

of the Finance Committee, who brought all sides together in a consensus bill that accomplishes our objective—extend expiring provisions that command support from all Senators. This was not a simple task.

Tax extenders were part of the large tax bill that began working its way through the Congress in July—a bill that in my view needed to be and was vetoed. This fall, Senator ROTH returned to the task and presented a chairman's mark focused on extenders. He built bipartisan support for the bill, and that is why we are here on the Senate floor so soon, ready to pass the legislation by unanimous consent.

This bill is a paid-for extenders package. As such, it meets the standards of Members on both sides of the aisle. It is a bill that can pass this Congress and can be signed by the President.

And it is important that we pass legislation that can be signed. If we do not, approximately 1.1 million Americans will find out that they will lose part or all of the \$500 child credit or the HOPE scholarship credit when they sit down to complete their 1999 tax return. That is because these credits have not yet been permanently exempted from what we call the alternative minimum tax. This legislation will exempt these credits from the alternative minimum tax for 1999 and 2000.

The American people ask us to be responsible in managing our tax laws. To not pass this bill would be irresponsible and contribute to a perception that Members of Congress who agree on what should be done cannot sit down and figure out a way to do them.

Again, my congratulations to the chairman, and let's move expeditiously to a conference with the House of Representatives as soon as they pass similar legislation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I appreciate the cooperation we have had on both sides of the aisle to get to this point. A number of Senators have expressed a desire to offer amendments and to change, in some way, the package as it has been presented and passed this morning. We will work with our colleagues to find ways in which to address many of these issues, whether it is in conference or on other vehicles.

There are a number of issues I care about as well, and I share the concerns expressed to me by some of our colleagues. It is very important that before the end of the session we pass this legislation out and get to conference within a time where we might be able to move it further along.

I strongly support the action the Senate has just taken. My only regret is that these matters aren't permanent law and that they require extension at all. There should come a time when we pass them permanently so we aren't required to come back year after year. Having said that, again, I appreciate the work of the majority leader.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I agree with that. I might say that there are some permanent provisions in the House Ways and Means version of this bill. They would make permanent the extender with regard to the alternative minimum tax and how it affects the low- and middle-income people and others. Also, I have a bill at the desk to express my strong feeling on this subject that would make the R&D tax credit permanent. I think to come back every year, 2 years, or even every 5 years, causes concern and insecurity with regard to those tax credits. I hope we will make it either permanent, or as long as possible, in the conference.

I know there is at least one Senator who has provisions he hopes will be considered in the conference, and I think they should be. On our side, I have one Senator who feels very strongly that there are three parts of this bill that affect permanent law, which is not extenders. I agree. I think those permanent law issues should be dealt with by the regular committees. One has to do with brownfields, one with a rum provision, maybe in the Virgin Islands—not that you might want to be for them; I am just questioning whether or not they should be in a bill that is supposed to be tax credit extenders. We have other good provisions in here, a welfare-to-work tax credit, and others. So I am glad we are going to get this done before we leave. I thank Senators for the cooperation on both sides.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000—CONFERENCE REPORT—Continued

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I yield some time at this moment to the Senator from Washington, Mrs. MURRAY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington is recognized.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I thank the chairman of the Labor-HHS Subcommittee for his commitment to children and health. He stood with many of us many times. Unfortunately, the Labor bill that is now before us simply doesn't make the grade. I believe a number of our colleagues on this side of the aisle will be speaking against this and voting against this in the hopes that when the President vetoes it, the Senator from Pennsylvania, chairman of the committee, will work out some of the things about which we care deeply.

When you leave something for the last minute, you can't do it justice. This Congress has left our investment in educating our children, in protecting our American workforce, and in ensuring the health of the people of this country for the last minute, and the failures are pretty obvious. The Labor-HHS appropriations bill should have been the first bill we brought to the floor—not the last.

This Congress has tried every trick and every gimmick to play games with

the budget. I am here to say we are nearing the end of this game; and for the American people who are watching this Congress, they must wonder how serious we are about addressing their concerns. If this flawed proposal passes, the American people will be the ones who lose out.

I am on the floor to say this combination D.C./Labor-HHS conference report—with its irresponsible across-the-board cuts—fails to make the vital investments we need, the investments our constituents are asking for.

Mr. President, I will vote against this conference report, and I will tell you why. First, and most important, this bill will not guarantee that we reduce class size.

