

negotiated with Senator HELMS, a condition of ratification which will provide that search warrants will be obtained through the normal process for all challenge inspections.

A third issue: Opponents say that adherence to the convention's provisions by party nations cannot be perfectly verified. What is occurring here is that the opponents are trying to make the perfect the enemy of the good. I can say that, in the 12 years I have been in the Senate as a member of the Foreign Relations Committee and deeply involved in work on a number of arms control agreements, I do not think I have ever seen an arms control agreement that is absolutely, perfectly, 100 percent verifiable. I do not think anybody who negotiates arms control agreements believes such perfection is attainable.

Perfection is not the standard by which we should make a judgment as to whether we have a good or bad treaty. Both our national defense leadership and intelligence community leadership have testified repeatedly that this treaty will provide them with additional tools that they do not have today which will help them gain more and better knowledge about what is happening in the world regarding chemical weapons and their precursors.

So the test is not can you perfectly verify compliance with the Convention's requirements; the test is do you enhance the security and intelligence interests of your country beyond where they would be without the treaty. Our defense and intelligence community leaders answer a resounding yes to that question.

Fourth, opponents say that the nations about whose chemical activities we are most greatly concerned, the rogue nations like Iraq and Libya and North Korea, will not become parties to the treaty and, if they are not parties to the treaty, it will not give us enough protection from chemical weapons to warrant our being a party to it.

This is a red herring of enormous proportions for the following reasons. As I stand in the Chamber today and the Presiding Officer sits on the dais, there is absolutely nothing to prevent those rogue nations from doing exactly what people say they fear. There is not even an international regime in place that makes manufacture and storage of chemical weapons illegal, or that provides a way to track the movement of such chemicals and their precursors so that there is a greater likelihood the world will know when rogues are engaging in conduct we believe should not occur, or that gives the world a way in which to hold such nations accountable.

I pose a simple question: Is the United States in a stronger position if it is a party to an international treaty in force, to which most nations of the world are trying to adhere, when a nation not a party to the treaty is seen to be engaging in behavior violating the treaty's terms, or is the United States

better off with every nation just going about its own business without any protocol at all, without any international standard, without any means to obtain accountability when a nation violates a standard of behavior to which the great majority of the world's nations have formally decreed they believe all nations should adhere.

I think most people would say that if the United States ratifies this Convention, our circumstance relative to rogue nations is in no way worse than it is now. We give up nothing, but we gain important advantages. What are they?

First, under present circumstances, the manufacture and storage of chemical weapons is not illegal under international law or custom. The Convention will provide that law and custom. It will then be possible to focus international opprobrium on nations violating its standards, be they participant or nonparticipant nations.

Moreover, with 72 nations already having ratified, and others certain to follow, especially if the United States ratifies before April 29, there will be a quantum leap forward in the capacity to track the manufacture and sale of chemicals that can be used as weapons, or precursor chemicals, and this enhanced capacity will help us determine what nations might be acting in a way that ultimately could do injury to our country.

It is important for everyone to remember that this treaty will greatly assist our efforts to impede the production and storage of chemical weapons. Therefore, it will make it less likely that our troops or our civilians will ever be put in harm's way by being subjected to an attack by chemical weapons.

I might remind my colleagues that, no matter what we do with respect to this treaty, we are not going to be manufacturing chemical weapons in the United States. That is the track we are on under our current law. The logic seems unassailable to me that the United States will be a lot better off if we bring the family of nations into a regimen which helps us guard against trafficking in those chemicals and which requires party nations to dispose of their own stocks of chemical weapons and not manufacture others.

Fifth, opponents say that participating in the chemical weapons treaty will make the United States less vigilant about the risks of chemical attacks by organized armies or by terrorists and about the need to maintain defenses against those threats. Well, shame on us if that were to be true. I do not think anybody who is supportive of this treaty wants—and I know I do not want—to let down our guard with respect to the possibility of another nation, rogue or otherwise, creating a chemical weapon and using it against us. I absolutely believe it is vital that we have a robust defense which will protect us in the event that someone were to try to break out and do that.

But I think this is a tactic of desperation, because if you follow the logic of this criticism to its conclusion, we ought to make certain that our adversaries have chemical weapons to be sure we have sufficient incentive to defend against them, if that is what it takes in order to build our defenses.

