

The majority leader.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, again I thank the members of the VA-HUD appropriations subcommittee and the full committee for their good work. Also, I am pleased we were able to work out an agreement as to how we could proceed for the remainder of the day. We have now completed action on the VA-HUD appropriations bill. The education issue that was being discussed earlier by Senator DASCHLE, Senator GREGG, and Senator KENNEDY, and others who will be commenting in a few minutes, those two issues will be considered back-to-back on Monday.

There will, obviously, be no further votes today. The next votes will occur at 5:30 on Monday. As it now stands, there will be two votes at that time.

The Senate has done good work this week. In addition to completing action on the VA-HUD appropriations bill, after a lot of delay and unnecessary obstruction, in my opinion, we were able to complete the Interior appropriations bill, and we also passed, by an overwhelming vote, the defense authorization conference report for the year—a good bill. Senator WARNER and his Armed Services Committee members, Senator THURMOND, Senator LEVIN, did an excellent job on that bill. I certainly expect and hope the President will sign the defense authorization conference report and, hopefully, the Interior Committee conference will get underway on Monday, and the VA-HUD conference as well.

That leaves only one appropriations bill to be considered in the Senate before all 13 of them will be completed. I believe we are well ahead of where we have been in many years in getting that done. It is actually possible that we could get the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill up by Tuesday or Wednesday of next week and either complete it before the end of the fiscal year or within a day of that, and then, of course, go to conference.

Will it be easy? No. I am sure it is going to be an interesting debate, but that is as it should be. I look forward to completing that work and moving forward with the appropriations conference reports. I hope there will be one or two conference reports that might be available on Monday. Whenever they become available, we will consider them that day or the next day. Energy and water is close to being completed, I believe, and Agriculture is still in the mill. We hope to get those done.

I do want to emphasize that I think the way we worked out handling this education issue is much better than having it on the VA-HUD appropriations bill. It does not relate to the VA-HUD bill. I did not think it should have been offered on that appropriations bill, even though it was offered as a sense of the Senate. It is better to handle it the way we have agreed to do it.

Senator DASCHLE seemed to question whether we intended to go to the

Labor-HHS appropriations bill. I have been saying for weeks we intend to do it. As soon as the committee reports it out, we will have it on the floor as soon as the rules allow. I have been saving next week for its consideration. Education amendments, I am sure, will be offered next week when this bill is considered in the Senate.

REAUTHORIZING THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT OF 1965

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I want to comment a bit about education. First, let me lay down a predicate about myself. I feel very strongly about the need for quality, safe, and drug-free education in America. We have lost our edge in education. Our kids are not getting as good an education as they should. In fact, I do not think they are getting as good an education as we were getting in the fifties and sixties. There has unfortunately been a steady decline in our schools. While some schools are doing a little better and some scores are, in many areas our schools are not what they should be.

I said three things: Quality, safe, drug-free schools. We have a lot of work to do in these areas.

I will not stand second to any Member of the Senate when it comes to feeling strongly about education and advocating on behalf of education, but it has to be done in the right way.

What has happened is the education establishment is firmly entrenched in the status quo. They believe that we should stay in this box, and we should not change it and, by the way, it should be run from Washington. That is not the answer, in my opinion.

I want to make this clear: While I think we should have choice in education, I am a product of public education from the first grade through the second, third, and fourth grades where I went to school at Duck Hill, MS, and I had better teachers in the second, third, and fourth grades in Duck Hill, MS, than I had the rest of my life. They were probably better than most people have had in these very fancy and better funded schools. Those teachers loved their students. They worked hard and taught us the basics. I have never forgotten them, and I appreciate what they did.

I went to public school all the way through college and law school. So did my wife, so did my son, and so did my daughter. So when some Senators get up and pontificate that we cannot allow students to have choice, that we have to save public education—let me be clear, I want public education. I want every student, regardless of religion, income level, race, sex, or anything else, to get a good education. But the tragedy is that that may not always be in a particular school. If a public school in your neighborhood is not doing the job, you ought to be able to leave.

Some people say if that happens, the bad schools will fail. Right. It is called

competition. Produce, give quality education, drug-free and safe, or get out of the business.

To tell students—intelligent students, needy students, poor students—they have to go to this school no matter what is wrong. Why is it in America that our elementary and secondary education is ranked 17th in the world and yet our higher education is No. 1 in the world? What is the difference? Why are we doing so poorly at the elementary and secondary level and doing so well in higher education?