Now, last year, this Congress, the House and Senate, Democrats and Republicans, made a bipartisan commitment to help our districts hire and train new teachers. We did that because research shows students who learn in classes where there are fewer students in the early grades do better throughout their educational careers. They learn the basics—math, science, and English—and they have fewer discipline problems. We did that because it was a goal of all of us to make a concerted national effort to make sure that young children learned the basics, reduced the discipline problems, went on to college, and would be viable contributors to our economy when they graduated.

Last year, we made that bipartisan commitment and promised the parents of this country we would give their schools targeted money for smaller class sizes for the next 7 years. This bill walks away from that commitment. That is not acceptable. Not only does it walk away, but it broadens the use of the money so much that it could open the door to using vital, public education, class size dollars for private school vouchers.

Now, the President has said he will veto this bill if it does not keep our commitment to hire more teachers to reduce class size. I am proud that 37 Senators have joined with me to sign a letter saying they will back up that veto because we know that guaranteeing smaller classes for our children is worth fighting for.

The Labor-HHS bill's failure on class size is glaring. But to me it is just a start of many things that need to be fixed once this is vetoed and sent back to us in order for Democrats to be supportive.

It also fails to help families gain the literacy skills they need. When the Senate passed its version, we were able to provide an increase of \$103 million, which would have taken thousands of people off of waiting lists for literacy services. But in this conference agreement, they cut the Senate number by \$43 million. Those families were just about to get the skills they needed to rejoin our economy, and this agreement pushes them to back of the line.

This bill fails to make kids safer in our schools. In a year when the tragedy

at Columbine High School is still fresh in our minds, this bill cuts—cuts—\$31 million from the Senate bill for the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program. Local educators tell me we should double our funding in this area which is vital. Cutting it is just not acceptable.

This bill also fails the children who depend on the Head Start program. Head Start often makes the difference between success and failure in school for so many disadvantaged children. This bill does not do right by them.

This bill also cuts basic skills education for disadvantaged students. And it underfunds education technology programs at a time when we know all of our students need to get the skills in technology so that they can get the jobs that are open and waiting for them in so many communities across our country. It also cuts the vocational education program at a time when we know we need to make sure our kids graduate with skills to help them get jobs.

This bill does not do enough to support the Reading Excellence Act and bilingual education. This bill underfunds several important programs that build access and success for higher education students by not adequately funding Pell grants and vital programs like GEAR UP, LEAP, and TRIO.

I could go on. But it is clear that on education this bill is a missed opportunity. I am sure many people will try to claim that this agreement is “a victory for education.” But I can tell you as a former teacher and a former school board member that it is a hollow victory.

Mr. President, on labor issues, the Labor, HHS bill fails to adequately protect American workers and to promote universal employment.

This bill cuts funds for vital organizations, like the National Labor Relations Board—by 5 percent—and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration—by 6 percent—below the administration’s request. I don’t want to be any part of a bill that could harm our ability to enforce the labor and workplace laws that protect the health and safety of our country’s workers.

This bill’s irresponsible across-the-board spending cut would also hurt many vital job programs. For example, it would cut the Department of Labor’s Youth Activities formula grants by \$9.7 million, closing the door to almost 5,700 disadvantaged young people as they seek job training, summer employment, and educational opportunities. That is not acceptable to this Senator.

Mr. President, when it comes to protecting the health of our citizens, this bill is a mixed bag. While it does offer important support for the National Institutes of Health, for telemedicine for Children’s Hospital in Seattle, poison control, and community and migrant health centers, the areas where it fails are so significant and so glaring that I cannot support the underlying bill.

This bill fails to address the human and social costs of AIDS and HIV. This

bill’s arbitrary and irresponsible across-the-board cut means that AIDS patients and their communities will suffer because it doesn’t meet the growing need for services—services like drug assistance and pediatric AIDS care.

Similarly, the D.C. appropriations bill will hurt our ability to halt the spread of the disease because the bill continues to prohibit public funds from being used for clean needle exchange.

This bill also reduces our commitment to reproductive health care and family planning. I find it painfully ironic that last week, 48 Senators went on record against the principles of Roe v. Wade, claiming that abortion should not be a choice for women. Yet when it comes to reducing unintentional pregnancies or providing health care services for pregnant women, those same Senators are simply not there. This bill means that 40,000 women will be denied access to basic reproductive health care. It will reduce women’s access to critical pre-natal care.

