

Nation that prides itself on competition, consumer choice, freedom of religion, and parental responsibility," yet, in fact, we don't give our parents a choice where they send their children to school?

The Gorton amendment, the Coverdell bill and the DC Student Opportunity Scholarship Act are not an attempt to destroy public schools. My goodness. And that is an important point, Mr. President. I hear my colleagues on the other side of this debate saying, "Oh, you will destroy public schools. You will take funds from public schools." Nonsense. This Nation is a rich, great Nation because we have always had diversity. From the first days of the people who settled this Nation, it has been about diversity. People from all over the globe have made America great and continue to make America great. It is about diversity. It is about choice. It is about competition.

Americans should want their public schools to be the very best, to be the absolute best school systems that they can make, they can provide, they can develop. I have a daughter in a public school system in Virginia. It is a good school system. I am not standing in this Chamber today to do anything that would deteriorate, take away or harm the public school systems. But we must enable all people to choose the best education for their children, whatever their circumstances are in life. And we must restore the fundamental belief that education policy and curriculum are best determined by those closest to the students—parents, teachers, school boards—not Washington.

Mr. President, I strongly encourage my colleagues to support the Coverdell bill, and I yield my time. I thank the Chair.

Mr. GORTON addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Washington.

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, on Monday, millions of American children will board schoolbuses all across the country.

But when they get off those buses, will they be walking into schools that challenge them to learn and grow, or into empty shells of missed opportunities and lost hopes? Are we doing the best possible job of educating our children, or can we do better?

For decades, the conventional wisdom in our Nation's Capital has been that Washington, DC, knows what's best for our schools. I disagree. I think teachers, parents, principals, and school boards know what's best for our children.

Earlier this month, the U.S. Senate passed school reform to restore the traditional role that parents and teachers play in education.

The reform adopted by the Senate sends Federal education funds for kindergarten through high school directly to school districts.

Bypassing Federal and State bureaucracies, which siphon millions of

dollars and attach regulatory strings, means more authority and more money for local educators.

All of us want the best education possible for our kids. We all want them to succeed.

A good education unlocks the future, provides a lifetime key to open doors of opportunity and helps our children reach their dreams. We can provide that opportunity to our children by restoring the role that parents, teachers, and principals need to play in education.

Unfortunately, Washington, DC, takes a different view—the President and Democrats in Congress have denounced this proposal.

Education should not be a partisan issue, but when this school reform measure was approved by the Senate, not a single Democrat voted for it. And the President has said he will veto this reform when it comes to his desk.

Apparently, he prefers a system that has Washington, DC, deciding what's best for schoolchildren in Chehalis, WA; New York City, and every place in between. By taking this position, I think the President is telling parents and teachers: "I don't trust you."

While I believe the President has taken the wrong position, I know that he and I share the same goal—we both want what is best for our children. The debate is not over who cares more for our children's future—the debate is about how to achieve our shared goal of doing the best we can for children.

There is nothing more important than our children's future. There are few issues as troubling as the state of our educational system. The next century will demand a lot—advanced technology, the global marketplace, an ever-changing American society—and I am concerned that our children aren't going to be completely prepared for their upcoming challenges.

There was a time in America when parents and teachers had more say in their children's education. Over time, Washington, DC, gradually took responsibility for education from our home towns, and put it in the hands of Federal bureaucrats. What have we gotten for allowing Washington, DC, to run our local schools?

Since 1960, education spending has risen 200 percent, but SAT scores are down. Teachers used to make up two-thirds of the full-time school staff—now it is barely half. And schools are more dangerous than ever.

The Washington, DC-knows best approach to education has also taken us away from the "back to basics" approach long-favored by parents. Skim through your daughter's American history book. Does it instill her with hope? Is it the story of how incredibly diverse people came from all over the globe to pursue boundless opportunities? Or is it a visionless narrative of American failures and shortcomings?

Those who oppose this measure argue that it's somehow dangerous to entrust parents and teachers with more control

over our children's education. Those in Washington, DC guard their power jealously, and they won't give it up easily.

