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an assault weapon and shot eight people and killed my son's best friend John Scully. On that day, I swore to ban these weapons. Now we have to have the fight all over again, a fight that we thought was over, a divisive, difficult fight. And they are celebrating with the circus. I do not understand it.

Who else loses with the contract? Have you ever heard of the gag rule? That is another fight we already had—the gag rule. A poor woman goes into a family planning clinic and cannot be told her options if she is pregnant, cannot be told her options, cannot be told that she has a right to choose in this country. We fought that fight, and President Clinton lifted the gag rule. He said he thought women should have all the facts known and they should make their own choice. It is up to them to decide. It is a difficult choice, but a woman should be able to make that decision. They are celebrating over there. In their contract, they are bringing back the gag rule, treating women like second-class citizens, as if we do not know what could hurt us.

So it is very clear who the winners and who the losers are. The winners? The very wealthy who get tax breaks, the corporate polluters, the big infant formula companies, the criminals, those who oppose the right to choose. They win in this contract. Really, the billionaires who will walk out and renounce their citizenship to get a tax break are the big winners because we ended that tax break. And what happened in the Republican conference committee? They took that out. Who else wins? The broker-dealers who cheat, who do not take their fiduciary responsibility to their clients seriously.

Those consumers, those investors will have a court system that probably does not let them in the front door.

I believe in a system where David can meet Goliath in the courtroom and let the system work.

They believe in a system where David cannot get in the door. They have something in that contract called "loser pays." It is an English system. It is not the American system. It says if you go into court and you lose, you pay the other guy's attorney's fees. How many of us as small investors would take that chance?

We are going to stop that here in the Senate, but it is in the contract. And the Republicans are celebrating with the circus.

So I hope, in this brief time, I have expressed clearly who the winners are and who the losers are. I can add to the losers the senior citizens, who will see Medicare cuts, huge Medicare cuts. And senior housing cuts.

We could not even get our Republican colleagues to protect Social Security when we took up the balanced budget amendment. We said, "Take Social Security out of that and protect it." We could not get a vote. We lost it on a party-line vote.

So while the celebration is going on there with the circus, I just hope the American people will ask a question like that little girl asked me in school: "Senator, what happens if you cut my school lunch? Who gets that money?"

I ask the American people to ask the question: Who benefits from this contract? And read the fine print, because they are not going to show it to you. You are going to have to work to find it out.

I hope that I have been of help in making the point that overall, this contract is not helpful to the American people.

Thank you very much, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

[Disturbance in the galleries.]

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The galleries will restrain.

Mrs. BOXER. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

WAS CONGRESS IRRESPONSIBLE? THE VOTERS HAVE SAID YES

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, anyone even remotely familiar with the U.S. Constitution knows that no President can spend a dime of Federal tax money that has not first been authorized and appropriated by Congress—both the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate.

So when you hear a politician or an editor or a commentator declare that "Reagan ran up the Federal debt" or that "Bush ran it up," bear in mind that the Founding Fathers, two centuries before the Reagan and Bush presidencies, made it very clear that it is the constitutional duty of Congress to control Federal spending, though Congress has failed to do so for the past 50 years.

The fiscal irresponsibility of Congress has created a Federal debt which stood at $4,876,206,792,345.50 as of the close of business Tuesday, April 4. This outrageous debt, which will be saddled on the backs of our children and grandchildren, averages out to $18,510.16 on a per capita basis.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS REFORM

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, yesterday, my colleague from South Dakota, Senator PRESSLER, stated on the Senate floor that the administration was working through my office to block consideration of S. 652, the telecommunications bill. This statement was flat out wrong, and while Senator PRESSLER subsequently corrected his statement for the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, the press has reported the inaccuracy. This issue is sufficiently important that the mistake needs to be pointed out.

I have spoken with the Vice President concerning telecommunications reform legislation. The Vice President stated, as he apparently indicated to Senator PRESSLER, that the administration would like to see the bill improved in a couple of different areas. However, the Vice President did not ask, nor did I offer, to block consideration of the bill.

I am committed to passing a telecommunications reform bill. I am eager to see the benefits of technology and communications services—the so-called information superhighway—extended to all parts of this country, especially rural areas like my own State of South Dakota.

The telecommunications bill is sweeping legislation addressing complex problems, and highly technical subjects. While I have taken no steps to block the bill from coming to the floor, I sympathize with those of my colleagues who desire the opportunity and time to study it. With the Senate schedule set for the balance of the week, and with the time provided by the upcoming Easter recess, Senators will have the chance to evaluate the proposal in detail prior to its coming to the floor.

Again, let me reiterate, I have not sought to block consideration of S. 652. Our ranking member on the Commerce Committee, Senator HOLLINGS, stands ready to proceed. Indeed, as Senator PRESSLER noted, every Democrat on the Commerce Committee voted for the bill at markup.

I believe my intentions in regards to this matter are clear. I simply take this opportunity to reinforce my position that a telecommunications reform bill is among the most important legislation the Senate will consider this year.

THE 14TH ANNIVERSARY OF SHOOTING OF JIM BRADY

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, today I would like to tell you a story about criminals and guns. It is about someone—let us call him John Doe because the B-A-T-F says it cannot disclose his identity—who in 1978 was convicted of criminal reckless homicide. He killed another driver while driving drunk. Although, as a convicted felon, John Doe was prohibited by law from buying guns, he purchased a handgun from a gun dealer in December 1993. Then, only 1 month later in January 1994, he purchased another. On both occasions he walked out of the gun store fully armed.

How could he do this? He lied on his forms and no one conducted a background check. A few weeks later John Doe tried to increase his arsenal yet again by purchasing a third handgun. But this last time he was caught—thanks to the background check that is now required under the Brady law.

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