This bill’s irresponsible across-the-board cut will also weaken our ability to respond to domestic violence. This bill would spend less money than we are spending this year on programs under the Violence Against Women Act. That means less money for rape prevention and for battered women’s shelters.

Many communities in my State are struggling—struggling—to help women and children affected by rape and abuse. Reducing the Federal commitment in this area is simply unacceptable.

Some people will say this bill’s across-the-board cut won’t hurt anyone. They are wrong because denying emergency shelter to a battered woman and her children is painful. Denying access to reproductive health care services to 40,000 women is painful, and denying access to life-saving drug therapies for AIDS patients is worse than painful, it is deadly.

Mr. President, we still have an opportunity to do the right thing for our children, our families and our communities. I urge my colleagues to vote “no” on this bill so the President can veto it and we can fix it—by undoing its damaging across-the-board cut and keeping our commitment to reduce class size. Let’s show the American people that even though this Congress has failed—throughout the session—to do its work in a timely, responsible way, we still have the wisdom to get things right at the end.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I wish to speak on the Labor-HHS bill which has been attached to the D.C. appropriations bill. I will not have any comments on the D.C. appropriations bill; I leave that to my friend and colleague, my leader, Senator DURBIN from Illinois.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

I ask unanimous consent Jane Daye, Mark Laisch, and Dr. Jack Chow, detailees to the Labor-HHS-Education

Subcommittee, be permitted on the floor during consideration of the D.C. and Labor-HHS-Education conference report.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HAGEL). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. HARKIN. Today we are bringing up—and I guess the vote will be held on Tuesday—the conference report that accompanies the D.C. appropriations bill. This report, as we now know, also includes the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill negotiated by the House and Senate appropriators.

I regret very much that the conference agreement includes a poison pill inserted by the House Republican leadership, an irresponsible and indiscriminate across-the-board cut against all discretionary programs, projects, and activities. Later I will discuss that at length.

First, I commend the work of my colleague and chairman on the appropriations bill, Senator SPECTER. He and I have had a great working relationship through the years, a true partnership every year on this bill, first when I was Chair and he was ranking member and now he is Chair and I am ranking.

Senator SPECTER has a deep commitment to the vitally important health, education, labor, research, and other initiatives in this bill. Senator SPECTER and his staff have always treated our side fairly. I want him and them to know how much I appreciate that. I not only appreciate it; I understand how important it is in terms of completing our Nation’s business.

A few weeks ago, the Senate passed the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill by an overwhelming vote of 73-25; 41 Democrats and 32 Republicans voted for it. This is an exceedingly strong vote. It got this strong vote because Senator SPECTER and I worked together and we worked with Senators from both sides of the aisle to craft a bill that truly reflected our Senate priorities. It was a good bill. It provides a major increase for medical research. It provides \$500 million more than the President requested for education. It maintained our commitment to worker safety provisions.

It did have one major flaw. It did not fund the President’s class size initiative in an acceptable manner. Nonetheless, I argued strongly for its passage. At the time, I told Members on my side of the aisle I would work to resolve the class size issue in conference. We had a good Senate bill. We had a strong Senate vote, with 73 votes on the Senate side.

The House of Representatives, on the other hand, was not able even to produce a bill. The Appropriations Committee on the House side reported out a bill. It cut education, cut job training, had a whole lot of bad labor riders dealing with workers’ safety protection. But the full House never even took it up.

Several weeks ago, we began something I had never ever engaged in

around here; we began a nonconference conference. We could not have had a conference because the House never passed a bill, but we met with the House appropriators. Congressman JOHN PORTER, the chairman of the Labor-HHS subcommittee on the House side—Senator SPECTER and I, and our staffs, met with him in an effort to move the process forward. When our committee was working on it, we made good progress. We worked together to produce an agreement that was very close to the Senate bill.

Again, I compliment and commend my colleague on the other side of the aisle in the House, Congressman PORTER, for working together in an open and constructive manner to produce a bill I believe could have garnered votes and could have passed. If we could have ended the conference at that point, I would be here today speaking in favor of the Labor-HHS and Education bill. However that is not the case.

With regard to the class size reduction issue, I raised the point in our negotiations with the House that 38 Senators encouraged the President to veto the conference report if it did not include this initiative. However, I was not able to convince the negotiators on this point. I am, however, convinced this issue will be addressed in any final bill. But putting this class size initiative aside, we had put together, I thought, really a pretty good agreement. We included a large increase for biomedical research, \$100 million for community health centers, and a big increase for Head Start. None of what I term “the offensive House riders” the House had put on for labor, health, and safety—none of those were included. Largely, it reflected most of the priorities of the Senate on both sides of the aisle, both Republican and Democratic.

