		EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE: 1—Official Business 2—Necessarily Absent 3—Illness 4—Other

This small program was created in 1989 during an economic downturn, with the obvious intention of bringing in immigrants who would spur economic growth that would benefit all Americans. A cap of 10,000 per year was put in place. Unfortunately, the program attracted very few immigrants in its first few years. In the last couple of years, though, it has grown. In 1997, there were 1,110 applicants. The major growth that has occurred has been due to the development of investment companies that pool the resources of immigrants. Instead of owning and operating a small business, wealthy immigrants can now put their money into a company that will run a large business with hundreds or thousands of employees. We are very pleased that this type of company has formed because we have seen its benefits firsthand. For instance, the Senators from West Virginia have spent their entire careers trying to bring jobs to isolated, hard-to-reach areas of their State. In some areas, despite their best efforts, little progress has been made until recently. One of those areas is McDowell County. Last year, InterBank, a company that is pooling the resources of these immigrants, announced that it was going to hire 400 people in McDowell County for teleservicing. Within a day it had 1,400 applicants in that job-scarce county. Over the next few years, InterBank plans on hiring up to 15,000 West Virginians for its phone services. If the Bumpers amendment were to pass, those jobs would never be created, and many of the jobs that have already been created, both in West Virginia and across the country, would be lost. This amendment's sponsor does not seem concerned by that fact; he has spent his time arguing that the United States should not "sell" citizenship. He is happy to accept any downtrodden, destitute, oppressed people. He does not complain about the hundreds of thousands of immigrants who arrive penniless each year. He is only offended that a few immigrants come to America with money and create jobs for needy Americans. We simply disagree with our colleague. We favor bringing in immigrants who are coming here to contribute by working, and we favor bringing in immigrants who are coming here to invest and create jobs for needy Americans. We therefore support the motion to table.

Those opposing the motion to table contended:

In 1989 Congress enacted a very mercenary program. Under that program, the United States, the great bastion of freedom and democracy and the champion of the downtrodden of the world, sells United States' citizenship to rich people around the world. In passing that law, it was copying Australia and Canada, which had enacted laws selling citizenship for $200,000. At first, Congress decided it would sell United States' citizenship for $1 million, but later it decided to lower the price to $500,000. In the first few years, the program had few takers. Recently, though, the number of applicants has risen sharply due to the emergence of a few companies that have learned how to take advantage of the program. Those companies typically ask an immigrant just to pay $100,000 or $200,000, and to give a promissory note for the rest. Under the program, after 2 years an immigrant gets his or her green card. The promissory note is then torn up. Thus, it costs much less now to buy citizenship. Even worse, many of these immigrants have no intention of ever becoming citizens. They just get their green cards, but for tax purposes they refuse to become Americans. Though are colleagues tell us that these immigrants are required to live in the United States, we have been told that it is very common for them to stay overseas. As we understand matters, this program to sell citizenship is now being largely used by rich foreigners to work their way around various tax laws. In our opinion, this program was bad in theory when it was created, and it is worse in practice. We urge our colleagues to join us in getting rid of it.