



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 106th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 145

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, AUGUST 2, 1999

No. 111

Senate

The Senate met at 12:01 p.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, we praise You for great Senators in each period of our Nation's history. And the Senate of the 106th Congress is certainly no exception. Thank you for our Senators who love You, seek Your best for our Nation, and are indefatigable in their efforts to lead with courage and vision. Over the years, You have impacted their consciences with Your Ten Commandments, Your truth, the guidance of Your Spirit, and vision for this Nation so clearly enabled by our founding fathers and mothers. Daily, refine their consciences. Purify them until they reflect the pure gold of Your character and Your priorities of righteousness, justice, and mercy. Then may their consciences guide their convictions, and may they always have the courage of these sacred convictions.

What we pray for the Senators we ask for the entire Senate family. May we all be one in asking You to develop in us a conscience saturated by Your absolutes and shaped by Your authority. To this end, Senators and all staff join in rededicating our lives to glorify You by serving our Nation. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable STROM THURMOND, a Senator from the State of South Carolina, led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able Senator from Alaska is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, today by previous order the Senate will begin 1 hour of morning business to be followed by 2 hours of debate on S. 335, the Deceptive Mail Prevention and Enforcement Act regarding sweepstakes. The first rollcall vote today will occur at 5:30 p.m. on passage of the sweepstakes legislation. At 3 p.m. today, the Senate will resume consideration of the Agriculture appropriations bill. It is hoped that Senators who have amendments will work with the bill managers to schedule time to debate those amendments. Additional votes beyond the 5:30 vote could occur relative to the Agriculture appropriations bill. It is the intention of the majority leader to complete action on as many appropriations bills as possible before the August recess. Therefore, Senators should be prepared to vote into the evenings throughout this whole week.

I thank my colleagues for their attention.

I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 10 minutes in morning business under the time allocated to Senator DASCHLE.

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

(Mr. STEVENS assumed the chair.)

FAMILY FARMING IN AMERICA

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, this afternoon at 3 o'clock we will begin debate on a farm disaster relief plan that will be offered by Senator HARKIN, myself, Senators CONRAD, DASCHLE, and others. I think this will be, for those of us from farm country, one of the most important pieces of legislation addressed by this Congress this year. I know that unless one lives on a family farm, it is probably pretty hard to de-

scribe the farm crisis, but I thought I would read a couple letters from my constituents in North Dakota.

Before I do, I am reminded of the story the former chairman of the House Agriculture Committee used to tell. Kika de la Garza was his name. He used to talk about agriculture and food by telling a story about nuclear submarines. He said he met with all these folks from the Defense Department and they told him about the wonders of these nuclear submarines the United States had. They told him about all of their provisions and all their fuel and their capabilities and their speed and their distance. And he said, well, how long can a nuclear submarine stay under the sea? And the admiral says: Until the food runs out. It was Kika de la Garza's way of pointing out that food, after all, is the essence of most of our existence, and we are a world, a rather fragile, large globe—as seen by the astronauts who leave our Earth and go into space—of diverse interests, diverse people.

However, one thing that seems constant in this world is that we read that so many people go to bed hungry—especially children, but so many people across the world go to bed hungry. Somewhere around half a billion people go to bed with a serious ache in their belly because they do not have anything to eat. Malnutrition and lack of good nutrition among billions of others exists around the world.

Then we go to the farm belt in the United States where a family is struggling to make a living on the family farm and find that its farmer loaded some grain on the truck and took it to the elevator and the grain trade said to the farmer: Your food does not have any value. Our grain trade assesses the value of your food as relatively meaningless. The farmer wonders about that because we live in such a hungry world. How could it be that what we produce in such abundance has no value?

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



Printed on recycled paper.

S9959

That is what our farmers wonder. Let me talk just about these farmers in the context of their words. This is a letter from a woman in the central part of our State whose family farms; she farms. Here is the kind of plaintive cry that exists from a proud and hard-working people in our country, family farmers who take enormous risks, risk everything they have to try to make a living with seeds they plant in the ground. They do not know whether they will grow; they do not know whether the natural disasters will occur—insects and hail and rain too much, too little. They don't know what will happen with this money they have invested in the soil. If they finally get their crop and they escape all of those problems, they get the crop off the ground and take it to the elevator, they don't know whether there will be a price that allows them to get a return for that crop.

Those are the kinds of people who live on our family farms. They are the people who create the backbone of our society in our country. They are the people who together build a small community where they trade and do business. They build our churches in those communities. They create charities. They do the things together in a community that we forget about sometimes in our country. What is it that makes this country work at its roots? It is entrepreneurship, it is family farming, it is a sense of community, and it is a sense of sharing.