The President says this proposal will reduce funding for schools, and eliminates the Department of Education—it will not.

Under this proposal, local schools get more money, and the Department of Education plays a more modest role.

While fewer bureaucrats and a weakened Department of Education are valuable byproducts of this effort, they are not my primary concern—giving parents and teachers more control over their children's education is my single most important goal.

One Senator who opposes school reform said he actually thought that parents would build more swimming pools, instead of buying more books, if Washington, DC stops telling our schools how to educate our children.

I disagree. It's offensive to suggest that parents and teachers don't have the children's best interests in mind.

I believe that with the additional authority and funding schools would receive from this reform, our teachers, parents, principals, and school boards will be inspired to do even more—not to build swimming pools—they will be inspired to make sure that every child receives the best education possible.

It comes down to this—will local schools be improved through more rules from Washington, DC, or will they be improved if we restore the authority for education decisions that parents, teachers, and principals once had?

On this issue, I believe the answers are best left to our parents, teachers, and communities, not Washington, DC.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I commend the Senator for what he has done with the education issue. I am really excited about the prospect of having, in fact, more education funds available for my State but decisions made about those funds going to the States and local governments. I commend him for doing that.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST— CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the majority leader, after consultation with the Democratic leader, must turn to S. 25, the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform bill prior to the close of the 1st session of the 105th Congress, and Senator MCCAIN be immediately recognized to modify the bill, and it be in order for the majority leader to immediately offer an amendment relative to campaign finances. I further ask unanimous consent that it not be in order for any Senator to offer any legislation regarding campaign finances prior to the initiation of this agreement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. DASCHLE. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the minority leader.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I am very disappointed on what I thought was an understanding the majority leader and I had about the way we were going to do business around here. I worked very closely with him all day yesterday. We were able to get quite a bit done legislatively on Interior appropriations, and work through an agreement on FDA that required my cooperation. Yet I am presented with this about 30 seconds ago—no consultation, no discussion, no deliberation, no way with which to discuss whether this makes sense for either side; an ultimatum, take it or leave it.

That is not the way to do business around here. It is an affront to the Democratic Caucus, to me personally, and it begs the question about how sincere this offer really is. If it were sincere I would think the majority leader and I would have a chance to sit down and talk about it together, work it through. No effort was made to do that. So, it is enlightening, it is instructive, and it will be reciprocated.

I am delighted that the Republicans have finally seen fit to recognize the importance of dealing with this issue this year. I am pleased that at long last they have agreed at least to taking the bill up, the McCain-Feingold bill, that 45 Democrats have said they support. It only takes 2 more Republicans and we will have the 50 votes necessary to pass McCain-Feingold as it was introduced, as S. 25. So we are looking for two more Republicans. We are hoping that 5 Republicans and 45 Democrats will pass this legislation sometime this year.

What the majority leader is asking in this unanimous-consent request is that at some point between now and the time we adjourn—it could be the last day of this session—that we give consent to go onto this legislation.

Before the majority leader leaves the floor, I will have a question for him, if I could pose it? At least I would appreciate that respect.

Is it the intention of the majority leader to bring this bill up at a point that will allow a deliberation and consideration of the legislation well before the adjournment of the session in order to afford us the opportunity to have a good debate about the bill? Mr. President, I would ask the majority leader that question.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the majority leader.

Mr. LOTT. In response to the question under the Senator's reservation to the unanimous consent, this agreement says that it would be done prior to the close of the 1st session of the 105th Congress. Certainly, there would be notification of what date that might be. I think, you know, we would have to talk to a lot of people on both sides of the aisle, including Senator MCCAIN, among others, who could not be here at this hour because he has had a commitment and had to leave by airplane. It depends on a lot of other circumstances that we would have to take into con-

sideration. We might want to do it early. We might want to do it later. But it would not be my intent to do it right at the end of the session. But I don't have a date in mind. We will have to look at what is happening with other bills all the way from FDA to appropriations conference reports.