I emphasize two points here. First, there is nothing whatsoever that any arms control agreement does that necessarily lessens our resolve to defend against the threat that the agreement is intended to reduce. And, second, neither the Clinton administration nor this Congress is going to play ostrich on this issue. The Clinton administration's budget calls for \$225 million in increases in the Defense Department's funding for chemical and biological defense over the next 6 years. A \$225 million increase hardly equates to a notion that we are being lulled to sleep or into some kind of complacency. I am willing to bet with any Member of this body that the ratification of the CWC will not result in a reduction of our chemical weapons defense efforts.

Mr. President, in the next few days we will face a debate which I hope will be conducted on the facts. I devoutly hope that we do not waste time debating the question of whether this treaty is a perfect treaty—of course it is not. Instead, I hope we squarely face and debate the question of whether the security of the United States of America and of the entire world is improved by United States ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

I respectfully submit to my colleagues that when they look at the facts, when they measure what the U.S. chemical industry has done to protect itself, when they measure what we are doing to strengthen our defenses against chemical weapons, when they measure what being a party nation to the Convention will provide us in terms of intelligence and information, when they measure what this does in terms of the ability to track chemicals throughout the rest of the world, when they measure the importance to the United States of our being part of this effort before the Convention takes effect on April 29, I believe our colleagues will decide that the answer to the question of whether the Convention improves the security of the United States is an unequivocal yes, and that they will respond by voting to approve the resolution of ratification and against any debilitating amendments that any treaty opponents offer to it.

I yield back any remaining time.

A NATIONAL AGENDA FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, tomorrow, the White House is hosting an extraordinary conference on "Early Childhood Development and Learning: What the newest research on the brain tells us about our youngest children." It is the first time a President has focused national attention on this issue.

Experts from across America will explore the implications of new scientific research on the intellectual development of young children. In their early years, children have an ability to assimilate far more knowledge than at any other time in their lives. If a child's curiosity is encouraged and his or her mind regularly stimulated, the capacity to learn can be substantially expanded.

If, conversely, a child receives little interaction and stimulation, that capacity declines just as an unexercised muscle atrophies. These findings dramatically reinforce the urgency of programs which will provide parents with the support they need to enrich their children's early years.

There is no more important responsibility which we in the Senate have than to provide a secure foundation on which America's children can build their futures. Now that we have a far greater understanding of the significance of the early childhood years in an individual's development, we know the extraordinary impact which the quality of care and nurturing in those years can have on a child's intellectual and emotional growth. Does a child have access to good preventive medical care? Are parents able to spend time with their child or are they unable to leave work? Do the hours spent in child care provide a real learning experience?

Does the child have access to a quality preschool education program? The answers to questions like these will have a substantial effect on a child's long-term ability to reach his or her full potential. The opportunity lost cannot be recaptured. Making these basic opportunities the birthright of every child should be our national agenda for young children. It should be our highest priority.

Congressional action this year could bring the essential elements of sound early childhood development within the reach of every child. Such an agenda for young children has four key elements: First, providing affordable child health insurance coverage for working families. The Hatch-Kennedy bill will make health care more accessible for the 10 million children whose families cannot afford insurance. Many of these children currently see a doctor only when they are acutely ill. They never receive the preventive health care which is so essential to proper growth and development.

Second, extending the Family and Medical Leave Act to 13 million more employees so that they have the same opportunity to spend precious time with a newborn child or to care for a seriously ill child. Giving each employee 24 hours of leave a year to accompany their child to a school event or on a visit to the pediatrician would also strengthen parental involvement.

Third, improving the quality of child care for infants and toddlers by providing incentive grants to States to make child care programs early learning op-

portunities. Programs that encourage a child's curiosity and stimulate communication skills can enhance long-term educational development.

Fourth, fully funding Head Start and expanding the Early Start initiative for younger children.

This program is widely recognized for its success in providing children from low-income families with a firm educational foundation. Yet, funding levels currently limit access to only 40 percent of the eligible 4- and 5-year-olds and a much smaller percentage of young children.

In the words of the Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children: "The earliest years of a child's life * * * lay the foundation for all that follows." It calls for a comprehensive strategy to "move the nation toward the goal of giving all children the early experiences they need to reach their full potential."

Collectively, these four legislative initiatives will provide all parents with the tools they require to enrich their children's early years.