Here is a family farm. This woman says in her letter to me:

We aren't asking for a free ride, just the possibility of surviving. We are private people and we bear our pain alone, and we don't discuss the true situation out here on the family farm with anybody. Our neighbors are all in the same shape. The spirit of North Dakota will be gone with these people and their farms. We cannot survive without a reasonable income. How much longer will it be before people understand that we are trying to feed our family, and pay for basic necessities? But with today's income we are not saving money for retirement. We are not going on trips. We are not enjoying any of the fruits from our labor. We are slowly but surely going broke.

A man who lives in southeastern North Dakota on the family farm says:

It sometimes brings a tear to my eye that maybe in a year, maybe two years, I will not be around in family farming to matter anymore. This won't be easy to explain to my three young daughters. This is where I wanted to bring them up, in a rural setting of life that I was used to and that I understand. If it happens, I hope they read in their history books that it wasn't because their dad was a dumb man. It was because it was caused by policy and giant concentration of companies who want dominance.

Or, from a woman named Susan, whose letter I have read previously on this floor. She lost her husband, and she had to sell their family farm. Prices had collapsed.

I had an auction last week to sell the machinery so that I could help pay off some of the debts that incurred after 26 years of farming. I have a 17-year-old son who would

not help me prepare for auction and did not even get out of bed the day of the auction sale because he is so heartbroken that he cannot continue to farm this land.

This is a 17-year-old boy who is not a bad boy. It is just that he couldn't get out of bed to watch the auction sale of his farm because he couldn't bear to see the loss of his dream and his families' dream. He wanted to be a farmer as well.

She said:

My husband was an excellent manager, fully educated. He chose to farm rather than live in a big city. He had a job once with Motorola. He wanted to raise his children in a place with clean air, no crime, and good schools. He worked very hard physically and emotionally to make this farm work. And its failure was no fault of his. Something is seriously wrong with our country when we will sacrifice the family farm for a political system and an entire way of life for hundreds of years.

Her point is that farmers at this point are not at fault for what is happening. The world is hungry. Most people need food. We raise it in great abundance, and family farmers are told that what they produce doesn't matter.

I would like to use a couple of charts that show the dilemma that family farmers are facing not only in my State but around the country.

I show this chart because some people might wonder, well, what is all this farm crisis about? I ask anyone who looks at this chart—this chart shows prices received by farmers for wheat. Most of the farmers in my part of the world are wheat farmers. Put minimum wage in this chart, if this had happened with the minimum wage; put corporate profits on this chart, if this had happened to corporate profits—what do you think the outcry would be? Put congressional salaries on this chart. If this had happened to congressional salaries, what would the outcry be?

This represents the income farmers are receiving from their products when the price of every other thing is increasing. The income received by farmers is collapsing.

For purposes of comparison, let me compare the price of corn and wheat with what farmers received for those commodities during the middle of the Great Depression. With the price adjusted over time, ask yourself: What do farmers get now relative to what they got during the Great Depression?

Take a look at it in 1998. These are the worst farm prices price adjusted for 50 years. Families cannot make a living in this country in these circumstances.

I am tempted to go into a long discussion of so-called Freedom to Farm. I didn't vote for it. It was a terrible piece of farm legislation. Some loved it. Some voted for it. Some still support it. Certainly it has a wonderful name.

It reminds me of the people early on who sold insurance. They called it "death insurance." Many years ago they sold "death insurance." Do you know something? Death insurance

didn't have a very good name for it. It didn't sell very well. Nobody wanted to buy death insurance. So what did they do? They changed the name to "life insurance." It is a better sounding name, and it sold much better.

So we had a farm bill called Freedom to Farm. What a nice sounding name with bankrupt policies that said family farming doesn't matter much in whatever the market system says with respect to agriculture.

There has never been a free market in agriculture, and never will be.

Do you think the European countries whose citizens have gone hungry will decide it doesn't matter whether they have family farmers? They will never make that decision. They will always have a farm program that insists on price supports for families on the farms in Europe.

The point is that this country has decided by itself that family farming as a concept doesn't matter to its future; that whatever the market decides is what our future shall be. If the market decides that corporate farms shall farm from California to Maine, so be it.

The problem with that is that all across this country we will have yardlights turned off and families leaving the farm. The economic arteries that they provide to the small towns will be closed and dried up, and those small towns will be boarded up. The people will be leaving small towns. We will see the collapse, the total collapse, of a rural lifestyle.

The author Critchfield, who was a wonderful, world-wide, world-renown author, who actually grew up in Fargo, ND, said that family values have always been nurtured on the family farms in this country, and the refreshing small towns rolled to the cities from many family farms. It was always a seedbed of family values of nurturing and helping and working together. We will lose all of that because some people say it doesn't matter.