There are a couple of simple answers. First of all, when you finish high school, rich or poor, whatever State you live in, you have a choice: You can go to work if you have had vocational education in high school, or you can go to additional training. You can go to a community college, you can go to a State university, you can go to a parochial college, you can go out of State, you can go to Harvard. You get to choose what fits your needs. But in elementary and secondary education, oh, no, you have to do it the way we tell you in this box. No choice. That is one problem.

The second problem is financial support. I am from a poor, blue-collar family. When I was in college, I worked and got a loan which, by the way, I paid back 1 year after I graduated. I could not have made it, though, if I had not been able to work for the university and get loans.

In America—and I hope every student in America and every parent hears me now—in America, when every child finishes high school, they can get a college education. No doubt about it. Some people say: I come from a family with no money. Hey, I was in a family with no money. At one point, I had no family. But I got a loan. Other students can get a grant or a supplemental grant or a State scholarship, a private scholarship. The financial aid is there. Every student can get an education in America.

There is financial aid when you go to college but not when you are in elementary and secondary school. Senator COVERDELL wants to remedy that. He wants to allow parents to save for their children's education so that the financial support will be there to choose a different school if you want to, to help you with the books, to help you get a computer, to help you get a uniform if that is what you need—choice and financial opportunity.

I want to add this: I am the son of a schoolteacher, and I still act like one sometimes. At times, my staff brings in a letter which has bad grammar. I feel a little guilty, but I start marking on it: This is surplus language; this is not correct grammar.

My mother taught for 19 years. So I care about education. I worked for 3 years of my life at the University of Mississippi. I worked in the placement office helping students get jobs when they graduated, and I worked in the financial aid office. I was the one who

added up the numbers to see if a student got a grant or a loan. I met with the students. I handled the scholarships. The best scholarship in the university was a Carrier scholarship. I interviewed the students who applied for it.

When I finished undergraduate school, I worked in the placement bureau of the law school to help law students find employment in law firms, and I was head of the law alumni association. So I have had experience in the academic sphere of the university.

One of the great things I did for 2 years is I went to every school in the State of Mississippi—every one. I met with the students, I talked with the teachers, I talked with the guidance counselors. I was a member of the State Guidance Counselors Association. I went into schools. I actually stood outside and looked at some buildings and said: I am not sure I want to go in there; this may fall down.

I remember the commitment of the teachers. I remember the efforts of the guidance counselors. I really believe education was better then than it is now, and that is sad. We have to do something about that.

When some people allege that Republicans do not care about education, they don't know what they are talking about. I will put my credentials, my background in public education, my feelings about education against anybody in this Chamber. Our party, the Republican Party in the Senate, has determined that education is our first priority. S. 1, the first bill I introduced, improves education. We want full funding for education. I want to fund education at the level the President asked for and more, if we can find a way to do it.

But there is a key difference: We want to do it differently.

I have no confidence whatsoever in this body or in any bureaucrat in Washington, DC, to make the right decisions on education—none. The teachers, the parents, the students, the communities in Wyoming and in Mississippi, know best what those students need. They know their students. They know their needs. They know the community. They know what they can afford. They know what they can spend. And they do not need some nameless, faceless bureaucrat or some Senator from some other State telling them: You are to spend it here or spend it there.

I trust the people; I trust the teachers at the local level. I do not trust the unions. I do not trust the Department of Education. I voted to make it a separate Department because I thought it was being undermined in the old Department it was in; it was gobbled up by other things. Maybe I made a mistake. I want to give education a high priority, but I do not think this Department up here, inside the Beltway, in this administration or in previous administrations, has helped education much. They are part of the problem.

Let the local people make the decisions.

I want to make this point, too. There are those who say what we need is more money. Yes, everybody comes to Washington knocking on the door: I need more money. We need bigger Government. That is ridiculous. We are wasting too much of the people's money here in Washington, DC. We do not need more money in this Government.

When was the last time any Senator had somebody show up and say: Hey, we can do better with less? No. The American people say they want a balance. The American people say they want to make sure we do not spend the Social Security surplus. But yet then the professional lobbyists say: We want more.

It is all good. I am from an agricultural State. Agriculture wants more. I appreciate what the veterans have done for our country. Veterans want more. Armed services are important for the future security of our families. They need more. We would like to have the American dream of having a home available for everybody. Fine. I think it ought to be done in the private sector. I think the Department of Housing and Urban Development, as a whole, is a miserable failure. I could go down every Department, every agency; and I support a lot of them.

I do support ships being built in my hometown of Pascagoula, MS. But I do not see a hunk of steel. I see pipe fitters, boilermakers, laborers. I see men and women and Indians out there pulling those steel lines, running those cranes, and providing for the defense of our country. I wanted more money for NASA, but you cannot have it both ways.