As I said, if we could have ended it there, we probably would have had a pretty good bill. But then Republican House leadership got involved. First, they insisted key programs be cut. They insisted afterschool programs be reduced by \$100 million. They insisted the small increase we had for critical family planning services be eliminated. They insisted on cutting Goals 2000. Why? I don't know, unless it was because it was a Presidential priority.

Next, they insisted on further delayed obligations. We had some delayed obligations, but I think they were delayed obligations with which we could have lived, with which the Departments and Agencies could have lived. But the delayed obligations the House leadership put in, I think, will cause some real problems at the National Institutes of Health.

I have long said not only do we have to increase the money going to the NIH, that we had to double their budget over 5 years—of which I have been very supportive—but that we need continuity, so grants could go out to researchers that are not interrupted, so when researchers start on a program and a research project they can continue.

With the delayed obligations and the extent to which we have them in this bill, it appears that NIH will not be able to fund these research programs on a longer term basis. It is just going to be from 1 year to the next. As any person familiar with research can tell you, that is not the best way to conduct research. I think the delayed obligations are going to cut back on the good that we did in terms of increasing the funding for NIH.

Next, the House leaders also put in a \$121 million reduction in salaries and expenses. That was over and above the reductions we had already made on the Senate side. We cut pretty deeply in the salaries and expenses and administrative costs of the Departments under our jurisdiction, but the House leadership cut another \$121 million. I believe that is unacceptable.

After that, the House leadership added—over, I might say, the opposition of most of the appropriators—the poison pill across-the-board cut. The House Republican leaders repeatedly said this cut will give each Department the ability to cut fraud, waste, and abuse. I take a back seat to no one in this body or the other body or on either side of the aisle when it comes to fighting fraud, waste, and abuse in government programs, but that is not what this provision says, nor would it accomplish that. This is not a 1-percent cut that can be taken from any broad array of programs. Every program, project, and activity in this bill has to be cut by 1 percent.

So when you see the House Republican leaders on television saying: 1 percent, that's nothing, we can take that out of fraud, waste, and abuse—sorry. That is not the way the provision is written. The provision is written it is 1 percent. It is not 1 percent of the increase; it is 1 percent of the total that goes to each line item in this bill, every single line item has to be cut.

You might say that is not, that 1 percent—that doesn't sound like a lot. When you put it in the Social Security system and the offices that administer Social Security, it cuts it big time. It cuts millions of dollars out of veterans' health care. It cuts Meals on Wheels, community health centers, afterschool programs; it cuts education. Again, I point out it does not just cut the increases; it cuts many important programs actually below last year's level.

I will read from a list here of some programs that actually will have less than last year because of this across-the-board cut. Adult job training—we saw the other day our economy is booming at unprecedented rates. But the economy is changing. For example, we had an announcement the other day in Iowa a major packing plant was closing its doors 5 days before Christmas. I will not go into that right now, but talk about heartless; 5 days before Christmas, Iowa Beef Processors is closing its doors, and over 400 people are being thrown out of work. We need to retrain those people. We need to re-

train them for the new kind of economy we have. The bill before us cuts adult job training to less than what we had last year. It is the wrong way to go.

Youth opportunity grants, community service jobs for senior citizens are cut below last year's level. Family planning, AIDS prevention, substance abuse block grants, child welfare and child abuse programs are all cut to less than what we had last year. This is not a cut in the increase, this is a cut below what we had last year.

Teacher training: I met with some educators in my office yesterday who were here from Irving School in Dubuque. They were getting an award as one of the blue-ribbon schools of America, a great award. I mentioned the teacher training program was being cut to less than last year. They said: How could this possibly be? This is the program, the Eisenhower math and science program, that keeps our teachers up to par with what is happening so they can better teach their students. You can vote for this bill if you want, Mr. President, but if you do, you are voting to cut teacher training programs for Goals 2000, the literacy programs.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent this list of cuts that I have just enunciated be printed in the RECORD in tabular form.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Sample of Programs Cut Below a Hard Freeze Under Conference Agreement¹—Compares Labor-HHS Items From Fiscal Year 1999 Level to Fiscal Year 2000 Level

