even while my State’s nursing homes are experiencing difficulty finding certified staff.

The bill that I introduced along with Senators KOHL and CONRAD would allow North Dakota and Wisconsin to continue using resident assistants for feeding and hydration, while a demonstration project is conducted in our states and others to evaluate what kind of impact the use of these staff has on the quality of feeding and hydration services provided to nursing home patients and on the recruitment and retention of nursing staff. If after the three-year demonstration project, the Secretary of Health and Human Services determines that the use of resident assistants does not result in a reduction in the quality of feeding and hydration of nursing home residents or in a decrease in the recruitment and retention of nursing staff, other nursing homes around the country would be allowed to use resident assistants to help with feeding and hydration tasks.

This legislation includes a number of safeguards designed to protect nursing home patients. For instance, nursing homes are prohibited from using resident assistants to replace existing nursing staff or to count these assistants toward minimum nursing staffing requirements. In addition, resident assistants would have to complete a state-approved training program related to the feeding and hydration tasks they would be performing. Of course, nursing homes would not be able to use resident assistants to administer medication, provide direct medical care, or perform other nursing tasks.

I recognize that this bill is not the only answer or the whole answer for addressing the staffing crisis in nursing homes. In fact, because they do not have enough staff, other nursing homes are using resident assistants to replace existing certified nurse aids. This is what will happen if long-term care facilities can no longer use resident assistants, then patients in North Dakota will suffer.

One resident assistant in North Dakota tells me about a patient she feeds who has difficulty holding her head up when she eats. The resident assistant said that when she was on vacation, her patient lost seven pounds. Fortunately, after a few weeks back on the job, the resident assistant got her patient’s weight back up to where it needed to be. However, if this resident assistant was forced to leave her post permanently, that weight loss may have been long-term and ultimately life-threatening.

I believe the Medicare and Medicaid Nursing Services Quality Improvement Act is a step that Congress can take to address both the staffing shortage and the malnutrition of patients. This is not the only solution and it may not be the best solution, but I hope my colleagues will work with Senator KOHL, Senator CONRAD and me to tackle these serious issues confronting long-term care facilities and their patients.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business Friday, April 20, 2001, the Federal debt stood at $5,713,631,168,647.61. Five trillion, seven hundred thirteen billion, six hundred thirty-one million, one hundred forty-eight thousand, six hundred forty-seven dollars and sixty-one cents.

One year ago, April 20, 2000, the Federal debt stood at $5,707,661,000,000. Five trillion, seven hundred seven billion, one hundred forty-eight million dollars and sixty-one cents.

Fifteen years ago, April 20, 1986, the Federal debt stood at $1,962,745,000,000. One trillion, nine hundred sixty-two billion, seven hundred forty-five million dollars.

Twenty-five years ago, April 20, 1976, the Federal debt stood at $604,399,000,000. Six hundred four billion, three hundred ninety-nine million, one hundred forty-four million, one hundred forty-four million dollars.

These accomplishments stem in part from the strong leadership of Morehouse School of Medicine’s founding dean and president, Louis W. Sullivan, M.D., who has been with the Medical School since its inception. Aside from his years in Washington as U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, Dr. Sullivan has dedicated his life’s work to producing top-quality physicians. During his tenure, Morehouse School of Medicine established several programs. These include a 4-year undergraduate medical education program, seven residency programs and several centers of excellence including the National Center for Primary Care, the Neuroscience Institute, the Cardiovascular Institute and the NASA/Space Medicine and Life Science Research Center, the first of its kind at a minority medical institution. The Sullivan leadership has worked tirelessly to provide vision and direction for the institution’s future, while continuing to preserve the very best traditions of its past. Morehouse School of Medicine,
the State of Georgia and our Nation are truly blessed to have his leadership.

TRIBUTE TO THE POSTAL EMPLOYEES OF THE NEW HAMPSHIRE PERFORMANCE CLUSTER

Mr. SMITH of New Hampshire. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the Postal Employees of the New Hampshire Performance Cluster, a group of dedicated public servants who have been recognized for exemplary performance of service duties. On April 3rd of this year, The Postal Employees of the New Hampshire Performance Cluster were recognized with the Postal Service’s highest award, the Chief Operating Officer Award for overall excellence in the area of customer satisfaction.

