

the 20th century, the information age, and yet there are those who are falling over themselves trying to take education off the national agenda.

This retreat from leadership in perhaps the most critical area of our national interest—education—is clearly wrongheaded. Overwhelmingly, Americans tell pollsters that education is one of their major concerns. Over 80 percent of Americans say they support a Federal Department of Education. And it is not surprising that they do. Americans recognize that education is central to the strength of our Nation, especially as information becomes the most valuable currency in the world.

When "A Nation At Risk," the report issued by former Secretary of Education under President Reagan, Terrel Bell, appeared in 1983 it commented on the poor state of American education by observing, "If an unfriendly foreign power had imposed our schools upon us, we would have regarded it as an act of war."

The analogy to national security was appropriate then, and I believe it is still appropriate. Our security, whether you define it in economic terms or in military terms, is absolutely dependent upon the quality of the education that we provide to our children and to our citizens.

How can we have a national interest in agriculture but not in our children? How can we talk about our industrial strength and not talk about the education of our work force? We do not question the Department of Defense, but what about the know-how that our people need to staff that Department?

Still, as we approach this new century, there are those who say that education is purely a State and local matter; let us get the Federal Government out of it; let us eliminate the Secretary of Education, get that person out of the President's Cabinet.

Mr. President, I have seen in the last few years the proposed elevation of the EPA to Cabinet status, which I have supported. The Department of Veterans Affairs we now have in the Cabinet; clearly, I support that. That is an important priority for the country.

I now read in the paper that we are going to have the CIA in the President's Cabinet. That also may be an appropriate thing to do. But to suggest that we should have each of those individuals in the Cabinet next to our President to set national policy but not have a Secretary of Education there to speak up for the future of our children is, I think, misguided.

Clearly, there is a priority here which we should not dissipate among various and sundry departments and agencies around the Federal Government. We need a central focus for leadership in education in this country. The Secretary of Education fulfills that role.

What is that role? Ask the 7 million students who attend colleges and universities thanks to loans and grants provided through Department of Education programs. The Department sup-

plies 75 percent of all post-secondary student aid, continuing a national commitment dating back to the GI bill.

Or ask the 6 million disadvantaged students who each year receive help through Federal programs to meet higher academic standards. Ask their parents. Ask their teachers. Scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the national test administered by the States and the Department of Education, show that the gap between the achievement scores of white and black students has decreased by about 40 percent since 1975. The narrowing of that gap coincides with the very significant Federal investment in K-12 education for the disadvantaged.

The combination of the Federal investment in these students plus leadership from the department which has sought for several years, from Secretary Bell through our current Secretary, Secretary Riley, to encourage high standards for all students in our schools—that combination is bringing about more equality of educational results and improved results for all of our students.

Ask the teachers and the administrators in the States about the value of Department of Education's work. Its research and dissemination of the results of that research are immensely helpful to local schools and districts. Now that schools are coming on line and becoming technologically more sophisticated, teachers can access information about the newest techniques, materials, and research, straight from their own desks or their own faculty rooms and obtain that information to a large extent through the Department of Education.

Ask American business whether they want national leadership to improve education in this country. I have heard business leaders in my State say over and over again that there is an unbreakable link between our Nation's economic competitiveness and the quality of our educational system. Our global competitors are doing a better job in many cases of preparing their young people for this new technologically rich and information-laden future than we are. We obviously need national leadership to help States provide their students with what it takes to compete in this new world.

As we go into the next century we face numerous challenges. We will have a growing population of young people as we hit the echo from the baby boom. We will continue to have many young immigrants. Many of the children I am speaking about will be born into poverty. They will speak languages other than English. Technology will continue to change the way that people work and the way people learn. The increased demands of a global economy will make it imperative that we provide high standards to our children and assessments to measure their progress toward meeting those standards.

States want and deserve Federal help and Federal leadership to meet these challenges.

I am especially aware of the need for strong Federal leadership in the area of technology for education. Only through leadership at the national level can we have a coordinated effort to bring the benefits of telecommunication and the computer revolution to all our schools and all our students.

States are struggling with these issues. They welcome the help and expertise the Department of Education has been able to bring.

I just went through a campaign this fall. I traveled all over my State of New Mexico. I talked to many thousands of people. I heard lots of complaints about the Congress, complaints about the Federal Government, and about State government, and about local government, and many other things people found objectionable. But I did not hear the voters saying they wanted less attention to education, less funding for education, less of a Federal role or less priority given to that important area. I heard quite the opposite. The American public sees education as having been neglected at all levels of government.

As I have traveled around New Mexico during the last several years—not just in the last campaign—I have asked folks at town hall meetings to express their opinions as to how much of our Federal budget they believe is committed to improving education. Usually people in the audience guess somewhere in the 10 to 15 percent range. Mr. President, they would guess that 10 to 15 percent of our Federal budget is probably committed to education. When I tell them that less than 2 percent of our Federal resources each year goes to support education at the national level, it is something of a surprise and a disappointment to a lot of the people in my State.

If some want to walk away from the Federal responsibility for education they certainly have that option, but I believe taking education off our national agenda and taking the Secretary of Education out of the President's Cabinet, will be sending exactly the wrong signal not only to the people of this country but throughout the world. That is the wrong message.

Our future lies with our young people. I know that is a cliché but it is the truth. A Federal Department of Education can help us prepare our young people for that future. It is the right priority for this country as we approach this new century. I hope very much we will retain the Department of Education for a very long time.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

THE LINE-ITEM VETO

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I want to make a couple of brief comments about the line-item veto, and what the

real, fundamental principle is. The fundamental principle about the line-item veto is requiring of a two-thirds majority of both Houses to override a President's veto. Anything less than that is a sham and meaningless.

