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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Almighty God, the true Source of spiritual, intellectual, emotional, volitional, and physical power, we need a fresh flow of Your Spirit for the work of this day. We confess our insufficiency and pray for Your power to think Your thoughts, to do Your will as You reveal it, to love unselfishly, to forgive graciously, and to act energetically with renewed strength and endurance. You have told us that You pour out Your greatest blessings on those who put their ultimate trust in You alone. You are the Rock of Ages on which we can stand, the Intervener when we are in trouble, the One who opens doors of opportunity for the next step of Your strategy for us, our Friend in life's lonely moments, and the Source of courage whenever we are tempted to give up in the battle for truth and righteousness in America.

Bless the Senators and all of us who are privileged to work with and for them. May this be a day in which we all sense Your presence and receive Your power. Through our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The acting majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, today the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 11:30 a.m. Following morning business, the Senate will begin debate on S. 96, the Y2K bill, with amendments expected to be offered.

ORDER FOR RECESS

I ask unanimous consent that at 12:30 p.m. the Senate stand in recess until 2:15 p.m. for the weekly party caucus luncheons.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, following the policy lunch, at 2:15 the Senate will resume consideration of the Y2K bill. Rollcall votes on amendments to the bill are expected during today's session. Votes are also possible on any other legislative or executive item cleared for action.

I thank my colleagues for their attention.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

(Mr. VOINOVICH assumed the chair.)

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, on March 17, Senator George Mitchell received the Medal of Freedom at the White House.

The day was picked especially because Irish Americans had gathered at the White House, but also Irish from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland were in attendance.

All together, with the President of the United States, we honored the extraordinary achievements of the United States Senate's former majority leader.

Marcelle and I were in attendance with great pride in watching our friend, Senator Mitchell. We were honored also to be with his wife, Heather, and other members of his family. Having served with him, I know he is an

extraordinarily capable, patient, and talented person. No one else could have done what he did.

Senator Mitchell received a standing ovation for his words that evening—words that came from his heart and mind.

I ask unanimous consent that his words be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the remarks were ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

REMARKS BY SENATOR GEORGE J. MITCHELL ON RECEIPT OF THE MEDAL OF FREEDOM, THE WHITE HOUSE, MARCH 17, 1999

Thank you, Mr. President, for your generous remarks, and for your commitment to peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. You are the only American President ever to have placed Northern Ireland high on our national agenda, the only President ever to have visited there while in office. The people of Ireland, North and South, know of your concern for their future; and they are deeply grateful. In behalf of peace loving people everywhere, I thank you.

I also want to thank you for giving me the chance to serve in Northern Ireland. I must admit that I didn't always feel this way. During the years that I sat and listened to the same arguments, over and over again, I had other, less charitable thoughts about you and about my role there.

It was difficult and demanding, but it also was deeply rewarding. For me to have played a part in trying to end an ancient conflict, trying to make possible a more safe and secure life for generations to come; for me to have come to know, to admire, and to love the people of Northern Ireland—these are rewards which cannot be measured, or even described.

I can only say that my heart is overflowing with gratitude—to you, Mr. President; to the political leaders and to the people of Northern Ireland; to Prime Ministers Ahern and Blair and their predecessors; to Mo Mowlam and David Andrews and their predecessors and colleagues; to my colleagues, John de Chastelain and Harri Holkeri; to my staff, Martha Pope, David Pozorski, and Kelly Currie; and especially to my wife, Heather, who was patient and understanding through three-and-a-half long, lonely years.

On an occasion like this, it is tempting for me to take a nostalgic look back on my life.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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But instead we must look forward, with urgency, not to my life, but to the lives of the people of Northern Ireland.

The events of the past year have shown the great promise of peace. But they also have shown that huge obstacles remain to a durable and sustainable peace. On Good Friday of last year, the political leaders of Northern Ireland showed the world the meaning of political courage. Many of these leaders are present, and I'd like to recognize some of them: David Trimble, John Hume, Seamus Mallon, Reg Empey, Gerry Adams, John Alderdice, Sean Neeson, David Ervine, Monica McWilliams and Gary McMichael.

Ladies and gentlemen, these are the heroes of the Northern Ireland Peace process. These are the men and women who deserve the medals and the applause. They are my friends, and yours. Please join me in letting them know how much you value their Good Friday agreement.

I'd like to address those leaders directly. You've heard the applause. Perhaps better than anyone, I know how well deserved it was. But even before the applause fades, the future intrudes.

Getting the agreement was historic. But, as you know, by itself it doesn't provide or guarantee peace. It makes peace possible. Whether it will be realized is up to you.

The Good Friday Agreement transformed Northern Ireland. It also transformed you. You are no longer just the leaders of your parties, or members of the assembly. You are the vessels into which the people of Northern Ireland have poured their hopes and dreams. You sought public office and with it comes power and responsibility. You have the awesome responsibility of life or death. What you do, or don't do, could mean life or death for many of your fellow citizens.

As he left London to join us at the talks last April, Tony Blair said he felt the hand of history on his shoulder. It's still there, on your shoulders.

For a moment, come back in time with me to December 16, 1997, the last negotiating session of that year. We met in the small conference room at Stormont. We had tried for two intense weeks to get agreement on a statement of the key issues to be resolved, and we had failed. We were all bitterly frustrated and deeply discouraged.

