

AIDS was only about 2½ months under review because FDA had worked with the company further up the line to accelerate the consideration and the whole development time.

So FDA has been moving in the area of priority drugs. Now what does the legislation say? The legislation says you have to examine all of them, all of the drugs within the 6 months. The fact of the matter is, as anybody who understands what goes on out at the FDA knows, the vast majority of those other drugs are "me-too" drugs, not the breakthrough drugs.

So now instead of bringing focus and attention of the gifted and able scientists out at FDA on those drugs that could be breakthrough drugs in cancer, in AIDS, in hepatitis, in all kinds of diseases, we are going to divert their attention to looking after the "me-too" drugs that can make extra bucks for the pharmaceutical companies. Is the public interest served there? It is not.

This is a direct result of the pharmaceutical companies wanting to get some additional attention so that they can put on the market and promote and advertise and make additional profits from those "me-too" drugs. This is unwise, ill-conceived, and bad health policy. Mr. President, we all know that when the Congress previously acted in a bipartisan way with the Executive together with the pharmaceutical companies, all of them working together, setting the goals, setting the standards, setting the accountability on what the FDA should do—96 percent of the goals that were established were achieved, and now we are saying, "Well, that isn't good enough. That isn't good enough even though the GAO says we are the best in the world. That isn't good enough, and we are going to change that system," alter that system in a way which I think diminishes the efficiency of the FDA and could very well diminish the opportunities of moving the breakthrough drugs to the consumer in a more orderly, effective, and rapid way.

Mr. President, I was talking about the changes in both time limits for the consideration of priority drugs and also about the changes in the manufacturing processes that do not have to have prior approval by the FDA.

FDA is the most respected regulatory agency in the world. With too few resources now, FDA still gives us the safest food supply in the world and the best medical products. The FDA seal of approval is accepted with confidence and trusted worldwide. American companies benefit immensely from that confidence. This bill will turn that seal of approval into a label that cannot pass the truth-in-advertising test. Whether the product is heart valves or blood derivatives or vaccines or food, the American people will be at risk.

There are ways that FDA should improve. Some products do need to get to market faster. FDA should collaborate as much as possible with companies

and researchers to reduce the time of bringing safe and effective products to market. They are doing a good job now; they ought to do a better one. But we should not gut FDA's independence or the laws that give it that independence.

This legislation puts the commercial interests of companies ahead of the best interest of consumers. I am hopeful, Mr. President, that the provisions of S. 1477 that undermine health and safety can be revised before the bill comes to the floor. I know that Senator KASSEBAUM is committed to working with all interested Senators, and I pay tribute to Senator KASSEBAUM. She has spent an enormous amount of time herself on this issue. She has listened to different positions taken by those who are committed to the public health interests. She has listened to Members of the Senate.

I have the highest regard for her and the way that she has conducted the hearings and the leadership she has provided in this area, but I do find that I come out on a different side than she does with regard to the bill itself.

The present bill would destroy the safeguards protecting the American people that have been built up over the decades. It will cripple the world's best regulatory agency. It would be tragic if it became law. When the American people understand what is in it, I believe they will reject it.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. INHOFE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

READ AND SUCCEED—MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF ILLITERACY IN AMERICA

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I rise today to share some thoughts on a subject of growing concern to many Americans, particularly to parents who seek a better and brighter future for their children through education.

It is that we are failing to teach our children to read effectively. In 1940, the literacy rate in the United States was 97 percent. It has now plunged to 76 percent—a rate which is lower than that of over 100 other nations.

To me, this is intolerable. America's future depends on restoring the reading skills of its people.

If we value our responsibility for leadership; if we seek to stay competitive in the world economy, we must address the problem of illiteracy in America.

We cannot stand by and watch our children sentenced to a life of mediocrity and illiteracy.

This problem exists in spite of the good intentions of Government and the expenditure of billions of taxpayer dollars over many years.

Reading is the most basic skill every child needs to achieve individual success and happiness—both in work and in life. Yet in failing to impart this skill effectively, we are directly under-

mining the success our children seek and deserve.

