

that is indeed true, then I have been richly blessed by my friends on both sides of the aisle in the U.S. Senate, but among them, there is no friendship for which I have greater pride and for which I treasure more than the friendship that I have been blessed to receive from the distinguished Senator from West Virginia.

So, I thank him for his kind words, for his eloquence, for the respect that he has shown me and also for being such an extraordinary instructor, not only to me, but to all the Members of the Senate as he continues to serve in such a magnificent way as the senior Senator from the State of West Virginia.

I yield the floor.

Mr. ASHCROFT addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. ASHCROFT. Thank you, Mr. President.

NATIONAL TESTING

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I rise to speak of the need to preserve and protect the intense involvement of parents in decisionmaking in local schools all across America. If America is to succeed in the next generation, we have to have the capacity to have the kind of schools that meet the needs of our students. We will have to have the ability to experiment from one school district to another. We will have to have State and local governments that can tailor the programs which they have to meet the demands of their unique settings.

Sometimes when we think about achievement, sometimes when we think about success, we think it might be necessary to try and impose the so-called "wisdom of Washington" upon the Nation generally. But, I think that temptation ought to quickly fly from us if we would think of what would have happened, for instance, if we decided there needed to be a single uniform type of computer and we had imposed it from Washington saying there would just be one way of doing things. Maybe we would have chosen Apple computers and their way of doing things instead of IBM and their way of doing things. Or maybe we would have chosen a single software company and said that is the only way it could be handled, and we wouldn't have the flourishing and the flowering and the kind of intense opportunity and plurality for the generation of marvelous alternatives that have made America the far and away overwhelming leader in terms of the technology.

I think whenever we feel that temptation to draw to Washington, DC, the decisionmaking and the prerogative of developing for the Nation a single uniform policy which would take the diversity and the creativity out of the system and would cheat America of the vital creativity and opportunity that is expressed when people at the local level are involved, whenever we have

that temptation, we should think about how bad it would be in so many areas had we had that kind of policy.

America's ability to flourish as a success reflects the diversity of this country and the ability of different groups of individuals to approach things differently and to do so successfully. Not only does it provide for us an energy which carries us to excellence, it also means that we don't ever have all of our eggs in a single basket. We have the capacity to meet a variety of challenges. We have innovative and creative thinking. We have the capacity to look at things from different points of view.

One of the things that the President sought to bring to the United States—and I think his intention was good—was he wanted to improve education, by bringing to us national testing, testing of students on an individual basis all across America with a uniform test promulgated by bureaucrats in Washington, a single test which would, unfortunately, chart the direction of education all across the country.

When you make a test, you decide that you are testing for something. So if you are going to make up a test that is going to be imposed on the country, you are going to be testing for something and you have to define what you are testing for.

So the development of a test, although it might not seem to be at first blush, is really the development of a curriculum. If you decide what you are going to test for, you have to decide what you are going to teach. Once you decide what you are going to teach, you have established a national curriculum.

Oddly enough, even deciding what you are going to teach probably isn't all that is controlled with the development of a test.

The development of a test probably decides how you are going to teach it, because if you teach English, for instance, with phonics, teach people how letters sound together, and combinations and the like, that is one way of teaching the English language and would be tested differently than teaching the English language with the so-called whole language approach where you just have the recognition of words by rote or memorization.

So when you have something like a national test proposed, you have to understand that you are talking about uniformity, that you are going to impose a single system all across the country, going to make everybody pretty much the same, you are going to deprive the system of the creativity and the vitality and diversity of what a lot of different folks can do when they are working simultaneously on a problem.

Second, you are not only going to have uniformity, but you are going to determine from Washington, DC—if you have a uniform test, you are going to have a uniform curriculum. What to

teach and how to teach it then becomes a uniform decision by bureaucrats. Because in order to test accurately, you have to know exactly what you are teaching and, of course, what you are teaching for will depend on how you are teaching.

It troubles me to think that we might take these most fundamental decisions in education and pry them from the prerogative of parents and move them to the educators or bureaucrats of Washington, DC.

As a matter of fact, the bureaucrats, educational bureaucrats, in Washington, DC, do not have a very good record. The bureaucrats in Washington, DC, run a couple school systems. We know that.

As a matter of fact, they run the Department of Defense Dependent School System. A year or two ago they tried to put the so-called whole math into that system. The results were devastating. The median percentile computation scores on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills taken by more than 37,000 Department of Defense dependent school students, 1 year after the Defense Department introduced whole math, dropped 14 percent for third graders—this is the median percentile score—dropped 20 percent for fourth graders, 20 percent for fifth graders, 17 percent for sixth graders, and 17 percent for seventh graders. One year's implementation of a fad, of the new whole math, devastated the performance of those students.