As we walked out into the windswept and rainy night, it seemed so hopeless, so impossible. And yet, less than four months later, you reached agreement.

How did you do it? You did it because each of you took a risk for peace, each of you acted with wisdom and courage. And you did it because you knew, in your hearts, that the alternative was unacceptable.

It stills is. The alternative to peace in Northern Ireland is unacceptable. It should be unspeakable, unthinkable. The continued punishment beatings and the savage murder of Rosemary Nelson, who on Sunday was blown to death just a few yards from her eight year old daughter's school, are like alarm bells ringing in the night. They warn that the cancer of violence and sectarian hatred lurks just below the surface and could erupt at any time into wide-spread conflict.

History might have forgiven failure to reach an agreement, since no one thought it possible. But once the agreement was reached, history will never forgive the failure to carry it out. The people of Northern Ireland don't want to slip back into the cauldron of sectarian conflict. You can prevent it.

Those who oppose the agreement have failed to bring it down. As Seamus Mallon has said, the only people who can bring the Good Friday down are those who supported it. You cannot let that happen.

I know you. I trust you. I believe in you. And I say to you that the problems you now

face are no greater or more difficult than those you faced, and dealt with, last year. You must once more rise above adversity. You must again defy history.

You must come together, now and as often as necessary until peace is assured. Then you will deserve and receive the honor that will transcend all others: the satisfaction of knowing that, in the most difficult and dangerous of circumstances, you have bestowed on your countrymen the ultimate prize peace and reconciliation.

After you reached agreement on Good Friday, we were exhausted, elated, and emotional. I conclude tonight by repeating what I told some of you then.

The agreement was for me the realization of a dream that had sustained me for three-and-a-half years. Now, I have a new dream. In a few years, I will take my young son to Northern Ireland. We will roam the country, taking in the sights and sounds of one of the most beautiful landscapes on earth, feeling the warmth and generosity of a great people. Then, on a rainy afternoon, we will go to the Northern Ireland Assembly. We will sit quietly in the visitors' gallery and watch and listen as you debate the ordinary issues of life in a democratic society: education, health care, agriculture, tourism. There will be no talk of war, for the war will have long been over. There will be no talk of peace, for peace will be taken for granted.

On that day, the day on which peace is taken for granted in Northern Ireland, I will be truly and finally fulfilled.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative assistant called the roll.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, what is the pending business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in morning business. The Senator is granted 10 minutes.

Mr. BAUCUS. I thank the Chair.

FEDERALLY IMPACTED SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ACT

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I rise today to speak to the Federally Impacted School Improvement Act.

As we all know, there is a very important debate going on in our country today concerning our Nation's schools. Schools all across our country are crumbling, in many cases in such disrepair that it affects the child's ability to learn or even feel safe. I hope and expect that this Congress will reach a consensus on a school construction bill very soon.

I support and have cosponsored several bills in the last Congress that encourage a nationwide effort to rebuild our public schools. Quite simply, it is the right thing to do.

But in a heated national debate, one group of children is continually left out in the cold; that is, students who live on federally owned land, usually an Indian reservation, very often a military installation. In my State of Montana, about 12,000 children are

classified as federally impacted; that is, they live on Federal land.

For almost 50 years, Congress has provided financial assistance to school districts that are impacted by a Federal presence. We call this Impact Aid funding. Unfortunately, it has been underfunded for the last 15 years. And even worse, for the last 5 years Impact Aid schools have received zero dollars to help in paying for badly needed repairs and construction.

This has created an underclass of schools with glaring infrastructure problems that border on dangerous and inhumane.

How bad is it, you may ask? Let me tell you.

In one school in Montana, the Hays Lodge Pole Elementary School on the Fort Belknap Reservation, they say that the high school has infrastructure problems that are so bad that saying it has problems is like saying that the Titanic had a small leak.

Whenever it rains or snows, the roof leaks making classrooms unusable. The kindergarten is located on a stage, not in a classroom. The school nurse and counselor work out of a converted locker room shower with no ventilation. The decrepit sewage system regularly backs up into this same shower, filling the nurse's and counselor's office with raw sewage. And all special education services, which a large percentage of students use, are provided in a separate house requiring the children or staff to walk over an ice rink in high winds and adverse weather just to get to class.

While some may say, OK, that sounds like a bad deal, shouldn't the local taxpayers pass a mill levy to build a new school? Or shouldn't they get help from the President's school construction bill which gives billions of dollars in bonding authority to school districts for just these sorts of problems? The answer, sadly, is no.

The problem is that these schools have no bonding authority. Since the land is owned by the Federal Government, there is no local mill levy to raise. And since the Federal Government has, for 5 consecutive years, provided zero dollars for repairing Impact Aid schools, these problems have just gotten worse and more expensive. And it is our children who pay the price.

So the Baucus-Hagel Federal Impacted School Improvement Act aims to fix that. Make no mistake, this is not some budget-busting Government handout. The act authorizes a small but meaningful \$50 million a year appropriation for the next 5 years for Impact Aid school construction and repair.

And 45 percent of the funds appropriated under the bill go to Indian lands. Another 45 percent is dedicated to military schools. The final 10 percent is reserved for emergency situations.

In order to make this small appropriation go further, our bill requires local school districts to match every