One of the interesting things about the resolution that was introduced by Senator KENNEDY and Senator DASCHLE here today is—they talked about some of the problems in education and that funding should be increased in programs right across the board. They want the Federal Government to start hiring local teachers—Federal Government dictates: There have to be X number of students in a classroom.

We need more money for afterschool programs, more money for the Safe Schools Program, more money for elementary and secondary education—more money, more money, more money.

Then it says—this is what is really ingenious—more money for everything. And, by the way, “the Senate should stay within the discretionary spending caps and avoid using the resources of the social security program by finding discretionary spending offsets that do not jeopardize”—great, great.

If somebody shows up and tells me how we can increase every program in the Federal Government and stay within spending limitations, I will give them a prize.

There are those who have a way to do it. It is called more taxes. Yes, let's in-

crease taxes—somewhere, someday, user fees. Let's find more money to come to Washington.

We do not need more money in Washington. The people need to keep their money back home. The American people are overtaxed. Their taxes are too high. They are unfair. They are complicated. When the people were told what we had in our tax cut package, they said: Yes, we support that.

But you can't have every nickel you want spent in Washington and have fiscal responsibility and have tax relief for working Americans, young families, such as my own daughter who just got married in May. She and her husband both work because they do not have a lot of money. By the way, they are going to pay more in taxes this next year than they did the previous year just because they got married. What a ridiculous set of circumstances.

We wonder why we have troubles having the traditional family survive. One reason is that you get taxed if you get married, for Heaven's sake.

In America, you get taxed if you die. When I get to the end of my road, after my life's work, I want two things, and that is all. I want my name to be decent and clean, and I want my kids to be able to have whatever I have earned. I do not want Uncle Sam showing up saying: Give me half of it. Nobody of any income level can defend the death tax. It is totally ridiculous.

We have a resolution that I believe is better than what was proposed by Senator DASCHLE and Senator KENNEDY. So I send this resolution to the desk and ask for it to be printed at this time. I will send it forward in a minute.

Let me just read this resolution into the RECORD because I think it is a good resolution. I want the American people to know what we think about education.

Whereas

The fiscal year 2000 Budget Resolution [that passed the Congress] increases—

Hear me now—

education funding by \$28 billion over the next five years, and \$82 billion over the next ten years.

We are not stingy when it comes to education. Our budget resolution says we are going to have more:

The Department of Education received a net increase of \$2.4 billion in FY 2000 which doubles the President's request.

I do not understand what Senator KENNEDY and Senator DASCHLE are talking about.

Compared to the President's requested levels, the Democratically controlled Congress' appropriations for 1993–1995 reduced the President's funding requests by \$3.0 billion.

The Democrat Congress reduced the President's request for education by \$3 billion.

Since Republicans took control of Congress, federal education funding has increased by 27%.

Maybe 100 percent would be better, but we are doing the job. We need a little credit for what we have been doing.

In the past three years, the Congress has increased funding for Part B of [the IDEA program]—

Where we have made a commitment, fulfilled over a period of years—

by nearly 80%, while the Administration's fiscal year 2000 budget only requested a .07% increase which is less than an adjustment for inflation.

Remember what happens. Schools are being told by the Federal Government: You must comply with IDEA. You must provide the special education. The schools are saying: But if we spend that money and you do not do your share, it means we have to take from somewhere else.

The most difficult thing the schools across this country are having to deal with is complying with special education requirements and the Federal Government not doing its share. That is what our resolution focuses on. We should give schools the flexibility to use this money to comply with IDEA or use it in other areas.

Congress is not only providing the necessary funds, but is also reforming our current education programs. Congress recognizes that significant reforms are needed in light of the following troubling statistics:

40% of fourth graders cannot read at the most basic level.

In international comparisons, U.S. twelfth graders scored near the bottom in both math and science.

70% of children in high poverty schools score below even the most basic level of reading.

In math, 9 year olds in high poverty schools remain two grade levels behind students in low poverty schools.

Earlier this year, the 106th Congress took the first step toward improving our nation's schools by passing the Education, Flexibility and Partnership Act . . .

Really simple: We just allow the schools at the local level to make the decisions where to spend all this Federal money that is going to be available to them. Really simple. It will work. And the teachers and the Governors and the parents say, yes, that makes sense.

This year's reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act will focus on increasing student achievement by empowering principals, local school boards, teachers, and parents. The focus should be on raising the achievement of all students.

In other words, we say: We are going to give you the flexibility, but we expect results. You are going to have to show some results.

Also:

Congress should reject a one-size-fits-all approach to education.

