

(One trillion, sixty-nine billion, three hundred thirty-seven million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$4 trillion—\$4,262,934,639,188.30 (Four trillion, two hundred sixty-two billion, nine hundred thirty-four million, six hundred thirty-nine thousand, one hundred eighty-eight dollars and thirty cents) during the past 15 years.

#### DRUG FREE COMMUNITIES ACT OF 1997

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I am pleased that the Senate yesterday passed H.R. 956, the Drug Free Communities Act of 1997. I have long been a supporter of substance abuse prevention programs, particularly for our youth, and was a cosponsor of the Senate's companion bill, S. 536.

I am glad to see that my Republican colleagues have taken a second look at these types of prevention programs since the debate over the 1994 crime law. It clearly was time to stop debating the usefulness of prevention programs and instead make sure we authorized and funded such programs as the Drug Free Communities Act.

Community-based prevention programs have proven to be an effective way to combat the problem of youth drug abuse. Throughout the country there are groups, large and small, public and private, whose mission is to reduce drug use among our young people. Many of these groups form coalitions, pool their resources, and work together to reach that goal. Groups such as D.A.R.E., MADD, the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, and Vermont's unique Kids N' Kops Program, serve communities every day with programs that involve entire communities and educate our youth in innovative ways so that they are secure in their decision not to use drugs. Those groups need to be supported and that is the purpose of H.R. 956.

Many Americans are concerned about the problem of juvenile crime and delinquency, and drug abuse is a contributing factor. According to a recent report from the Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the number of juvenile delinquency cases for drug offenses has increased significantly. In 1994, 61 percent of all delinquency cases were for drug offenses compared to 43 percent in 1985. Unfortunately, the proportion of drug offenses is higher in Vermont than the national average. Similarly disturbing are trends in the overall juvenile crime rate. While the juvenile violent crime rate dipped nationally in 1995, it rose in Vermont that same year. In addition, the number of juvenile violent crime arrests is 67 percent higher than in 1986.

That is why at the beginning of this year, I along with a number of my Democratic colleagues, introduced S. 15, the Youth Violence, Crime and Drug Abuse Control Act of 1997. This bill includes a number of initiatives to prevent juvenile crime and drug abuse, in-

cluding providing funding for comprehensive drug education and prevention for all elementary and high school students, creating safe havens where children are protected from drugs, gangs, and crime. We must ensure that prevention programs and funding are included in S. 10, the Republican juvenile crime bill currently being considered in the Senate Committee on the Judiciary.

The Drug Free Communities Act of 1997 creates a 5-year, \$143.5 million grant program to be run by Gen. Barry McCaffrey and the Office of National Drug Control Policy [ONCDP]. The purpose of the grant program is simple: to provide matching grants to community coalitions, particularly those dedicated to reducing drug abuse by young people. Established partnerships in local communities with positive track records can apply for grants of up to \$100,000 per community. No new funding is required; it will come from re-directing money already in the \$16 billion Federal antidrug budget.

In Vermont, these resources will be put to good use. With the movement of gangs into Vermont and the rise in youth drug use, more resources are needed to serve our children. I am proud of the work that many of community groups are doing in Vermont. The Orleans County Prevention Partnership [OCCP] in Newport, VT, has spent the last 6 years fighting youth crime and drug use. OCCP was formed based on the premise that communities already possess a wealth of knowledge and talent to deal with these problems, but need resources to coordinate and harness community talents to the fullest. Over the years, this partnership has grown from the original 17 members to the current 117 members, including all segments of Orleans County from church groups to law enforcement to schools. This commitment has led to great results: The OCCP reports that, in Orleans County, liquor consumption among middle schoolers is down 15 percent, as are DWI arrests of teens and arrests for drug crimes in all age groups. The Prevention Coalition based in Brattleboro is also doing terrific work in drug prevention efforts in the southern part of the State. These coalitions know as well as anyone about the benefits of targeted prevention programs and that community partnerships are an effective way to approach this problem. The passage of H.R. 956 will provide them another tool in this battle.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who seeks recognition?

Mr. KENNEDY addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I would like to be able to proceed for the time that was allotted to me, 15 minutes.

Therefore, I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended for that period of time.

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

observes that morning business was to end at 1 o'clock. The Senator from Massachusetts has asked unanimous consent to extend that time.

Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### OUR GOAL IS TO SAVE MEDICARE, NOT DESTROY IT

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, the Finance Committee yesterday reported a bill that will tragically undermine Medicare as we know it. I'm sure that some will tell the American people that these changes are needed to preserve Medicare for future generations. I say, hogwash. The assault on Medicare that began in the last Congress is continuing with full force, and Congress should reject it this year, just as we rejected it last year.

There is no justification—none whatever—for Congress to rush forward with ill-considered changes in Medicare under the thinly veiled pretext of balancing the Federal budget. None of these basic changes in Medicare were part of the budget agreement. It is the height of hypocrisy for these who voted against including the Hatch-Kennedy children's health plan in the agreement last month to make this assault on Medicare part of the agreement this month.

In the last Congress, the assault on Medicare came in two steps. The first step was to make deep cuts in Medicare—\$270 billion over 7 years, three times the amount necessary to restore the solvency of Medicare. The second step was to inflict enough damage to Medicare that it would wither away over time.

This year, the amount of cuts in Medicare is lower—\$115 billion over 5 years—and was locked-in by the budget agreement. But the budget agreement was not strong enough to prevent the second part of the anti-Medicare strategy.

Medicare is still one of the most successful social programs ever enacted. It has brought health care and health security to tens of millions of senior citizens. We can deal with the financial problems of Medicare, but we must do it the right way, not the wrong way. Our goal is to save Medicare, not destroy it.

The proposal coming to the floor next week will raise the age of eligibility for Medicare from 65 to 67. If this increase passes, we will be breaking a compact made with millions of working Americans. Despite what supporters of this proposal claim, Medicare is not the same as Social Security on the age of eligibility.

A delay in eligibility for Social Security may result in delayed benefits or lower benefits, but people can still retire when they choose. By contrast, a delay in eligibility for Medicare will throw millions of seniors into the ranks of the uninsured. Unless we are willing to enact simultaneous insurance reforms to guarantee access to affordable and comprehensive coverage