Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I rise today to express my support of the Agriculture Job Opportunity, Benefits, and Security Act of 2001. I am proud to join my colleague Senator CRAIG as a cosponsor of this important legislation.

I am a strong believer that American workers should have the first chance to have American farm and ranch jobs. However, when there are not enough American workers, our agricultural producers should be able to find farmworkers elsewhere. Under the current H-2A program, workers are required to go through a lengthy, uncertain, and undoubtedly costly process to demonstrate to the Federal Government that American workers are not available in order to gain authorization for guest workers. During this long process, Montana crops are not being harvested and cattle and sheep herds are not being tended to the degree they require. A General Accounting Office study recently found that the Government’s inefficiency in processing such claims discourages use of the program. As a result, the Federal Government estimates that only half of this country’s 1.6 million agricultural workers are authorized to work in the U.S., and the figure may be higher since the estimate is based on self-disclosure by illegal workers.

Let me give you an example of how H-2A reform will benefit real producers. We have a number of large sheep ranchers in Montana. All of these sheep need to be sheared in the spring of the year, and as any shepherd will tell you, this is a job that needs to be done quickly, safely, and accurately. Shearers need to pay close attention to detail, lest sheep could be severely injured. With the number of sheep ranches in this country dwindling, there are few Americans who shear professionally, so guest workers from countries such as Argentina must be brought in to do the job. Reform of the H-2A program would make this process easier for our sheep producers.

It is high time we reformed the H-2A program. This legislation will replace the current system with a more efficient process for certification of H-2A workers to work in the agricultural sector. It will also replace the current, unrealistic premium wage mandated for H-2A employers with the standard, minimum wage. Employers will continue to furnish housing and transportation to H-2A workers. This bill makes sense for producers in Montana, Senator CRAIG’s home State of Idaho, and other agricultural States across the country. It also provides a better environment for our guest workers. I look forward to working with my colleagues on this important legislation.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2001

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about hate crimes legislation I introduced with Senator KENNEDY in March of this year. The Local Law Enforcement Act of 2001 would add new categories to current hate crimes legislation sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society.

I would like to describe a terrible crime that occurred January 14, 1999 in El Dorado, AR. Thomas Gary, 38, was run over by a truck he owned after he suffered a blow to the head and shotgun injuries that killed him. Chuck Bennett, 17, who has been charged with the crime, claimed that Gray made a sexual advance toward him.

I believe that government’s first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harm that comes out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act of 2001 is now a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation, we can change hearts and minds as well.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Tuesday, July 10, 2001, the Federal debt stood at $3,639,222,329,428.99, five trillion, seven hundred ten billion, four hundred thirty-six million, three hundred twenty-nine thousand, four hundred twenty-eight dollars and ninety-nine cents.

One year ago, July 10, 2000, the Federal debt stood at $5,662,856,000,000, five trillion, six hundred sixty-two billion, nine hundred fifty million.

Five years ago, July 10, 1996, the Federal debt stood at $5,148,771,000,000, five trillion, one hundred forty-eight billion, seven hundred seventy-one million.

Ten years ago, July 10, 1991, the Federal debt stood at $3,533,712,000,000, three trillion, five hundred thirty-three billion, seven hundred twelve million.

Fifteen years ago, July 10, 1986, the Federal debt stood at $2,071,214,000,000, two trillion, seven-one billion, two hundred fourteen million, which reflects a debt increase of more than $3.5 trillion, $3,639,222,329,428.99, three trillion, six hundred thirty-nine billion, two hundred twenty-two million, three hundred twenty-nine thousand, four hundred twenty-eight dollars and ninety-nine cents during the past 15 years.