What is good in Boston, MA, just may not be good in Boise, ID, or in Laramie, WY, or certainly not good in Pascagoula, MS. We have different needs. We ought to have that flexibility to address the needs we do have.

Parents are the first and best educators of their children. We have to find ways for the Congress to support proposals which provide parents greater, not less, control and input into the unique educational opportunities we want for our children.

Every child should have an exceptional teacher in the classroom.

We have a program in Mississippi—I am trying to remember who did it—but

a philanthropist gave every classroom in Mississippi, or at least every school, a computer. I was talking to a local educator recently. He said: That's real nice, but in many of those schools, those computers are still sitting in the boxes in the hallways or in the backs of the rooms because the teachers don't know how to use the computers, let alone how to teach the use of the computers.

Technology is great. We have to make sure, though, that the teachers have the ability or at least can be trained or have access to training so they can use the modern technology.

Our whereas goes on. It just says that Congress will continue its efforts to improve the Nation's schools by reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, guided by the principles I have been referring to above; that is, more flexibility, more control by the teachers and the school boards, and more involvement by the parents.

We feel very strongly about this. The Democrats say: We will provide 100,000 teachers, hired by the Federal Government, and we want to start repairing roofs.

The quality of the buildings themselves and repairing roofs are a local issue. The Federal Government should not be doing that. While others will say, well, wait a minute, we need to help these schools and these States in repairing buildings, where does it end? If we proceed down the road where we start paying for building schools at the local level, we will have to build every school in America. That is where it will end. Sure, it is nice; people like it.

Let me tell my colleagues about the States. Every single State in the Nation has a surplus, more than they are going to spend. You say, well, maybe it is not much. It is almost \$34 billion. If you have dilapidated schools in your State, I say: State, fix them. The Federal Government, Uncle Sop, is not going to pay for repairing roofs in Biloxi, MS. Let the people in Biloxi, in the State of Mississippi, do that. I am for it. I am for teacher pay raises, but the answer is not in this hallowed city that we stand. The answer is with the American people. I believe that. Give them the flexibility. When Senator KENNEDY said, basically, what we want is for Washington to run the schools, frankly, a bad situation could be worse. The Federal Government would mess it up.

So we have an alternative. We will be debating it again on Monday. I believe our alternative will pass. It should pass. But I am telling you right now, I am telling the President of the United States, William Jefferson Clinton, and I am telling everybody in this Senate, when it comes to education, TRENT LOTT is not going to yield to anybody, and the Republicans in Congress are not going to be run over by a bunch of additional Federal programs that will waste the money, should not be our responsibility, and will not get the job

done. We are going to make it flexible. We are going to make it local.

This is going to be an interesting debate. I can tell you one thing: I am going to be at the debate because I am going to be involved in this. I care about it, and I know what will work, and I know what won't work. What we have is not working. We have to do it differently.

I beg the pardon of my colleagues for getting fired up and going on a little long, but I am not going to let those sorts of things be said on the floor of the Senate on education without an adequate response.

I yield the floor, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The resolution will be received and appropriately referred.

The Chair recognizes the Senator from Georgia.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. CLELAND. Mr. President, it has been marvelous to listen to the eloquence of the distinguished Senator on the high-tech environment of Duck Hill, MS. It reminds me of my own educational background in Lithonia, GA, at little Lithonia Elementary School there. I worshiped my second- and third- and fourth-grade, fifth-grade teachers, too. But by no means do I want to go back to those days in 1953 and 1954.

This is 1999. We are fixing to go into a new millennium and a new century. I am afraid this country is about to go into this new century, with great opportunity ahead of it, with minimal opportunity for our citizens to take advantage of it.

Bill Gates, who has become pre-eminent as a thinker and an innovator, and certainly one who is interested in the cause of education, has put it clearly. He said: It is clear that our ability to continue benefiting from technology will largely depend on how well we educate the next generation to take advantage of this new era.

I don't think anyone really questions the wisdom of Mr. Gates. The challenge, of course, is to live up to that challenge Mr. Gates has put before us. He not only talks the talk; he walks the walk. Last week, Bill Gates pledged to spend \$1 billion to provide college scholarships to thousands of deserving but financially needy students across the country. This gift is the largest individual contribution to education in history. We can learn something from the leadership our business leaders around America are now showing. I think the Senate leadership can learn something.

We are only 4 months away from the year 2000. We must not forget the future of this country is in very small hands. Yet despite all the rhetoric, the great speeches, and the fact that three out of four Americans in the latest Washington Post/ABC poll put improving education No. 1 on the national agenda, what we see here in the agenda