. I have always been impressed by their ability to sing in harmony and through their leadership and dedication to their music. Their singing ability has been recognized by the state of Pennsylvania and the National Association of Teachers of Singing.

The 25-member String Orchestra performed at Lanier Middle School in Fairfax, VA on Saturday, March 31, and the choirs sang at W.T. Woodson High School, also in Fairfax. These choirs include a 165-voice Concert Choir, 16-voice Varsity Singers, 16-voice Men’s Ensemble and 27-voice Women’s Ensemble. The choirs have been successful in adjudication classes and have participated in many music festivals. In addition, they have received the “Spirit of the Festival Award” presented only to the elite choirs in the nation. These groups have also received the “Spirits of the Festival Award” for the last 2 years, which is awarded to the organization that best represents its community and school, and that is the most cooperative and enthusiastic during the festival.

It is without a doubt that this group is an outstanding representation of young people in Pennsylvania and across the country. They have demonstrated tremendous talent both musically and through their leadership and maturity. I enthusiastically congratulate the Choirs and String Orchestra of Central Bucks East, and I extend my best wishes for their future success.

IN RECOGNITION OF MRS. ARBELIA GREER PENNINGTON WOOD

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I am delighted to rise today to acknowledge and congratulate Mrs. Arbelia Greer Pennington Wood, a resident from my home State of Michigan, who will be celebrating her 116th birthday on Friday, April 6, 2001.

The child of a sharecropper, Mrs. Wood, who is affectionately called “Ma” by her nephews and nieces, was born in Caledonia, MS in 1885. Raised in Alabama, she moved to Detroit in 1934. Throughout her life, she has been guided by devotion to her family and a deep and abiding faith. Though widowed twice, Mrs. Wood has never been alone. Her life has been involved in the lives of her extended family, which includes not only her nieces and nephews, but also children in her neighborhood. Family members and friends have all commented on her cooking abilities and her ability to teach families about cooking, grammar and even carpentry.

In addition to a multitude of nephews and nieces, Mrs. Wood has been blessed to be part of a family noted for its longevity. Her mother lived to be ninety-three years old. A brother of hers lived to be eighty-nine, and many of her younger siblings are currently in their eighties and nineties. One of her nieces has designed a website dedicated to her life. She has been recognized as an outstanding group of young people from Bucks County, PA. The Central Bucks East High School Choirs, under the direction of E. Scott Teaschner and the String Orchestra, under the direction of Eileen Teschner, have been recognized since the 1970s for a public performance. I have always been impressed by their ability to sing in harmony and through their leadership and dedication to their music. Their singing ability has been recognized by the state of Pennsylvania and the National Association of Teachers of Singing.

This group of students has been recognized for their outstanding choral abilities in Washington, Williamsburg, Orlando, Boston, and Montreal. In addition, they have been recognized since 1991 as the “Outstanding Choral Program” in every festival in which they have participated. Performances are judged according to National Standards of Excellence by college choral professors, and the Central Bucks East Choirs consistently earn “Superior” ratings. In addition, they are frequently honored with the “Special Ad- mittance to a Student Choir for Distinguished Performance,” presented only to the elite choirs in the nation. These groups have also received the “Spirits of the Festival Award” for the last 2 years, which is awarded to the organization that best represents its community and school, and that is the most cooperative and enthusiastic during the festival.

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