Next week, for instance, the focus has to be on getting the appropriations conference reports agreed to. It would depend on what is happening with other major legislation like the transportation bill, the administration's proposal with regard to fast track—all of these will be taken into consideration. We want to do it in a time when it can be fully debated. I think it is important that we have a chance to look at different proposals and see if a consensus can be reached, see if there is some way that we can deal with the way the laws were broken in 1996 but see if it can be done without another big Government gag of free speech.

So, we fully intend to have notification of the date and an adequate discussion on all sides of the issue.

Mr. DASCHLE. Is it the majority leader's intention to adjourn on or about the date of November 14?

Mr. LOTT. I beg your pardon, repeat the question?

Mr. DASCHLE. Is it the intention of the majority leader to adjourn on or about the date of November 14?

Mr. LOTT. As we have discussed in the past, at the beginning of the year we sort of laid out a schedule for the whole year of the times that we would be in and out in each month. At the beginning of the year we had talked in terms of having a week in October off for the Jewish religious holidays as well as the Columbus Day period, and that we would—you know, our target day to adjourn was the 14th.

There has been some consideration of it being earlier than that. Senator DASCHLE and I, as you recall, we did discuss the possibility of November 7. So I don't think we can at this point fix a specific date. I think more important is to get the work done that we must get done before we leave. But I think we are sort of shooting now for the 7th of November. But at the beginning of the year we said we would be out no later than the 14th.

Mr. DASCHLE. Well, if it is the 7th, or the 14th, somewhere in there, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the request made by the majority leader be amended to say that "at a date no later than the 31st of October." That would leave, according to the Senator's answer, at least 1 week for us to debate this and not make a sham of this request.

Obviously, if he has no intention of bringing it up until the last day, this isn't a meaningful request. If we have at least a week to debate it, it is a meaningful request. So I would propose that we take S. 25 up before the Senate at a date no later than the 31st of October.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I do not intend to have this issue come up the last day or the last week of the session, because I think we will have other issues that we would have to deal with or want to deal with and I assume the administration wants to deal with at that point. I presume that we would probably want to look for a date earlier in the month of October, maybe even the end of October.

But I think this consent request is an honest one and a fair one for now. I would like to leave it the way it is so that we will have a full panoply of options to make sure we have it brought up at the right time and we can have a full debate and look at all the other things that we need to consider.

So I object at this time to changing that date. Let's leave it for the end of the session. I do not intend to bring it up the last day. I don't want to do that. I don't want to go out and be cramped on this issue. I would like to have a free discussion much earlier, but I would like to have a chance to talk to Members who have worked it on both sides—Senator MCCAIN, Senator MCCONNELL, Senator FEINGOLD, the leadership on both sides, the committees that are involved—and come to an understanding and agreement that everybody is comfortable with.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, can I just request for the record why the majority leader has seen fit not to share this unanimous-consent request with me until we came to the floor? This is a highly unusual matter. I would be interested in the leader's response.

Mr. LOTT. If I could address that question, if the Senator is surprised, he is the only person in the room, in the building, in the media that is surprised by this. This has been a running discussion for quite some time. In fact, yesterday—

Mr. DASCHLE. Has the majority leader shared the language—

Mr. LOTT. Let me respond to the question, if I can, and give a full response. We were working on the language of the UC. I believe a copy was given to Senator MCCAIN, perhaps a copy to Senator FEINGOLD. I understand Senator DASCHLE saw it. It is not a complicated UC. Basically, all it says is we are going to bring this up and how it will be brought up and it will be done before the end of the session.

As a matter of fact, Senator DASCHLE and I sat right there yesterday, and we talked about the parameters of this agreement, and I had the impression he knew full well what was in it.

The only difference in it now to what happened yesterday was to clarify that we are not going to have this popping up all the time while we have an agreement to get it brought up at a specific time.

So that is why it was done the way it was. He was notified I was going to make a unanimous-consent request. We don't have, usually, necessarily hours or days of running discussions. This was very simple and clear. I thought

everybody would be delighted with this. Senator McCain is comfortable with it. I had the impression Senator Feingold is comfortable with it. Senator McConnell is here ready to comment on it. He is comfortable with it.