New Hampshire Postal Employees have been honored along with four other districts in the nation receiving the Order of the Yellow Jersey Award for Excellence in customer service. This prestigious award is based on the percentage of residential customers who rated the postal service employees as excellent in four areas: overall performance, courteous and friendly clerks, consistency of mail delivery and accuracy of mail delivery.

The Postal Employees of the New Hampshire Performance Cluster have provided dedicated service to the citizens of our state. The people of our state look upon them with tremendous gratitude for all that they have done.

It is an honor and a privilege to serve the Postal Employees of the New Hampshire Performance Cluster in the United States.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Evans, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, which were referred as indicated:

EC-1365. A communication from the General Counsel of the Central Intelligence Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled “Implementation of Inspector General and the designation of an Acting Inspector General; to the Committee on Intelligence.

EC-1366. A communication from the Director of the Office of Regulations Management, Veterans Benefits Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Certification of Evidence for Proof of Service” (RIN2000-AJ55) received on April 18, 2001; to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs.

EC-1367. A communication from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report covering those cases in which equitable relief was granted in 2000; to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs.

EC-1368. A communication from the Inspector General, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of the Inspector General Strategic Plan for 2001 through 2006; to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs.

EC-1369. A communication from the Chief of the Regulations Unit, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report of a rule entitled “Qualified Leasehold Construction Allowances For Short-Term Leases” (Rev. Rul. 2001–20) received on April 11, 2001; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-1370. A communication from the Secretary of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relating to the Impact of Medicare Physician Payment Reform on Utilization and Access for 2001; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-1371. A communication from the Acting Administrator of the Federal Union Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the annual report relating to management performance for 2000; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-1372. A communication from the General Counsel of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “List of Communities Eligible for the Sale of Flood Insurance” (Doc. No. FEMA–7750) received on April 6, 2001; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-1373. A communication from the Attorney/Advisor, Federal Transit Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the discontinuation of service in acting role of Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-1374. A communication from the Attorney/Advisor of the Federal Transit Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the return of the nomination for the position of Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-1375. A communication from the Chairman of the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of the annual performance evaluation for fiscal year 2000; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-1376. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Export Administration, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Implementation of the Wassenaar Arrangement List of Dual-Use Items; Revisions to Control List of Dual-Use Items; Revisions to Commercial License Procedures; and External Interconnects Equipment” (RIN8949-AC30) received on April 18, 2001; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-1377. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Export Administration, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Implementation of the Wassenaar Arrangement List of Dual-Use Items; Revisions to Control List of Dual-Use Items; Revisions to Commercial License Procedures; and External Interconnects Equipment” (RIN8949-AC30) received on April 18, 2001; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-1378. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Export Administration, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Entity List: Revisions and Additions” (RIN0694-AB60) received on April 18, 2001; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-1379. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Export Administration, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Revisions to the EAR as a result of the addition of Brazil, Latvia and Ukraine to the National Sponsors and Other Revisions” (RIN0694-AB50) received on April 18, 2001; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-1380. A communication from the Under Secretary for Export Administration, Department of Commerce, transmitting, a report relating to the Imposition of Foreign Producer-Based Export Controls for Exports to Persons in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Inductees of the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-1381. A communication from the Director of Regulations Policy and Management, Food and Drug Administration, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Food Additives Permitted for Direct Addition to Food for Human Consumption; Food Starch-Modified by Amylolytic Enzymes” (Doc. No. 99F–2082) received on April 6, 2001; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-1382. A communication from the President of the United States Institute of Peace, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of the Office of the Institute of Peace Fiscal Year 2000; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-1383. A communication from the Railroad Retirement Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of the Office of Inspector General for the Fiscal Year 2002; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-1384. A communication from the Acting Assistant General Counsel for Regulations, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, Department of Education, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Recreational Programs” (RIN1360-ZA12) received on April 16, 2001; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-1385. A communication from the Director of Regulations Policy and Management, Food and Drug Administration, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Medical Devices; Reclassification of Cardiovascular Preamendments Class III Devices into Class II” (Doc. No. 99N–0033) received on April 18, 2001; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.