I am not sure we want to yield the control of our public schools to the Federal Government so we can have that kind of devastating impact. I sure do not.

Maybe, if you think the Federal Government does things particularly well, you should look at another school system which the Federal Government runs. It is called the District of Columbia School System, where, I think, we have the highest per capita expenditure on students anywhere in the world, and we have some of the lowest achievement levels.

What I am trying to say is, we do not need to forfeit to the Federal bureaucracy in Washington, DC, the decisionmaking in education of what to teach and how to teach it, and we need far less to take parents out of the equation.

Some people might not understand the value of parents in education, but there has been a lot of work in the educational research area about the value of parents in education. A 1980 report in "Psychology in the Schools" shows that family involvement improved Chicago elementary schoolchildren's performance in reading comprehension dramatically.

One year after initiating a Chicago citywide program aimed at helping parents create academic support conditions in the home, students in grades one through six "intensively exposed to the program" improved .5 to .6 grade equivalents in reading comprehension

on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills over students less intensively involved in the program—a 50- to 60-percent better level of improvement when the parents are deeply involved.

If we are going to take parents out of the equation of what to teach and how to teach and we are going to tell them, do not bother to try to get active in your schools, because if things are not working there, you would have to change the whole country in order to change what happens at your schools, and besides, all the decisions are going to be made at sort of a quasi-national school board in Washington, DC, I do not think we are going to get effective parental involvement. That is why I believe that locally controlled schools are the fundamental thing that we ought to pursue. It is not only true for Chicago schoolchildren, it has been proven over and over again in other cities across the Nation in a variety of studies.

It is important that we have parental involvement. It is important that we have local determination. It is important that we not yield to Washington, DC, the capacity to impose uniform curricula and a uniform teaching methodology all across the country. It would stifle creativity. It would impair achievement in a very, very significant way.

The Republican agenda for education has not been to centralize education in Washington, DC. Our agenda, as expressed in this legislative session, has been to give local schools block grants. It has been to send them the power to do what they know they need to do.

I heard Congressman GOODLING from the House talk about the President's plan to improve education with just one more test. We already have between three and nine standardized tests every year for every student in the country, according to USA Today.

Congressman GOODLING put it this way: "If you are trying to fatten cattle, they don't get fat by weighing them one more time." If you are trying to educate students, they don't get smart just by being tested one more time. Students not only have the regular tests of their instructional regime, they also have these three to nine other tests which are taking instructional time. And they are telling us pretty clearly where we are educationally. We know where there is much to achieve, but weighing the cattle one more time, testing the students one more time, will not make them fatter or smarter.

The truth of the matter is, the solution is to do things like the Republicans have sought to do here, which is to get more capacity into the hands of schools so that it can be devoted to students and teachers, not to the bureaucracy in Washington—a clear contrast.

The bureaucracy in Washington grows under President Clinton's ability to dictate, through the backdoor of testing, a curriculum and a teaching

style in uniformity across America. Under the Republican proposals, instead of having a growing bureaucracy, you take the resource which would otherwise be sapped by the bureaucracy in Washington, and you target it on the schools, you give block grants to local schools.

Another Republican initiative, the A-plus accounts, gives parents choices. Instead of taking parents out of the equation by saying we are going to have a national school board that no parent could afford to come and talk to and that would impose a uniform regime all across America, the Republican plan is to empower parents, to give parents choice. Let parents invest resources so that they can send their children to the schools that the parents choose and invest those resources absent the kind of onerous tax burdens that parents normally would have on their investments.

The President's agenda is more programs, more bureaucracies, more of Washington-knows-best. The Republican agenda is a commitment to local schools, local control, local education, the creativity, the pluralism, yes, the diversity and the energy that comes when we have local schools all across America.

There is an effort being made in this year's appropriations measure to harmonize the kind of demands that are being made by the administration and the items that were passed in the Senate with items that were passed in the House. I think it is fundamentally important that we protect local schools. If we are not willing to stand up to protect the local schools, the prerogative of parents to operate in those schools, to be effective there, to get involved meaningfully in the development of curriculum and the development of teaching methodology, I think we will have failed in our duty.

I intend to do whatever I can, as we close this session—and I mean "whatever I can"—to make sure we arrive at a conclusion which makes it possible for parents to continue to have that kind of beneficial impact.