If this is a sneak attack, there hasn't been such a well-covered sneak attack since Pearl Harbor. So everybody knew what was going on. I think it is a fair agreement. If we want to get this issue up in a way everybody understands and deal with some of the changes that we can make legitimately in campaign finances, including allowing employees and union members to have some say in how their dues and their fees are spent in campaigns, then we can do that.

Mr. DASCHLE. Well, the Senator from Mississippi is a smooth sell. Let me just say this. Senator McConnell ought to be very happy with this, because this plays right into the hands of the opponents of campaign finance reform. Senator Feingold didn't know about this. I didn't know about this. There is no Democrat I am aware of who has seen any of this language.

So, I am very disappointed. We are not going to relegate our right to offer campaign finance reform in some form to other bills prior to the last day of this session, and that's really what the majority leader is asking here. He is asking us to forgo the opportunity to debate campaign finance reform until what could be the very last day of the session, and we will then be under the terms of this agreement, an agreement that I have not seen. And yet, yesterday we worked through several unanimous-consent requests, back and forth, in detail, in direct consultation, he and I working together to get an agreement on Interior appropriations, to get a deal, as difficult as it was, on FDA reform. We worked through that because he knows it is one thing to say we are going to schedule FDA next week, it is another thing to come up with an arrangement that brings about the unanimity of all 100 Senators that takes care of all the concerns raised by Senators who have issues and concerns that they want to raise.

That's how you work through unanimous consent requests. You don't bring it to the floor and say, "Here it is, take it or leave it." You negotiate it.

If there was a real intent, a sincere intent to negotiate a real unanimous-consent agreement, do you suppose I would have been presented with it 2 minutes ago on the floor with no discussion, no negotiation?

We did have a discussion here on the floor a couple nights ago, or whenever that was. But it was, "You know what, we may actually bring up campaign finance reform and we may actually have an agreement I would like you to look at." I am looking at it, but this is the very first time.

In all the time I have been leader, every single time when there has been a sincere effort to resolve a unanimous-consent request, guess what happened?

Senator Dole and I worked on it together, Senator Lott and I worked on it together, and jointly we presented it to the body because we wanted to get it passed, we wanted everybody to agree.

This is designed for disagreement. This is designed to surprise. This is designed so all the people up there will write, "Democrats objected to a unanimous-consent request." That's what this is about. He knows it; I know it. We are playing a game this afternoon. We object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I think we have made a very fair unanimous-consent offer here that we would bring this issue up before the end of this session of Congress, that we would bring up McCain-Feingold and then the latest iteration of that, which I believe is the McCain bill, and that I would have the opportunity, as majority leader, which I have anyway, to offer an amendment or a substitute for that. A very clear, understandable, fair process.

Now, if the Senator is surprised, I thought he had been talking to his own Senator Feingold. I have in my hand a press release from yesterday that went out from Senator Feingold's office announcing that Senators McCain, Feingold, and Lott, much to my surprise, "will discuss the McCain-Feingold campaign finance proposal in coordinated statements on the Senate floor this afternoon." That was yesterday. "Attached is an outline of the new proposal."

I thought if it had gone that far—which I thought was certainly jumping the gun because we were trying to make sure everybody had an opportunity to know how this unanimous-consent agreement was being constructed and what was in it, and Senator Feingold, to his credit, apologized that it was done in the way it was. I said, no problem. I understand how sometimes we get a little carried away, maybe staff got a little exuberant and released it before it was completed.

For instance, I felt like I ought to at least talk to Senator McConnell and make sure he was aware of what we were developing here. I thought this was a very good proposal. This is a fair way to get the issue up, have a full discussion, for us to offer proposals that would correct some of the problems and abuses of union members, abuse of their dues, to deal with the illegal foreign contributions that we have seen over the past year in 1996, to deal with the other abuses of the law, tighten up the law and make it clear, or clearer if we need to, about the President and Vice President should not do certain things while on Federal property. Whatever.