It is my understanding there is serious consideration being given on the other side of the aisle to a proposal which would require a majority vote in one House in order to override the President's veto. The American people will not be fooled by that facade. The American people will not be cajoled or deluded to believe that a majority vote in one House would be sufficient to override a Presidential veto. It only took a majority vote in one House to put the pork in to start with. What we are seeing here is a reluctance to take the issue head on, but to water it down so it is meaningless.

In the course of negotiations with my friends on this side and on that side, I accepted the separate enrollment. We looked at the expansion to entitlements. We looked at targeted tax benefits. And all of that is negotiable. It is not negotiable to the American people to dilute the two-thirds majority aspect of the line-item veto. Without that this is meaningless.

I understand there are various proposals being considered for an alternative suggested by the Democrats. I strongly recommend that whatever they propose does not drop the two-thirds majority. It is clear on this side of the aisle, because of the internal debate we went through, the overwhelming majority on this side of the aisle will stick to and adhere to a two-thirds majority in order for the President's veto to be overridden. That is the meaning of the word veto. That is what it all is about in the 43 States in America, where Governors have the line-item veto. We will accept nothing less.

If people on the other side of the aisle or anywhere support such a weakening of the line-item veto, I warn them: The American people will not be fooled.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

WASHINGTON POST STORY

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, an article appeared in today's Washington Post with the catchy, but entirely misleading, headline "Dole Takes 180-Degree Turn on Affirmative Action."

I would like to take a few moments now to set the record straight.

If affirmative action means remedying proven past discrimination against individuals, then I am all for it.

If affirmative action means recruitment of qualified minorities and

women to give them an opportunity to compete, without guaranteeing the results of the competition, then I am for that too.

But if affirmative action means quotas, set-asides, and other preferences that favor individuals simply because they happen to belong to certain groups, then that is where I draw the line.

Of course, those who discriminate ought to be punished, and those individuals who are the victims of discrimination ought to be made whole. But you do not fix one problem by creating another. You don't cure discrimination with more discrimination. As I said when the Senate unanimously adopted the amendment that created the glass ceiling commission: "There is no right or correct number * * * and my opposition to quotas could not be stronger or more deeply felt."

That was during the debate which apparently the reporter did not check into.

Mr. President, I am proud of my civil rights record and I have never shied away from it. I supported the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Voting Rights Act of 1965. The Americans With Disabilities Act. The compromise leading to the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1991.

However, my past record on civil rights does not, and should not, disqualify me from raising legitimate questions about the continuing effectiveness and fairness of affirmative action, particularly when the affirmative action label is used to describe quotas, set-asides and other preferences. In fact, it was precisely because of these questions that I asked the Congressional Research Service last December to prepare a list of all Federal preference laws and regulations.

And, after all, even President Clinton and the chairman of the Democratic Leadership Council are raising these same questions.

They understand, as I do, that no Federal program is writ in stone. And no Federal policy should be immune from congressional scrutiny.

This has been my position in the past. It is my position now. And it will be my position in the future.

If we cannot go back and look at some Executive order or some law that has been passed 5, 10, 15, or 25 years ago without some liberal reporter suggesting that somehow that is a change in position, then I think we are never going to accomplish anything. Things have changed. The programs have failed in some cases. In some cases, maybe they have worked properly. But we have a continuing obligation in the Congress of the United States, regardless of our part, to go back and take a look at programs or Executive orders, whatever it may be on the horizon, regulations that have been in place for a long time and maybe have served no useful purpose.

That is precisely what we intend to do. That is precisely what we will do.

Hearings will be held on a couple of these provisions, one by the distinguished Senator from Missouri, Senator BOND, and one of my other colleagues, the Senator from Kansas, Senator KASSEBAUM, relating to two programs that we think should be examined.

LINE-ITEM VETO

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, on Monday we are going to move to the line-item veto. I want to congratulate Senators MCCAIN, COATS, DOMENICI, LOTT, STEVENS, and members of my staff and others who have been working trying to bring us together on the Republican side. I think now that we are in fair agreement on this side.

I want to congratulate my colleagues, particularly Senators MCCAIN and COATS, who have been at this year after year after year, for their efforts. They have not given up and they have stuck to it and have hung in there. Now we may be able to pass this legislation.

Just as we had the debate on the balanced budget amendment which lost because six of my colleagues on the other side, who voted for a balanced budget amendment 1 year, voted against the identical—or almost identical—bill the next year.

This line-item veto has the overwhelming support of the American people. It will receive the overwhelming support of Republicans on this side of the aisle. I know that this legislation is opposed by some and by many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. I know that they will do what they can within the rules to block passage.

But let me say that the line-item veto, in my view, is a little different than the constitutional amendment for a balanced budget. In the House, it passed by a vote 294 to 134. Strong bipartisan support. It has also been voted on a number of times in the Senate over the past years. We have had support from Republicans and Democrats, including Senator BIDEN, Senator EXON, Senator HEFLIN, Senator HOLLINGS, Senator KENNEDY, Senator LEAHY, Senator NUNN, and Senator PELL.

The bottom line is that here in the Senate a vote will be taken, and the American people will know where we stand. That is how this process works.

But will they know where President Clinton stands? That is the big question. Where does President Clinton stand?

For a long time, it was hard to tell where he stood on the balanced budget amendment. It was not until the final weeks of the debate that he finally did what he could to defeat the amendment, although he continued to say he understood why Americans so strongly supported it. About 80 percent supported it.