At the end of this year the President and his bureaucrats seem to be winning. America's children are losing. The block grants, which would have cut the Washington bureaucracy by sending more funds directly to local school districts, were all but abandoned, and I commend the occupant of the Chair for having that idea, which is one of the best ideas that has been offered to help education in this Congress in decades.

Scholarships for needy children in the District of Columbia were filibustered to death. Instead of giving parents the power to help their children in education, we lost on that ground. And the President has indicated that, if we succeed on that ground, he will veto it.

On Tuesday, the Senate voted to kill A-plus accounts to help parents pay for the costs of their children's education. At least the vote was to not allow that

to go forward. We could not get closure. So those who sought to reinforce the position of the President there deprived America of another opportunity for parents to be beneficially involved.

We have lost on the block grants. We lost on the A-plus accounts. We lost on the scholarships for DC students that would empower parents.

A final ballot remains over national testing. It is a cause from which I do not intend to waiver.

I do not think Senators should pack their bags for the recess just yet. There are rights to defend. There are students whose interests are in the balance. I do not think we should sacrifice the next generation's education for a few extra days of rest at the end of this year. I certainly do not intend to do so myself.

National tests would lead to a national curriculum. I think we can all understand that. The President keeps saying that the national testing system he is proposing would be voluntary. He said these will all be voluntary. Do not worry. No school district would be required to be involved in these tests.

That is what he said in Washington, DC. That is what he said in his State of the Union Message. That is what he said recently. Perhaps he thought we were not listening carefully when he was speaking in Lansing, MI, on March 10 of this year, 1997. He put it this way:

I want to create a climate in which no one can say no, in which it's voluntary but you are ashamed if you don't give your kids the chance to do [these tests].

Here is a President who says this is to be voluntary, but he says he wants to make it so no one can say no. When the President has the ability to control funding, and when he has the opportunity to give grants and otherwise to make favorable or unfavorable decisions about what happens in schools, I doubt seriously whether there will be a real opportunity for these to be voluntary.

William Safire recently warned of the dangers of allowing the administration's testing proposal. And I quote William Safire in his editorial from the New York Times op-ed page entitled "Flunk that Test." He put it this way:

We're only talking about math and English, say the national standard-bearers, and shucks, it's only voluntary.

I continue to quote Safire.

Don't believe that; if the nose of the camel gets under the tent, the hump of a national curriculum, slavish teaching to homogenizing tests, and a black market in answers would surely follow.

You know, the evils of a national test have long been understood, not just by Republicans, but by Democrats as well, because they have understood that national testing ultimately dictates national curricula.

Perhaps one of the most eloquent in that respect was Joseph Califano. Joseph Califano was the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare in the Carter administration. When Joseph Califano was asked about national

tests, he warned the American people. He put it this way:

Any set of test questions that the federal government prescribed should surely be suspect as a first step toward a national curriculum. . . . In its most extreme form, [Joseph Califano went on to warn] national control of curriculum is a form of national control of ideas.

We could have a long debate about the potential evils of national control of ideas, but it is pretty clear to me that none of us believes that Washington, DC, should control ideas. I think all of us understand that if Washington, DC, controls things, it generally does not do them well. As a matter of fact, what this country has controlled from Washington, DC, has not been exemplary. It has been an example of what to avoid rather than what to embrace.

When you are talking with individuals about the so-called tests which they would impose, you have to wonder whether Washington's imposition of tests would be something like Washington's attempted imposition of the standards for history, which they tried to develop at the end of the last decade and early in the 1990's.

The National Endowment for the Humanities sought to develop a set of history standards telling us what we should know and what we should teach. What was interesting to me is that the standards tended to be far more politically correct than they were historically correct.

When you are thinking about mathematics, I do not think we should think about that which is politically correct or historically correct. We should think about things that are arithmetically correct.

But here is what happened to the national history standards. The national history standards were more interested in those who were politically correct.

The standards slighted or ignored many central figures in U.S. history, particularly white males. To name a few, Robert E. Lee was left out, Thomas Edison and the Wright brothers were left out, Paul Revere was left out, so we could have many, many references to the Ku Klux Klan, so we could have references to heroes from other continents.

The truth of the matter is the U.S. Senate understood what was happening there and voted against those standards. I believe that these standards were rejected unanimously in the Senate. George Will attacked the failed history standards as "cranky anti-Americanism." It didn't surprise the American public. The American public has witnessed the Federal Government go awry, time after time after time on issue after issue after issue.