It seemed like a fair proposal to me. And I was ready to go with that. And my intent is to try to get an agreement where we could do this some time early in October. But if the Senator feels constrained to object, that is certainly his right.

Mr. DASCHLE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the minority leader.

Mr. DASCHLE. We will do it in October. I guarantee the majority leader of that. But we will do it either the easy way or the hard way. We will do it the easy way, by scheduling Democrats and Republicans in a way that makes sense in getting a unanimous consent that works, or we will do it the hard way, we will do it the way we had to do on Kennedy-Kassebaum, we will do it the way we had to do it on minimum wage, we will do it the way we did it on disaster. But we will do it and do it and do it until it is done. That is a promise.

So we can play games on schedule and we can position ourselves and talk about how much we are in favor of campaign finance reform, but the bottom line is it is going to be more than rhetoric. We are going to get this job done the hard way or the easy way. It is going to get done.

I yield the floor.

Mr. FEINGOLD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, the road to campaign finance reform is obviously a long, hard one. But we are going to keep on it. I just want to say, because I am involved in a bipartisan effort here, that I believe the majority leader was engaged in the last couple of days in a good-faith effort, negotiating with Senator McCain, of course, with members of his own caucus, to try to resolve this issue.

I believe there has been a relatively small misunderstanding here with regard to the specifics that sounds a lot worse than it actually is. What we are down to here is merely a difference, based on the conversation I just heard, as to whether the bill will come up in early November or whether it might come back some time in October.

Surely, we will not allow such a difference to make the difference between whether we debate campaign finance reform or not.

I just had the opportunity to speak with Senator McCain briefly. He and I share the view that I think most of the American people share, that too much has happened with regard to this scandal in this area to not address this matter.

I think we need to work a little more on the UC. I had not seen the UC. I want that noted in the RECORD. I had not seen the UC, but I am not complaining. That is not my role in this institution to be the main person reviewing an agreement of that kind.

But I am confident, once this small matter is resolved, that we will have an agreement very much like the one that was just propounded. That agreement would be a historic agreement. I think it would be the first time in memory that the leaders of both parties in this body had agreed to bring up bipartisan campaign finance reform.

The nature of the proposal was quite reasonable. The proposal suggested

that there would be full and open debate on this issue without a time limit, that there would be an opportunity to amend. We can fix the bill with amendments. We can accommodate Members' concerns. We can improve the bill or we can even defeat the bill, as my colleague from Kentucky may choose to do. But that is different than last year when we were given only 2 days, no amendments, and a cloture vote.

The agreement that was just propounded was significantly better in that regard. The agreement would give the American people the opportunity with some certainty to know about when this issue was going to come up so that the people across the country could write their Representatives, call their Representatives, e-mail their Representatives, and say, "We'd really like this bill passed" or "We'd like it killed" or "We'd like it changed." I think all of this is embodied in the proposal.

So I say, on behalf of myself and Senator MCCAIN, if I may do so, that, apart from this small issue of the exact timing, that this agreement, once agreed to, will do what we want it to. It is what we want. It is what we worked for for a long time, while all the pundits, especially in this town, have said that the issue will never come up. Most importantly, when we have this debate—and it will be in the near future—I am confident it will be done in an orderly manner. And it will give the American people what they deserve, an opportunity to have a real debate on this issue instead of just an endless stream of reports of abuses with regard to campaign financing throughout their Government.

So, Mr. President, I am very optimistic that this brief conversation here was merely a blip and that we will not be forced to use the tactic of having to try to attach this legislation to other bills and in fact S. 25, which of course is still the McCain-Feingold bill, will in fact come before this body in the relatively near future.

I want to thank the majority leader for his cooperation on this. I want to thank my leader for his efforts to try to resolve these differences at this point. I want to thank all 45 members of my caucus, all the Democrats for having signed on to the McCain-Feingold bill. Of course I want to thank the other cosponsors of the bill, Senator THOMPSON and Senator COLLINS on the other side of the aisle.

