guess is as good as the Senate's: The Victims' Rights Amendment doesn't bother defining the term ''victim.''

The wider the net, the bigger the logistical challenge. Just notifying all these people of every proceeding, from the time a suspect is arrested until the time he's released from prison years or decades later, would be hard enough. Making room for them in court might mean holding the trial in a large auditorium. Letting each one speak would not exactly advance the goal of speedy justice.

There is nothing to stop the states from mandating consideration of crime victims. In fact, all 50 states have done that. As former Reagan Justice Department official Bruce Fein testified at a recent House hearing, ''Nothing in the Constitution or in U.S. Supreme Court precedents handcuffs either Congress or the states in fashioning victims' rights statutes.''

The advantage of helping victims by these means is that we can experiment to find solutions that are sensible and affordable and abandon those that are not. But a constitutional amendment would transfer the power to courts to enforce these new rights, without much regard for practicality or proportion.

It would amount to giving unelected federal judges instructions to do good and a blank check with which to do it. Only years later would we find out whether the benefits would be worth the cost and by that time, it would be very hard to change our minds.

The Victims' Rights Amendment is not likely to do much for crime victims that can't be done by other means. But by creating a new constitutional demand of unknown dimensions, it threatens to make victims of us all.

[From the Collegiate Times, Apr. 25, 2000]

VICTIMS' RIGHTS BILL VIOLATES OTHERS' RIGHTS

Although the victims' rights amendment, set to receive Senate vote at the end of the month, sounds like it has all the makings of noble piece of legislation, its true colors shine through as potentially endangering to the rights of the accused.

The bill finds bipartisan support, primarily bolstered by the efforts of Senators Jon Kyl (R–Arizona) and Dianne Feinstein (D–California.)

The measure would provide victims with the right to notification of public proceedings, which emerge from the alleged offense against them.

In addition, it provides the right of presence at hearings and capacity to testify when the topics of parole, plea-bargaining or sentencing are concerned. Further, victims would be privileged with orders of restitution and attention to their interests in the initiative of speedy trials (Washington Post, April 24).

On a state level, many of these provisions already exist.

But does the Constitution, the ultimate framework of our nation's concept of justice, deserve this slap in the face legislation?

Certainly, when anything is under consideration of amendment to the Constitution, a thorough analysis should occur to both ensure the delicate balance of the Constitution between the accused and the accuser remains intact and that justice remains the focus at all times.

Upon examination, this measure is exposed as a travesty to both. Any right the accused has under the Constitution would be grossly usurped by the passing of this bill into law.

For example, a defendant's constitutional right to a fair trial would rest on the victim's concern in pursuing justice swiftly for their own sake. Another ramification of this bill includes the inevitability of prosecutorial hold ups.

By integrating the emotional response of victims into the proceedings of plea-bargaining and sentencing where prosecution once exercised discretion as given to them by law, fairness in sentencing and swiftness in sentencing seem harder to come by.

On the most basic of levels, the sheer label of victim conflicts with the very sentiment for which the Constitution stands.

The use of the word victim violates the premise of innocence until guilt has been proven in a court of law. By labeling the accuser as a victim, guilt has been assigned to the accused.

It prematurely uses terminology that assesses a situation in light of allegations rather than legally submitted evidence.

The rights of all victims remain preserved in the Constitution.

The fact that courts are fully prepared to issue a denial of all freedoms to the accused, should they be found guilty, guarantees, on the behalf of victims as well as society at large, justice will be served.

Justice will be served by the end processes and not prematurely.

For this reason, the interests of victims are under constant consideration. This piece of legislation threatens to disrupt the balance the Constitution maintains and tip the scale in favor of victims.

This bill, should it be made into law, promises an undemocratic approach to dealing with the accused in a manner which jeopardizes their rights and liberties.

The court system pursues prosecution on behalf of victims.

To undermine these efforts in the name of victims' rights seems the most forthright ruin of what the Constitution truly intended as safeguards for the accused as well as the accuser.

[From the Herald, Everett, WA, Apr. 19, 2000]

AMENDMENT TO AID VICTIMS COULD CAUSE MORE DAMAGE

The U.S. Senate is nearing a vote on a constitutional amendment that seeks to enact a good idea. Like many fine concepts, however, the proposed victims' rights amendment could cause enormous trouble. The Senate has been looking at the proposal seriously since last year. Good arguments have been made on both sides of the amendment, which has bipartisan sponsorship from Sens. Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., and Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif.

As amendment supporters argue, the level of crime in American society should cause us to look more carefully at protecting the rights of victims and their families. Too many court decisions have protected criminals' rights without a corresponding development of the law to assure victims' interests are respected. Indeed, the whole area of prosecution has changed so much in the past 200 years that an amendment could be a reasonable addition to the Constitution. When the Founding Fathers wrote the Constitution, for instance, it was common for victims themselves to bring a criminal case.