The proponents of the proposed national tests have indicated that their interest is in the whole math curriculum. As a matter of fact, when we found out what they were talking about with the whole math curriculum we discovered they were talking about

a rejection of computation. Computation is 3 times 6 is 18; 3 times 18 is 54; 4 times 18 is 72. They reject that. One whole math proponent was quoted in the Wall Street Journal as having said we can't ask students to say 6 times 7 is 42, put down the 2, carry the 4. They said that is discriminatory. Most students can't do that, they are too dumb. That is ridiculous. Our students are smarter than that. They are not that dumb.

As a matter of fact, the only thing that will dumb down American education is if we have low expectations. I have studies that show when you have low expectations you get low performance. Here you have people designing the tests who want to run away from the ability of American students to compute. They want to supply everyone with a calculator so no one has to know the multiplication table and no one has to do things in his or her head. I think such dumbing down of America's educational performance would be inappropriate.

Most importantly, it is fundamental that we maintain in this great land the ability of moms and dads to be at the focal point of educational policy and development and not bureaucrats in Washington, DC. It is fundamentally important that we maintain local control of education rather than Washington control.

As we are working our way to see whether or not we can have an appropriations bill that maintains this balance, I want to say to the U.S. Senate that we have an obligation to stay here and work until we do protect the rights and opportunities of the next generation for a decent education by making sure that their parents are in charge, that local school boards and States are in charge, and that we don't forfeit the prerogatives of education policy to bureaucrats in Washington, DC, who would impose a kind of mindless "dumbed down" national curriculum which would fail to have the diversity and creativity and energy—especially the energy—that comes from local involvement that we need.

I intend to do whatever I can and everything that is possible to make sure that we protect that prerogative. I hope Members of this body and Members of the House will join me in doing so. As we are seeking in these moments to reach an agreement with the White House in this respect, I hope it will be their understanding that a plan to have a uniform stifling environment promulgated from Washington is not a plan for a prosperous America but is a plan which would pull the educational rug out from under the feet of our children and would destroy our capacity to compete in the next generation.

I yield the floor.

Mr. JEFFORDS. I ask unanimous consent I may proceed for 10 minutes as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SMITH of Oregon). Without objection, it is so ordered.

FIRST STEP ON AN UPHILL ROAD

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I rise again today to speak about the state of the District of Columbia public schools, an issue that is extremely important to me. And I am happy to say, that for the first time in the months that I've been bringing this issue to the attention of my colleagues, that there is some good news to report.

Behind me there are two articles from yesterdays papers declaring the news that the advocacy group Parents United has settled its 5-year old lawsuit against the District over school repairs. I want to commend Parents United, Judge Kaye Christian, Gen. Julius Becton, and the many staff who were finally able to come to an agreement. The settlement outlines how repairs for these schools can take place as quickly as possible, with the least interruption of the school year as possible.

On paper, that is a good first step. But in concrete terms, the only thing this deal has done is to stop unnecessary school closings, which are clearly having a detrimental effect on morale and achievement. What about the money and the orderly process for seeing that these repairs get accomplished? Look at Dr. Brimmer here and see what it boils down to: Congress. It boils down to us.

Yes there is included in this settlement a commitment on the part of the control board to allocate money that the city borrows for school repairs, but let me remind my colleagues that unless the city has a sustainable dedicated revenue stream to be used for bonding credit, who knows how much the city will be able to borrow? In years past the city was considered essentially bankrupt, allowing for zero borrowing. How will the school system be able to execute repairs on schedule with an orderly process when they can't project a consistent budget?

Let's look at the money that is needed to get the schools fixed. Based on a GSA report, and the D.C.P.S. 2010 long range facilities master plan—we need a total of \$2 billion to get the D.C. schools repaired to code and modernized. The D.C.P.S. plan is a solid one, and it is broken into three phases: stabilization, functionality, and modernization. The total cost is estimated at \$200 million a year over 10 years. Will Congress appropriate that kind of money? I think not—and history shows us so.

Look at the money that D.C.P.S. had available—through congressional appropriation and city borrowing—for school infrastructure improvement over the last few years: In 1996—\$14.9 million; in 1995—\$21.1 million; in 1994—\$9.5 million; and in 1993—\$8.8 million.

As you can see, Mr. President, this yearly allocation falls far short of \$200 million. In fact, the average amount of money the District was able to spend on school repairs, over the last 10 years was \$13.4 million. If we keep driving money to the schools at that rate it