I want to thank the President. The President has been very steadfast in trying to move this legislation forward. His staff has worked closely with us on a day-to-day basis to try to see if we could resolve the very difficult differences between the parties so we could have this matter debated.

Mr. President, we will get there. We are getting there. I hope we can today begin to tell the American people they are finally going to be able to participate in, hear and understand the debate about whether big money is going

to continue to control the Government of the people of the United States.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. MCCONNELL addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I listened with interest to the comments of the Democratic leader and Senator FEINGOLD. I would just like to say briefly in response, there is no reluctance to debate this issue. Those of us who oppose McCain-Feingold look forward to the debate. We relish the debate.

My colleague in the chair remembers when we stayed up all night to debate this about 5 weeks before the 1994 election, which was the greatest victory for my party in congressional races in this century.

So let me just disabuse all of my colleagues of the notion that there is any reluctance on the part of those who oppose putting the Government in charge of political speech of individual groups, candidates, and parties in this country, any reluctance to debate the merits of that proposal. There is no reluctance whatsoever.

What the majority leader was trying to do here today was to structure that debate in such a way as to provide minimal inconvenience to Members of the Senate. The Democratic leader said we can get there the hard way or the easy way. We have no reluctance to get there the hard way, Mr. President, no reluctance whatsoever.

The majority leader was simply trying to accommodate all of the Senate by providing an orderly, structured way to have a debate that we relish, look forward to making. My experience with this issue over the years is the more colleagues and the American people and, yes, the press learns about the issue the better, the greater likelihood the first amendment will be protected.

So bring on the debate. We are ready for it. But, obviously, it will be a lot easier on everyone if we did it an orderly, structured way. That is what the majority leader was seeking to do. I commend him for that, and look forward to the debate that will be forthcoming. We will be happy to do it either the hard way or the easy way, whichever seems to suit the Senate the best.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GORTON). The Senator from Georgia.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, we have spent the better part of the morning talking about our initiatives to begin to get at the core problems in elementary education in America. We have talked about creating an education savings account that allows every family the opportunity to save and build resources to deal with whatever deficiencies are troubling their children.

We talked about the Presiding Officer's amendment which would move \$11 billion or \$12 billion to local school districts without the strings and encumbrances that Washington cannot ever seem to free itself of. Just put the resource at the local level.

We have talked about a proposal to create scholarships in the District of Columbia to try to allow these families in certifiably troubled schools a way out.

Three things, all of which are addressed where the real problem in American education is occurring: Elementary and high school.

Now, what has been the opposition? What is the opposition? It began when the savings account was put in the tax relief proposal. The President told the Speaker that if it was left in the proposal, the savings account for families to help kids in elementary school, he would veto all of it, all the tax relief would be vetoed.

So obviously it was removed. But we have not retreated. We have brought the proposals back. The Speaker introduced the education savings account on the House side, and myself and the majority leader on this side.

Now, what is the reason? Why would the President go to such lengths to clamp down on an education savings account? Well, he and the Secretary of Education say it would undermine public education—remove resources from public education.

Mr. President, I have to assume they are just misinformed by their own staffs. I can come to no other conclusion—that they just have become so accustomed to the status quo and to beating down any new idea that there is a knee-jerk reaction. They always try to infer that these ideas will somehow impair or undermine public education. Wrong, wrong, and wrong.

In fact, it is the reverse, the exact reverse. The savings account will infuse public education with new money. The vast majority of students are in public schools and the vast majority of students will stay in public schools. The savings accounts that the parents of those children create will come to the aid of—there is not a single dime, Mr. President, not 10 cents, that will be removed from public schools.

Conversely, billions—billions—of new dollars will come to the support of public schools. The child in a public school who needs a tutor, the child in public school—which, incidentally, will be a public schoolteacher. If I was a public schoolteacher I would be rushing in support of the education savings account because it will give them a vast, vast new opportunity to teach, which they love to do, and earn compensation, which will help them. Not one dime is removed.

Every family that opens this savings account will continue to pay their property tax for the public school—every one. They will set up the savings account. They will hire tutors from the public school system. They will be tutoring children in the public school