

Mr. LOTT. I understand that.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now be in a period for morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

COMMENDING SENATOR COCHRAN

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I commend my colleague, the Presiding Officer, Senator COCHRAN, for the remarks he made a few moments ago on the floor of the Senate with regard to the defense budget, particularly missile defense. He has been very thoughtful in this area. He has been involved for a number of years.

He serves as head of a bipartisan group of Senators who have been to Russia on behalf of the Senate, who have met with representatives from the government, the Duma of Russia, when they have been in the United States.

To put this in a positive way and note that President Bush intends to go forward with it when it is ready to be deployed and that we be prepared to have a serious discussion about it is fine, but I thank him for the way he has been involved in this issue and express my confidence that as we move forward on this very important defense item for our future, I know he will be involved in that.

I feel very good that President Bush and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld will approach this matter in an appropriate way, with our defense budget funding but also in the way it is handled with our allies. I look forward to working together in the future on this important issue.

I yield the floor.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. SARBANES. Mr. President, I am very pleased to join in commemorating African-American History Month and particularly this year's theme, "Creating and Defining the African-American Community: Family, Church, Politics and Culture."

Since 1926, the month of February has served as a time for our citizens to recognize and applaud the vast contributions made by African-Americans to the founding and building of this great Nation. The vision of the noted author and scholar, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, led to this important annual celebration. As we note the theme of this year's Black History Month celebration, it is important to recognize the challenges ahead for African-Americans in a new age.

From early days, the family has been the backbone of the African-American culture in our country. Through a strong and stable family structure, African-Americans found companionship,

love, and an understanding of the suffering endured during oppressive periods in history. The African-American family has served to strengthen and encourage young African-Americans to forge ahead to break barriers and rise to new heights within American culture.

The unemployment rate for African-Americans has fallen from 14.2 percent in 1992 to 8.3 percent in 1999, the lowest annual level on record. The median household income of African-Americans is up 15.1 percent since 1993, from \$22,034 in 1993 to \$25,351 in 1998. Real wages of African-Americans have risen rapidly in the past two years, up about 5.8 percent for men and 6.2 percent for women since 1996.

The African-American poverty rate has dropped from 33.1 percent in 1993 to 26.1 percent in 1998, the lowest level ever recorded and the largest five-year drop in more than twenty-five years. Since 1993, the child poverty rate among African-Americans has dropped from 46.1 percent to 36.7 percent in 1998. While still too large, this represents the largest five-year drop on record. It is critical that we in Congress continue to work to enact legislation that will further strengthen African-American families and enable these rates to continue to decrease at record levels.

Religion, like family, has played a vital role in African-American life in this country, with the Black Church a substantial and enduring presence. Throughout the early period of our Nation's development, African-Americans established their own religious institutions. Although these institutions were not always formally recognized, it should be noted that the African Methodist Episcopal Church was founded in 1787, followed closely by the African Baptist Church in 1788. Throughout our Nation's history, the Black Church has served as both a stabilizing influence and as a catalyst for needed change.

During slavery, the African-American Church was a place of spiritual sanctuary and community. After Blacks were freed, the Church remained a line of defense and comfort against racism. The Black Church served as an agency of social reorientation and reconstruction, providing reinforcement for the values of marriage, family, morality, and spirituality in the face of the corrosive effects of discrimination.

The Black Church became the center for economic cooperation, pooling resources to buy churches, building mutual aid societies which provided social services, purchasing and helping resettle enslaved Africans, and establishing businesses. From its earliest days as an invisible spiritual community, the Black Church supported social change and struggle, providing leaders and leadership at various points in the struggle against racism and discrimination.

The civil rights movement of the 1960s provided the catalyst for African-Americans to move into the political

arena. Three major factors encouraged the beginning of this new movement for civil rights. First, many African-Americans served with honor in World War II, as they had in many wars since the American revolution. However, in this instance, African-American leaders pointed to the records of these veterans to show the injustice of racial discrimination against patriots. Second, more and more African-Americans in the North had made economic gains, increased their education, and registered to vote. Third, the NAACP had attracted many new members and received increased financial support from all citizens.

In addition, a young group of energetic lawyers, including Thurgood Marshall, of Baltimore, Maryland, used the legal system to bring about important changes in the lives of African-Americans, while Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. appealed to the conscience of all citizens. When Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Clarence Mitchell, Jr., of Maryland, played a critical part in steering this legislation through Congress.

African-Americans began to assume more influential roles in the Federal Government as a result of the civil rights movement, a development which benefitted the entire Nation. In 1966, Dr. Robert C. Weaver became the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, the first Black Cabinet Member and Edward Brooke became the first African-American elected to the Senate since reconstruction. In 1967, Thurgood Marshall became the first Black Justice on the Supreme Court. In 1969, Shirley Chisholm of New York became the first Black woman to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Progress continued in the next three decades. In 1976, Patricia Harris became the first Black woman Cabinet Member and in 1977 when Clifford Alexander was confirmed as the first Black Secretary of the Army. In 1989, Douglas Wilder of Virginia became the first elected African-American Governor in the Nation. In 1992, Carol Moseley-Braun became the first African-American female U.S. Senator. In 1993, Ron Brown became the first African-American Secretary of Commerce, Jesse Brown became the first African-American Secretary of the Veterans Administration, and Hazel O'Leary became the first black Secretary of Energy. In 1997, Rodney Slater became the first African-American Secretary of Transportation and Alexis Herman became the first African-American Secretary of Labor. In 2001, Roderick Paige became the first African-American Secretary of Education and General Colin Powell, in addition to being the first African-American Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, became the first U.S. Secretary of State.

African-Americans have played significant roles in influencing and changing American life and culture. Through such fields as arts and entertainment,