Program	Total cut in millions
Department of Labor:	
Adult Job Training	\$7.38
Youth Job Training	10.01
Youth Opportunity Grants	2.50
Comm. Service Jobs for Seniors	4.40
Department of Health and Human Services:	
Family Planning	2.14
CDC AIDS Prevention	1.34
CDC Epidemics Services	0.85
Substance Abuse Block Grant	15.34
Medicare Contractors	33.52
Child Welfare/Child Abuse	2.82
Department of Education:	
Goals 2000	4.91
Teacher Training (Eisenhower)	3.35
Literacy	0.65

¹Includes 1 percent across-the-board cut.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, the House Republican leadership and others have argued this across-the-board cut was needed to protect Social Security. We all agree we want to protect the Social Security surplus. But the Congressional Budget Office says even with the across-the-board cut, they are going to have to tap Social Security by \$17 billion. So leaving that aside, an across-the-board cut is not the answer. Let's protect Social Security. Let's do it in the right way. Let's make the tough decisions, not hide behind an across-the-board cut.

Frankly, there are other offsets we could use. I say we should impose a penalty on tobacco companies that fail

to meet targets for reducing youth smoking. In fact, I have in my hand a specific proposal to do just that, to set a goal of reducing teen smoking by 15 percent. That is a modest goal. If they fail to meet that modest goal, they would have to pay a penalty. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that this proposal would raise almost \$6 billion in fiscal year 2000.

That is \$2.8 billion more than is saved by this across-the-board cut. It would have the added benefit of protecting our kids from the deadly addiction of tobacco.

I want to be very clear—my esteemed friend from Illinois is sitting here—this is not a new idea. We have voted on this before. In fact, this was part of a proposal the Senator from Illinois and the Senator from Ohio proposed and which actually passed this body. So why don't we do this rather than having an across-the-board cut in teacher training, the substance abuse block grant, health programs, AIDS prevention programs. Let's do something we already said we ought to do—cut teen smoking. And if the tobacco companies cannot meet it, they pay a penalty. Unfortunately, the conference report we have before us does not take this path.

With all the respect, admiration, and friendship I have for Senator SPECTER—and he has worked doggedly on this bill; he has worked hard to protect education and health and research programs; he and his staff have worked openly with me and my staff—reluctantly I will have to vote against this conference agreement.

The poison pill across-the-board cut did it. I do so with reluctance because I believe we crafted a good bill in the Senate, and it would have avoided all kinds of political maneuvering if we had the bill we passed in the Senate. If we followed that bipartisan path Senator SPECTER and I worked on and set up in the Senate that was reflected in a strong bipartisan vote in the Senate, we would have had a much different result.

It is very clear to everyone, if this conference agreement is passed by the Senate, it will be vetoed by the President, and that veto will not be overridden. When that happens, I plan to work very hard with my chairman, Senator SPECTER, and will be sitting at that table to help craft a bill with our House colleagues and, of course, with the White House, that reflects congressional priorities but does not make these inordinate, mindless across-the-board cuts and that has offsets that truly do reduce teen smoking and help us meet our goals of not invading the Social Security trust funds.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. I would like to make a unanimous consent request because I have been waiting to make a statement on the floor. Several of my colleagues have come to the floor with requests for short periods of time. If there is no objection, I ask that the Senator from

Washington be allowed to speak for 10 minutes, as in morning business, followed by the Senator from West Virginia for 10 minutes, and then that I be given the floor at that moment in time for 15 minutes to address the bill that is pending before us.

Mr. GORTON. Reserving the right to object, I am not speaking in morning business; I am speaking on the bill.

Mr. DURBIN. Sorry.

Mr. GORTON. While I think it would be about 10 minutes, I do not want to be called down if I go over 30 seconds.

Mr. DURBIN. I would be happy to amend the unanimous consent request to accommodate whatever time the Senator would like, if he would specify a time.

Is there a time the Senator would like to set?

Mr. GORTON. It will be approximately 10 minutes. It will be on the bill. If the unanimous consent request is amended in that form, I am perfectly happy with that.

Mr. DURBIN. I want to give the Senator from Washington every opportunity to speak on this bill. I misunderstood when I spoke with him. But I would be happy to yield to him. As part of the unanimous consent request, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Washington be recognized on the bill for up to 15 minutes.

Mr. GORTON. Fine.