Each element—medical care, parental involvement, quality child care, and early learning opportunity—is essential to maximizing a child's potential. Let me explain how each of these programs would work:

CHILDREN'S HEALTH CARE

Today, more than 10.5 million children have no health insurance. That is 1 child in every 7. The number has been increasing in recent years. Every day, 3,000 more children are dropped from private health insurance. If the total continues to rise at the current rate, 12.6 million children will have no medical coverage by the year 2000.

Ninety percent of these children are members of working families. Two-thirds are in two-parent families. Most of these families have incomes above the Medicaid eligibility line, but well below the income it takes to afford private health insurance today.

Too many young children are not receiving the preventive medical care they need. Uninsured children are twice as likely to go without medical care for conditions such as asthma, sore throats, ear infections, and injuries. One child in four is not receiving basic childhood vaccines on a timely basis. Periodic physical exams are out of reach for millions of children, even though such exams can identify and correct conditions that can cause a lifetime of pain and disability. Preventive care is not only the key to a healthy child, it also is an investment for society. Every dollar in childhood immunizations, for example, saves \$10 in hospital and other treatment costs.

Every American child deserves an opportunity for a healthy start in life. No family should have to fear that the loss of a job or a hike in their insurance premium will leave their children without health care.

Children and adolescents are so inexpensive to cover. That's why we can and will cover them this year—in this

Congress. The cost is affordable—and the positive benefits for children are undeniable.

The legislation that Senator HATCH and I have introduced will make health insurance coverage more affordable for every working family with uninsured children. It does so without imposing new Government mandates. It encourages family responsibility, by offering parents the help they need to purchase affordable health insurance for their children.

Under our plan, \$20 billion over the next 5 years will be available to expand health insurance coverage to children. When fully phased in, it will provide direct financial assistance to as many as 5 million children annually. Millions more will benefit because their families will be able to buy good quality coverage for their children.

The plan will be administered by the States, under Federal guidelines to guarantee that the coverage is adequate and meets the special needs of children, including good preventive care and good prenatal care. States will contract with private insurance companies to provide child-only health coverage to families not eligible for Medicaid. Eligible families will receive a subsidy through their State to help pay the cost of private insurance coverage for their children. Funding will also be available to help provide prenatal services to uninsured pregnant women.

For the youngest children, this medical care is the most vital. It can prevent serious illnesses and long-term developmental problems.

It is the first priority if we are to help children grow to their full potential.

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE

Passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act in 1993 was a true landmark for America's families. For the first time, millions of working men and women were freed from the threat of job loss if they needed time off for the birth of a child or to care for a sick family member.

The act has worked well—for employees and for their employers. Employees are now able to take a leave of absence to be with their children or with a sick relative at a crucial time for the family, so that they can provide the special care and compassion which are the glue that binds a family together. In the 4 years since its enactment, it has already helped millions of families.

In more and more American homes today, both parents must have jobs in order to support their families. A substantial majority of children live in families where neither parent is at home during the day because of their jobs. If we value families—if we are serious about helping parents meet the needs of their children—then family medical leave is essential.

The Family and Medical Leave Act currently applies to businesses which employ 50 people or more. It is time to extend the benefits of this landmark

law to an additional 13 million people who work for firms with between 25 and 50 employees. Their families face the same crises. Their children deserve the same attention. I concur wholeheartedly with Senator DODD, the original architect of the Family and Medical Leave Act, who has proposed this expansion.

There is another very important leave issue for working families—the need for a brief break in the workday to meet the more routine, but still very important, demands of raising children. Every working parent has experienced the strain of being torn between the demands of their job and the needs of their children. Taking a child to the pediatrician, dealing with a child care crisis or meeting with a teacher to discuss a problem at school, accompanying a child to a preschool or school event—all of these often require time off from work. No parent should have to choose between alienating the boss and neglecting the child.

Many employers understand this, and allow their workers to take time for family responsibilities. But many other companies refuse to accommodate their workers in this way.

The ability of parents to meet these family obligations should not be dependent on the whim of their employer. In a society that genuinely values families, it should be a matter of right.

Under legislation already proposed by Senator MURRAY, working parents would be entitled to 24 hours of leave a year to participate in their child's school activities. I would add time for a parent to take a child to the doctor. Employers would have to receive at least 7 days advance notice of each absence, so that employers will have ample opportunity to arrange work schedules around the brief absence of the employee.

Clearly, this legislation is needed. A recent survey of 30,000 PTA leaders found that 89 percent of parents cannot be as involved in their children's education as they would like because of job demands.