Still, a constitutional amendment ought to be a matter of last resort. The amendment simply fails to meet that elemental test. In fact, portions of what the amendment seeks to ensure are already required in existing federal law.

Unfortunantely, members of Congress have failed to provide the appropriations necessary to ensure that victims are notified of hearings and to make sure that prosecutors have the time and resources to be in regular contact with them. An amendment to the Constitution requiring such actions would do little to remedy such neglect. Indeed, unless followed by better funding, the amendment might put even more strain on prosecutors' time and budgets, making them more reluctant to take on difficult cases. That would work decidedly in the favor of criminals, not society.

Many prosecutors and victims' groups have concerns about the potential for unintended harm from the amendment. Their arguments make enormous sense. During the past two decades, America has begun to address its crime problem more seriously. From local offices to the federal government, prosecutors and lawmakers are doing better in addressing the needs of victims and society. The step-by-step approach is showing results in reduced crime. Methodical, painstaking improvements should be strengthened, rather than being shunted aside in favor of a constitutional amendment that, at best, promises more than it would deliver.

WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY 2000

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, on Friday, April 28, 2000, we remembered and honored the sacrifices of the men and women across the years who have lost their lives on the job. We also marked the 30th anniversary of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, which has done so much to reduce such casualties by improving conditions in the workplace for employees across the country. On this day, we renewed our commitment to fair and safe working conditions for every American.

The progress that we have made over the past 30 years is remarkable. In 1970, the year the Occupational Safety and Health Act was signed into law, 13,800 workers died on the job. Since then, workplace fatality rates have fallen by 74 percent. Over 200,000 lives have been saved. Injury rates have fallen by more than a third.

In observance of this important day, we must also remember the lives and the families that have been irrevocably changed by workplace injuries and illnesses. Despite the progress, 154 people still lose their lives on the job on the average day. Last year in Massachusetts, 91 workers died on the job—more than double the number in 1998. Currently, it is estimated that 1,000 deaths a year result from work-related illnesses, and 1,200 workers a year are diagnosed with cancer caused by their jobs. Clearly, those high numbers are unacceptable.

As the global economy continues to expand and change the new workplace, new challenges are created for ensuring adequate safety protections. The modern workplace is being restructured by downsizing staff, larger output quotas, mandatory overtime, and job consolidation. This restructuring creates new pressures on workers to be more productive in the name of efficiency and competitiveness. New technologies in the workplace make it easier to do jobs faster, but they pose new hazards as well.

For ten years, workers have been struggling to achieve a workplace free from ergonomic injuries and illnesses. Since 1990, Secretary of Labor Elizabeth Dole announced the Department

of Labor's commitment to issuing an ergonomics standard, more than 6 million workers have suffered serious job injuries from these hazards. Each year, 650,000 workers lose a day or more of work because of ergonomic injuries, costing businesses $15–20 billion per year.

Ursula Stafford, 24 years old, worked as a paraprofessional for the New York City school district. She was injured assisting a 250-pound wheelchair-bound student. She received no training on how to lift the student, nor did her employer provide any lifting equipment. After two days on the job, she suffered a herniated disc and spasms in her neck. As a result of her injuries, her doctor told her that she may not be able to have children, because her back may not be able to support the weight.

Charley Richardson, a shipfitter at General Dynamics in Quincy, Massachusetts, sustained a career-ending back injury when he was ordered to install a 75-pound piece of steel to reinforce a deck. Although he continued to try to work, he found that on many days, he could not endure the pain of lifting and using heavy tools. For years afterwards, his injury prevented him from participating in basic activities. The loss that hurt Charley the most was having to tell his grandchildren they could not sit on his lap for more than a couple of minutes, because it was too painful. To this day, he cannot sit for long without pain.

OSHA has proposed an ergonomics standard to protect workers from these debilitating injuries. Yet in spite of the costs to employers and to workers and their families, industry has launched an all-out, no-holds-barred effort to prevent OSHA from issuing this important standard. A stronger standard would go a long way to reducing this leading cause of injury.

Ergonomics programs have been shown to make a difference in reducing the number of injuries that occur on the job. Johns Hopkins University initiated a program which significantly reduced the rate of such injuries by 80 percent over seven years. A poultry processor's program lowered the incidence of workers' compensation claims by 20 percent. A program by Intel Corporation produced a savings of more than $10 million.