Mr. DURBIN. Then the Senator from West Virginia be recognized for up to 10 minutes in morning business, and then I be recognized for 15 minutes on the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Washington.

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, this is a landmark Labor, Education, and Health appropriations bill. It is a landmark in more than one respect. From my perspective, however, it is especially notable for two features relating to our assistance to the education that is being provided to children all across the United States of America.

The first is this bill, in reaction to the President's budget message of much earlier this year, ends any dispute about the generosity of support for education on the part of either the President or the congressional majority. In fact, this bill includes some \$300 million more for education purposes than did the President's budget message earlier this year; \$2 billion more than last year—\$35 billion in total.

Mr. President, \$35 billion is not an inconsiderable sum. But of that portion that goes to our common schools from kindergarten through 12th grade, it still will represent only about 7 percent of the number of dollars that go into providing an education for future generations of Americans. But there is not a dispute in this bill over whether or not we should fund education with this relative degree of generosity. In that respect, this is a landmark bill.

But as we deal with the question of education, I believe it to be a landmark

in more than just that respect. This bill, in its present form, represents the first modest turn from a direction that we have taken for three decades or more. During the last 30 or 35 years, the Congress and Presidents of both parties have piled one categorical aid program for education on top of another. Each of those programs has its own rules for eligibility. Each has its own rules as to how money should be spent. Each carries with it its forms to be filled out and its audits to be performed and to be examined after the fact.

The President's proposed budget added a number of new categorical aid programs to those already in existence and, I believe, shortchanged a number of the most vital educational programs that have been a part of our system literally for decades. As a consequence, this bill provides considerably more money for impact schools than the President's budget called for. Impact schools, of course, are those schools on or near military reservations, Indian reservations, or other Federal property in which a peculiar and unique burden is placed by the fact that the Federal Government has employees or beneficiaries in the immediate vicinity while at the same time owning tax-exempt property that does not, as property, pay its fair share or any share of the cost of operating those schools.

Most national administrations, most Presidents of the United States, have not much liked impact aid. It took me some time to determine in my own mind why that was. I think it is because once the formula distributes so many dollars to a school district in impact aid, the school district decides how the money is going to be spent to advance the education of its students. There aren't any rules and regulations from the U.S. Department of Education telling school districts how they must use that impact aid. As a consequence, it has never had much of a lobby in the Department of Education or in administrations either Republican or Democratic.

A second area in which this bill includes more money for education than did the President's original request is for IDEA, the education for the disabled. This body proudly reauthorized IDEA just 2 years ago, including in it a provision that we would come up with 40 percent of the costs that that bill, for the education of the disabled, imposed on school districts all across the country—40 percent of those costs. This bill, more generous than the President's budget, actually funds about 9 percent of those costs. Members of the Congress and the President got to congratulate themselves on passing a bill mandating education for the disabled. They got to congratulate themselves on a promise that, very bluntly, I think, neither side had any intention of keeping. We do not, in this bill, come close to that 40-percent requirement, but we do better than the President of the United States did in his budget submission.

From my perspective, however, the most important change takes place in connection with a program that began last year designed to put more teachers in the classroom, especially more teachers in the classroom up through the third grade, a proposal that, for all practical purposes, could be used only for that purpose, whether more teachers in those primary grades was the primary need for each and every one of the 17,000 school districts in the United States or not.

I don't believe my State is different from many others. My great friend and frequent ally, the Senator from West Virginia, is on the floor. I suspect he has a greater percentage of school districts in his State than does Washington State that don't receive enough money under this program to hire one teacher because they are simply too small. So this bill, after an extended debate between the two sides in which one side said we have to continue the program entirely unchanged, whatever those school districts' priorities are, and our side that says we have to trust the school districts to spend that money for any educational purpose they desire—two rather dramatically opposed points of view—takes a half-way position between the two.

It states that the primary goal of this \$1.2 billion is to put more teachers in the classroom but that if school districts have other priorities or if they don't get enough money to do that for even one teacher, they can, in fact, use it for improving the quality of teachers they already have through more training or for some other educational purpose they believe is more significant than the top-down mandate in this bill.

I hope that will be appealing to the President of the United States. It does express at least a qualified degree of trust on the part of the Congress in the dedication and intelligence and knowledge of the men and women who run our schools, either as elected members of school boards or as full-time superintendents, principals, and teachers, to make decisions that will improve the quality of education of their children.