The evidence of our failure is all around us. Teachers and administrators see it in our schools, where 60 percent of entering college freshmen find themselves in need of remedial courses in reading or math.

Employers and businesspeople see it in the workplace, where industry spends exorbitant amounts on employee remedial training in basic verbal skills. Researchers and scholars detect it in their studies.

Hardly a week goes by that we do not see stories in the media about declining test scores or startling accounts of the growing problem of lagging reading skills in America. For example:

According to the U.S. Department of Education report known as the National Assessment of Education Progress [NEAP], "the average reading proficiency of 12th grade students declined significantly from 1992 to 1994."

This important study is widely considered to be one of the best barometers of overall student achievement. It reported that "70 percent of 4th graders, 30 percent of 8th graders, and 64 percent of 12th graders did not attain a proficient level of reading." In other words, these students did not reach a minimum skill level in reading which is considered necessary to do the work at that grade level.

According to a recent 5-year study, entitled "Adult Literacy in America," conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, similar startling results were found. It stated that: 42 million Americans, 22 percent of the population cannot read; 50 million, 27 percent, can recognize so few printed words they are limited to a fourth or fifth grade reading level; 55 to 60 million, 30 percent, are limited to sixth, seventh, or eighth grade reading levels; only 30 million, 16 percent, have ninth and tenth grade reading levels; only 6 to 7 million, 3.5 percent, demonstrated skills necessary to do college level work.

SAT scores have declined steadily for most of the last 35 years. Verbal achievement has declined by nearly 90 points since 1960.

A U.S. Department of Labor study found that 20 percent of U.S. high school graduates could not even read their diplomas.

Mr. President, this is serious. All of this has consequences—in our economy, in our standard of living, in our competitive position in the world, and in our national security. For example:

The lower the literacy rate: the less productive our economy becomes, the less hours are worked and the less money they make in the form of wages and income, the higher the incidence of crime and welfare and their costs to society, the less effectively we are able to compete in world markets, the less capability we will have in our Armed Forces which are increasingly dependent on advanced technology and highly trained personnel as opposed to just sheer numbers.

Clearly, our level of literacy is closely linked to our success in the world. If we fix this problem, the benefits will spread through our entire society. I firmly believe that if we know how to read, we will know how to succeed.

Secretary of Education Richard Riley recently confirmed the problem when he said:

Our Nation's reading scores are flat and have been flat for far too long . . . Too many of our young people are groping through school without having mastered the most essential and basic skill.

Riley said that "the most urgent task" facing American schools is to improve reading instruction. So we know the problem exists. We can rejoice there is a solution.

Right now, we can take a giant step forward simply by doing what we can to demonstrate and celebrate what works when it comes to basic reading instruction.

Mr. President, we know what works in teaching children and adults to read. We can point to evidence backed by more than 60 years of educational research and experience.

What works is when our teachers and administrators return their emphasis to the use of phonics as the basis of reading skills instruction. Phonics refers to that body of knowledge which allows us to break down the letters of the alphabet into sounds so that words can be deciphered and sounded out according to simple rules.

With phonics-based programs, students learn not by memorizing huge numbers of whole words, but rather by mastering the very limited number of sounds and corresponding letter combinations which are the building blocks of all words. With this essential grounding, they are better equipped to move ahead to learn more advanced reading skills and techniques.

I do not argue that phonics is the only answer to the many problems faced by today's teachers in improving reading skills. The breakdown of the family, the impact of television, the force of popular culture—all of these and more pose challenges which were unheard of a generation ago. But clearly it is time for the pendulum in emphasis to swing back toward phonics—and not away as we have been moving more and more in recent years.

Phonics-based programs work. History and statistics have proven it. Now, similar grassroots evidence is sprouting up in more and more parts of the country.

For example, in one of the poorest districts in Houston, TX, there is a success story from which all of us can learn. There at the Wesley Elementary School, its principal, Dr. Thaddeus Lott, has encouraged teachers to use proven methods such as phonics in a concentrated effort to improve reading skills. The program is working.

Students are leaving this school reading at two or three levels above their grade. Many go on to private academies because their achievement

levels are so far beyond the public schools they would otherwise attend.