A Radcliffe Public Policy Institute study completed last year found that the total time that parents spend with their children has dropped by a third in the past 30 years. This disturbing trend must be reversed.

Greater involvement of parents in their children's education can make a vital difference in their learning experience. A big part of that involvement is more regular contact between parent and teacher, and more regular participation by parents in their children's school activities. Many of those meetings and activities are scheduled during the work day. As a result, millions of parents are unable to participate because their employers refuse to allow time off. Permitting a modest adjustment in a parent's work day can greatly enrich a child's school day. All children will benefit from this kind of parental support and encouragement, and so will the country.

QUALITY CHILD CARE

Child care for infants and young children is essential for the majority of mothers who work outside the home. However, quality child care for these youngsters is often hard to find. A 1995 GAO study found a shortage of infant care in both inner city and rural areas.

Even where facilities are available, they often do not provide the type of care which would be an enriching experience for young children. A majority of children in child care spend 30 hours or more per week. Their well being requires more than merely a safe and clean place to stay while their parents are at work—though even this is currently out of reach for far too many families. Young children—even infants and toddlers—need regular interaction with attentive caregivers to stimulate their curiosity and expand their minds.

This requires a much lower staff to child ratio than most providers can afford and it requires a level of training, supervision, and compensation which is seldom present. The early years are too precious—their potential too great—for children to spend them in custodial rather than educational care. Yet according to the Work And Family Institute, only one in seven child care centers offers quality care and only 9 percent of family child care homes are found to be of high quality.

To say this is not to criticize those currently providing care. Most work hard to create the best atmosphere for children they can given the current level of resources. However, a simple comparison with the kind of support required under the Military Child Care Act demonstrates how much better we could be doing with the civilian child care system.

Under the military statute, each child care provider participates in an individualized training program and receives salary increases based on their training. Each child care center is monitored at least four times a year and has an on-site teacher mentor. In addition, the military has established family child care networks designed to serve infants and toddlers where similar supports are provided. As a result of these provisions, provider salaries have dramatically increased when compared to civilian child care and staff turnover is negligible. Staff to child ratios have been reduced and individualized care and attention increased. The quality of the services provided reflects these changes. The children of working families deserve no less.

I am proposing that we provide incentive grants to States to model their child programs after the high quality services offered by the military.

This would include lower ratios as well as better training, supervision, salaries, and support. In this way, those who regularly care for our youngest children would be able to provide them with the nurturing and individualized attention they need and deserve. The time spent by children in child care would then become a valuable learning experience for them.

HEAD START

Head Start is widely recognized for its success in providing children from low income families with a solid developmental foundation. It focuses on the complete child—education, emotional growth, physical, and mental health, and nutrition. It strongly encourages parental involvement. Most importantly, it allows at-risk youngsters to enter school ready to learn. Head Start works extremely well for those it serves.

However, even with recent funding increases, it serves only 40 percent of eligible children. There are few legislative initiatives which make more sense than fully funding Head Start. It could truly change the lives of many of those children currently excluded.

In 1994, we established a new Early Head Start initiative for infants and toddlers. HHS has awarded 142 grants nationwide for programs to provide basic early education, nutritional and health services for children under 3 years of age from low income families. This pilot program has proven very successful. The scientific research I alluded to earlier makes a compelling case for services directed to children in their earliest years. If we are seriously concerned about helping children expand their learning capacity, the Senate should fund a major expansion of Early Start.

DISABLED CHILDREN

As we make these reforms for the benefit of all children, we must not forget to provide for the special needs of disabled children. Despite their disabilities, these children hold great potential. With adequate support and assistance from us that potential can be realized. We cannot in good conscience leave the families of these children to face such enormous challenges alone.

CONCLUSION

The national agenda for young children which I have outlined today will give children—regardless of their family's income—a fair chance to reach their full potential. What occurs during a child's earliest years will make a lifetime of difference.

We know how important preventive health care, parental involvement, quality child care, and early learning opportunity during those years are to that child's later development. How can we fail to act? These issues are compelling and they deserve a strong bipartisan response. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to make this agenda for young children a high priority for Congress in 1997.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, if the Chair would alert me when I have 1 minute remaining, I would appreciate that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THOMAS). The Senator has 10 minutes.

NORTH DAKOTA—THE IMPACT OF BLIZZARD HANNAH ON UTILITIES AND ELECTRIC CUSTOMERS

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I rise to give my third report on the disaster