that no other government investment can match the unique value of the Coast Guard.

Despite this heavy workload, however, the Coast Guard has aggressively sought to streamline its organization and reduce its overall budget. In the past 3 years, Adm. Robert E. Kramek, the Commandant of the Coast Guard, has reduced the service's work force by 4,000 positions and lowered it's annual budget by $400 million—all without reducing any services to the general public. While many agencies have failed to offer meaningful contributions to our efforts to balance the Federal budget, the Coast Guard has been a leader in fiscal responsibility.

Mr. President, I again commend Senator STEVENS and Representative SHUSTER for their dedication to reauthorizing the USCG. I would also like to recognize two staff members whose focused efforts were integral to the success of this reauthorization, Tom Melius of Senator STEVENS' staff and Rebecca Dye of Representative COBLE's staff. Their hard work has certainly paid off. This legislation will ensure that the Coast Guard will continue to do an excellent job of protecting our Nation's maritime highways for years to come.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Tuesday, October 1, the Federal debt stood at $5,234,730,786,626.50.

Five years ago, October 1, 1991, the Federal debt stood at $3,674,303,000,000.

Ten years ago, October 1, 1986, the Federal debt stood at $2,125,302,000,000.

Fifteen years ago, October 1, 1981, the Federal debt stood at $997,984,000,000.

Twenty-five years ago, October 1, 1971, the Federal debt stood at $412,058,000,000 which reflects an increase of nearly $5 trillion ($4,822,672,786,626.50) during the past 25 years.

MAINTAINING OUR B–52 FLEET

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I rise to comment on important steps taken in this year's defense appropriations bill to maintain our full fleet of 94 B–52H bombers. Many North Dakotans, particularly those who live and work at Minot Air Force Base, are very interested in the future of these aircraft.

My colleagues will understand the importance of these bombers when they recall that it was B–52's that recently struck at Saddam Hussein in retaliation for his violation of the Kurdish safe haven in northern Iraq. Those bombers flew from Guam, were refueled by KC–135 tankers, and launched 13 AGM–86 cruise missiles at air defense, command and communications targets in southern Iraq. Press reports suggested that the B–52's long-range capability was needed because no Middle Eastern country would allow the United States to use its bases or airspace in order to launch this air strike.

AUTHORIZATION ACT

My colleagues will also recall that the Congress recognized the importance of these bombers in the defense authorization act by including language that prohibits ''retiring or dismantling, or preparing to retire or dismantle'' any B–52H bombers.

The authorization bill also included an amendment offered by Senator CONRAD and myself that requires that the current fleet of B–52 bombers be maintained in active status and that the Secretary of Defense treat all B–52's identically when carrying out upgrades.

Lastly, the Armed Services Committees of the House and Senate agreed to authorize additional funding for B–52 modernizations, operations and maintenance, and personnel.

DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS BILL

The fiscal year 1997 defense appropriations bill, which the Senate has just passed, fulfills the promise of the authorization act. The conference report includes $4.4 million for military personnel, $47.9 million for operations and maintenance and $11.5 million for procurement. This additional funding is vital if we are to keep all 94 B–52's modernized and flying. This number is the full fleet of our only bomber that can deliver both conventional and nuclear payloads.

I am pleased that the Congress has again recognized the wisdom of not trying to prejudge force structure studies now underway at the Pentagon. It makes no sense to retire B–52 bombers when the Deep Attack Weapons Mix Study and the next Quadrennial Defense Review may recommend that we keep them in the air.

STUDY OF NEW ENGINES

Lastly, report language accompanying this bill requires the Air Force to report to the Congress by March 15, 1997 on a proposal to put new, commercially-available engines on the B–52's. Some projections suggest that the new engines would save the Air Force 40 percent of the B–52's current fuel costs, would increase the plane's range and loitering capability, and would improve engine reliability and ease of maintenance. Over the planes' projected remaining life (through 2036), the new engines could save the Air Force $6.4 billion. These savings would likely be enough to pay for the costs of operating and maintaining the 28 B–52's that the Pentagon has sought to retire.

I applaud the defense appropriations conferees for recognizing the potential benefits of this innovative plan. And I look forward to reviewing the Air Force's analysis of this proposal.

Mr. President, in closing I would like to thank Senator STEVENS of Alaska and Senator INOUYE of Hawaii, the distinguished chairman and ranking member of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, for their recognition of the value of our B–52 fleet. I look forward to working with them to keep 94 B–52's flying for many years to come.

IRS WORKERS AND THE OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Mr. DORGAN. Mr President, I rise to comment briefly on an aspect of the omnibus fiscal year 1997 appropriations bill that the Senate just passed.

My Senate colleagues will recall that the Internal Revenue Service has proposed a field office reorganization that would cut 2,490 employees, many of them from front-line taxpayer assistance jobs. These employees are now in field offices, where they provide needed services to taxpayers in North Dakota and other rural States. The IRS proposes to hire 1,500 new employees in its regional headquarters to do some of the same work now carried out at the field office level.

This IRS proposal puzzles me for a number of reasons.

First, we all know that taxpayers too often have trouble getting straight answers out of the IRS. The proposed reorganization would make it even more difficult for North Dakotans to have access to advice and assistance on how to comply with Federal tax law. I often hear from constituents who are frustrated at their inability to get sound tax advice from this agency. A 1–800 number, which may or may not be answered, is no substitute for the ability to walk into an IRS field office and receive advice in person.

Second, if the IRS is trying to save money, it could start by examining its personnel policies on the rotation of managers. My State staff tells me that no other Federal agency changes its management staff as constantly as does the IRS. Sometimes the North Dakota State director stays for only a year or so before moving on to the regional office in Saint Paul, or elsewhere. Besides harming institutional memory about tax matters in North Dakota, this rapid turnover means that the IRS must spend more on moving expenses. The IRS also has an arrangement with local real estate firms to buy managers' homes so that those leaving North Dakota do not suffer any loss as they leave. I am told that the IRS district that includes North and South Dakota and Minnesota has spent $300,000 on managerial moves in the past few years. None of the front-line employees who may be fired will be eligible for this sort of moving assistance.

Third, by moving jobs from North Dakota to St. Paul, the IRS will actually be increasing its payroll costs. A salary of $30,000 will go much further in a small city than in a large metropolitan area. The IRS is therefore likely to be able to attract more qualified people in my State than in the Twin Cities with the same salary level.

Given my concern with this IRS proposal, I am pleased that the omnibus