Now, Dr. Lott has been appointed to a blue ribbon committee in the Houston Independent School District to expand his quality education techniques to other schools in this, the seventh largest school district in the Nation. It worked in Houston and it is working elsewhere.

Near one of Chicago's low-income housing projects, Mrs. Marva Collins of the Westside Preparatory School is making a real difference. Her phonics-based methods are helping all her students learn to read by the end of first grade. By the time her students reach third grade, they are memorizing poetry, discussing Shakespeare, and talking about early American history.

In Inglewood, CA, similar targeted programs have also proven highly successful.

Now, as the Washington Post reported last week, the State of California is urging all of its 7,700 school district "to place more emphasis on phonics" in order to reverse the dismal results they have been seeing on their statewide reading exams.

These are just a few recent examples—out of many—which show that the trend back to a renewed emphasis on phonics is growing. But much more needs to be done.

To help foster similar successful programs and to help focus public attention on what can and should be done, I propose to take the initiative in my home State of Oklahoma.

In the near future, I plan to help establish a limited in scope, privately funded, reading foundation in Oklahoma City.

Its purpose, broadly stated, will be to identify children, as well as adults, in need of enhanced reading instruction and to help them take advantage of a good phonics-based reading program that works.

If this limited demonstration project is successful, I would hope to expand it to Tulsa and perhaps to other cities throughout Oklahoma.

The goal is to show through private voluntary efforts that we as concerned citizens can address this one serious problem constructively, without resorting to Government mandates or vast infusions of Federal tax dollars which obviously have not worked.

Indeed, I want to make it very clear that I do not seek to establish a new Federal program, nor do I seek any new expenditure of taxpayer dollars. I propose no new legislation or Government mandate.

At the same time, I seek no direct intrusion into the day-to-day business of the public schools. I have long been opposed to Federal control of local education and I am not about to change my position now.

Rather, what I am talking about is fostering voluntary and cooperative efforts through the use of private funds, through persuasion, through example, and through a genuine concern for

helping our young people and others achieve success in life.

This is a good cause. I intend to demonstrate that what works in Dr. Lott's school in Houston and Mrs. Collins' school in Chicago can and will work in Oklahoma City. When it does, we will offer it throughout the State.

Mr. President, there is absolutely no excuse for us in the United States of America to lag behind other industrialized nations in our reading skills—we are going to take the initiative and correct it.

AN ANNIVERSARY TO REMEMBER

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, this past Saturday, March 23, marked the 13th anniversary of President Ronald Reagan's address to the Nation in which he outlined a vision of the future based on the common sense wisdom of developing a national defense against missile attack.

To commemorate this occasion, I ask unanimous consent that a transcript of President Reagan's remarks on missile defense from this historic speech be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

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

(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, on that day in 1983, President Reagan announced his decision to begin the long march away from the suicidal defense doctrine known as mutual assured destruction. In one bold stroke, he single-handedly committed the Nation to an intense research and development program designed to harness our technology to the task of countering the threat posed by ballistic missiles, and to do it with measures that are defensive. Wouldn't it be better, he asked, "to save lives rather than to avenge them?"

In retrospect, we can see that it was a speech that truly rocked the world. In the context of the closing strategy of the cold war, it posed the decisive final challenge to the Soviet Union. Three years later, at the Reykjavik Summit, extraordinary Soviet efforts to deter Reagan from his commitment to missile defense failed. As a result, the evil empire's days were numbered and Soviet leader Gorbachev knew it.

In the context of domestic politics, Reagan's 1983 speech ignited a passionate debate over defense policy which still continues today. Within just hours after the speech, one of our distinguished colleagues in this body coined the term star wars. Opponents claimed Reagan's idea was a fantasy, that he wanted a perfect astrodome defense which would cost trillions of dollars.

Despite such rhetoric, in the context of science and technology, the speech helped focus inquiries on numerous fronts which led to remarkable breakthroughs. Is it technically feasible, at an affordable cost, to "intercept and destroy strategic ballistic missiles before they reach our own soil or that of