I have never been quite certain why it is that Members of the Senate think they know more about the needs of schools all across the country than do the people who make their entire careers out of providing that education, but that has been the net result of what we have done. This is a modest move in the other direction, a reflection of the fact that early next year, when we debate the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, we will debate exactly that kind of issue: Who knows best what our young people need, we in Washington, DC, or those who run the hundreds of thousands of schools in the United States of America.

This bill also begins to keep a promise we made a relatively short time ago significantly to increase funding for health research through the National Institutes of Health.

This bill is a landmark in one other vitally important respect. As generous as this bill is to education, as generous as it is to health programs and to other programs included within it, it is a part of a pattern of 13 appropriations bills that spend almost \$600 billion in discretionary money in the course of the next year but do not touch the Social Security trust fund. Last year, for the first time in decades, we ended up with a budget that was not only balanced but in surplus to the tune of \$1 billion without touching a dime in the Social Security trust fund. We are absolutely convinced, I think most of us, that we should make the year 2000 the second consecutive year in which that takes place and keep on following exactly those same policies.

We can pass this bill and the other appropriations bills still unresolved without dipping into the Social Security surplus and without increasing taxes on the American people. That truly is a landmark. We thought when we passed the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, we might get to this point in 2002 or 2003. We got to it in fiscal year 1999.

This morning's newspapers printed excerpts of a speech by Alan Greenspan on the nature of our economy and on the fact that it has actually been growing more rapidly and is more robust than most of our statistics had indicated. Chairman Greenspan has made it very clear that actually balancing the budget and paying down the debt is a key factor in keeping the economy of this Nation moving forward.

We have a bill that I commend enthusiastically to all of the Members of this body. It is generous with education dollars, as it ought to be for one of the highest of all priorities in any society, the education of its future generation; it provides at least a modestly greater degree of trust in our professional educators and in our elected school board members with respect to how to spend that education money; it deals generously with our need for health research; and it is a part of a pattern that will continue the 1-year precedent of balancing the budget without invading the Social Security trust fund, without breaking the promises we have made not only to those who are retired today but those who are working today but will depend on Social Security in the future, that the money they pay into Social Security is for that purpose and that purpose only. For that reason, I highly commend this bill to the Senate of the United States and hope it is passed and approved by the President of the United States.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia is recognized.

THE PHONE BILL FAIRNESS ACT

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, yesterday, I introduced the Phone Bill Fairness Act. Consumers across this country have to deal on a regular basis with telephone bills, and one thing they do understand is that telephone

bills are very complicated and frustrating. But what they may not know is that telephone bills are, to them, more than just an annoyance—they may be costing them quite a lot of money. I want to address that issue very briefly.

When the average consumer receives their phone bill, they don't get a sheet of paper; they get dozens of pages, with very small type, filled with confusing acronyms, complicated payment schemes, and sometimes even services they have not signed up for at all but for which they are being asked to pay. I imagine most consumers not only don't understand everything they have received, but after reading a few pages into their bill—if they do that—they give up and just hope, so-to-speak, they are getting what they want.

Now, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 was based on the idea competition and market forces would lead to lower prices and better service. We have begun to see the benefits of that act in certain respects. New companies and newly competitive incumbents have begun to reduce rates and offer innovative new services. That is to the good. The main beneficiaries of these improvements, however, have been business consumers. They have the expertise to analyze the bewilderingly complicated telecommunications market and to find out what are the best deals for them. That is exactly what they wanted because they have the size and scope to figure out what is going on and proceed to do what is in their best interest.

But your average phone user does not have a team of lawyers or accountants who can pour over his or her phone bill to determine the plan or the company that will save them the most money, which is what competition is about; thus, they cannot use the market system to their financial advantage. Unfortunately, phone bills become so complicated, and the array of services and phone plans so bewildering, that it really does take lawyers and accountants to understand and maximize the benefits that are intended.

So, on the one hand, the Telecommunications Act is working because it has created the opportunity for consumers to get lower rates and better service, but it is not working because it requires consumers to walk through a complicated and highly uncertain maze to finally get to that opportunity.

Once simple choices about telephone service have become so complicated that even the Chairman of the FCC, Bill Kennard, who was our foremost expert on telecommunications matters, himself has expressed frustration over reading his own phone bill, I think we have something we need to consider.

We may not be able to reduce the complicated nature of telecommunications competition, but at the very least we can provide residential consumers with a roadmap that leads