Hopefully, after this long battle, a national ergonomics standard will finally be put in place this year. If so, it will be the most significant workplace safety protection in the 30 years since OSHA became law. The ergonomic standard will be a landmark achievement in improving safety and health for all workers in America. May this Workers Memorial Day serve as a monument to the progress we are making, and as a constant reminder of our obligation to do more, much more, to achieve the great goal we share.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business Friday, April 28, 2000, the Federal debt stood at $5,685,108,228,594.76 (Five trillion, six hundred eighty-five billion, one hundred eight million, two hundred twenty-eight thousand, five hundred ninety-four dollars and seventy-six cents).

One year ago, April 26, 1999, the Federal debt stood at $5,598,230,000,000 (Five trillion, five hundred ninety-eight billion, two hundred thirty million).

Five years ago, April 28, 1995, the Federal debt stood at $4,852,327,000,000 (Four trillion, eight hundred fifty-two billion, three hundred twenty-seven million).

Ten years ago, April 28, 1990, the Federal debt stood at $3,059,578,000,000 (Three trillion, fifty-nine billion, five hundred seventy-eight million).

Twenty-five years ago, April 28, 1975, the Federal debt stood at $515,176,000,000 (Five hundred fifteen billion, one hundred seventy-six million) which reflects a debt increase of more than $5 trillion—$5,169,932,228,594.76 (Five trillion, one hundred sixty-nine billion, nine hundred thirty-two million, two hundred twenty-eight thousand, five hundred ninety-four dollars and seventy-six cents) during the past 25 years.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

HONORING TOP GEORGIA YOUTH VOLUNTEERS

• Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate and honor two young Georgia students who have achieved national recognition for exemplary volunteer service in their communities. Shelarese Ruffin of Atlanta and Sagen Woolery of Warner Robins have just been named State Honorees in The 2000 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program, an annual honor conferred on only one high school student and one middle-level student in each State, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

Ms. Shelarese Ruffin is being recognized for her efforts in developing an intervention program that targets at-risk teens. The program is designed to help further educate and discipline teens in overcoming drug and behavioral problems. Mr. Sagen Woolery is being honored for volunteering his time and creating ''The Kid's Kitchen,'' a soup kitchen for needy children and their families which is fully operated by kids between the ages of 8–12.

In light of numerous statistics that indicate Americans today are less involved in their communities than they once were, it is vital that we encourage and support the kind of selfless contributions these young people have made. People of all ages need to think more about how we, as individual citizens, can work together at the local level to ensure the health and vitality of our towns and neighborhoods. Young volunteers like Ms. Ruffin and Mr. Woolery are inspiring examples to all of us, and are among our brightest hopes for a better tomorrow.

Ms. Ruffin and Mr. Woolery should be extremely proud to have been singled out from such a large group of dedicated volunteers. As part of their recognition, they will come to Washington in early May, along with other 2000 Spirit of Community Honorees from across the country, for several days of special events, including a congressional breakfast reception on Capitol Hill.

I heartily applaud Ms. Ruffin and Mr. Woolery for their initiative in seeking to make their communities better places to live, and for the positive impact they have had on the lives of others.

In addition, I also salute other young people in Georgia who were named Distinguished Finalists by the Prudential Spirit of Community Awards for their outstanding volunteer service. They are: Vidya Margaret Anegundi of Lilburn, Shamea Crane of Morrow, Lyndsey Miller of Atlanta, Jessica Nickerson of Savannah, Leslie Pruett of LaGrange, and Erin Shealy of Watkinsville.

All of these young people have demonstrated a level of commitment and accomplishment that is truly extraordinary in today's world and deserve our sincere admiration and respect. Their actions show that young Americans can and do play important roles in their communities, and that America's community spirit continues to hold tremendous promise for the future.•

GOREVILLE, ILLINOIS, CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

• Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the great people of Goreville, IL, during their centennial celebration. Although Goreville was not officially incorporated until 1900, it has been a busy settlement since before the Civil War. A post office was established as early as 1886, after the Gore family migrated from Georgia to settle on the land they had purchased from the government in 1854. When the Civil War broke out, General John A. Logan visited the community to recruit volunteers for his 31st Illinois Volunteer Infantry, which rendezvoused at Camp Dunlap in Jacksonville, IL, before moving on to Fort Defiance in Cairo, IL.

When the Chicago and Eastern Illinois railroad went through Johnson County in 1889, the village moved its businesses down the road. This flexibility proved beneficial to Goreville as the small village prospered.

In April 1900, the village was incorporated, and was formally recognized by the State of Illinois in a small ceremony on July 5, 1900. While Goreville's population has never been extremely large, it has gradually grown to 900 people. Goreville is nestled next to Ferne Clyffe State Park. In 1923, the State Park was declared ''the most beautiful spot in Illinois.''