We are having a debate this afternoon at 3 o'clock. It is critically important. This matters more than most people in this country will ever know. I hope that with my colleagues we can easily pass a disaster bill in the first step, and in the second that we can then pass a revision of the underlying farm bill, and say to farmers: You have a future. We want to provide you hope and help because we think you matter to our country.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I echo the words of my colleague.

I was raised on and continue to be a part of the seventh generation Arkansas family farm.

I think it is so important that we recognize this is an issue—those from other States, as well as farm States, agricultural-based States—and that we can impress upon our colleagues in Washington, D.C. the crisis that our small rural communities and our farming communities are going through.

I will certainly be joining the Senator later on this afternoon in that debate. We need to impress upon people

that this is an issue for this country. It is not just agriculture; it is a heritage of this country and a heritage of our rural communities.

SAFE SCHOOLS ACT OF 1999

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I rise to speak on what I think is the most critical as well as the most worthy of issues that we should be dealing with in the Senate and the Congress; that is, the emotional well-being of our children. They are truly the fabric of the success of our Nation into the next century.

All too often we have been through incidents such as Jonesboro, AK, as well as Littleton, CO. We like to talk about them and discuss these issues and the crises that are going on in our children's minds and in their souls. But all too often we talk about it, and we seem to forget it. We don't do what we really need to be doing on behalf of our children in this country.

Mr. President, the Safe Schools Act of 1999 will provide resources to public schools so they can remain safe and strong cornerstones of our communities.

As we move into the 21st century, we must adapt our approach to education to meet the changing needs of students, teachers and parents in these communities.

Although I am one of the youngest Members of the Senate, I grew up in Helena, Arkansas during what seemed to be a much simpler time—even though we were in the height of de-segregation in the South.

Our parents pulled together to make everyone's education experience a success. Students came to school prepared to learn. Teachers had control of their classroom. The threat of school violence was virtually non-existent.

Now, more than twenty years later, things are different.

Our children are subjected to unprecedented social stresses including divorce, drug and alcohol abuse, child abuse, poverty and an explosion of technology that has good and bad uses.

These stresses exhibit themselves in the behavior of teenagers, as well as in our young children. Increasingly, elementary school children exhibit symptoms of substance abuse, academic underachievement, disruptive behavior, and even suicide.

Too many students bring guns and weapons to school.

This is a very complex problem and there is no one single answer. It will take more than metal detectors and surveillance cameras to prevent the tragedies occurring in our schools today. But we must do something. We cannot wait any longer. We have to address this issue now.

I believe the Safe Schools Act reflects the needs and wishes of students, parents, teachers and school administrators. It is the first step toward addressing the emotional well-being of our young people.

During my Senate campaign last year, I spent a lot of time listening to parents and teachers. From my experience, a lot of the most effective solutions being at the local level.

This bill incorporates the lessons I have learned from the people of my state who are working on the front lines to educate and care for our children.

First, this bill would provide funds to elementary and secondary schools to hire additional mental health professionals.

Students today bring more to school than backpacks and lunchboxes. Many of them bring severe emotional troubles.

It is critical that schools be able to help these students and help teachers deal with them. We can possibly prevent a horrific act of violence, and if a disruptive student receives help, his or her teacher will have more control of the classroom in order to instruct all of the children there to learn.

Unfortunately, there are not nearly enough mental health professionals working in our nation's schools today.

The American School Health Association recommends that the student-to-counselor ratio be 250:1. In secondary schools, the current ratio is 513:1. In elementary schools, where the student-to-teacher ratio exceeds 1000:1.

This is just not acceptable for a country as advanced as ours to not be providing the needs of our children.

The second major component of my Safe Schools Act provides funding for after-school and mentoring programs.

Many of our children go home to empty houses or spend hours every day in poorly supervised settings. Studies show that youth crime peaks between 3:00 and 7:00 p.m.

Local public schools need additional resources so they can establish or expand after school and summer programs for children.

This is a wonderful chance for the community to get involved. Many non-profit organizations can bring their resources to children in the schools and to the community.

A variety of organizations can come together to build strong after school and summer programs which enhance the academic work of students and provide them with other meaningful activities.

Many communities in Arkansas are doing just that.

The city of Fort Smith has begun the SPICE Program, which has been working for nine years with adult tutors who help kids after-school with homework, and teach them arts and crafts which keep them out of trouble.

In Little Rock, the Camp Aldersgate Youth Initiative encourages teenagers to participate in supervised community service activities, such as tutoring, recreation and conflict management;

The Safe Jonesboro Mentoring Program in Jonesboro, Arkansas, brings adults from the local business commu-

nity to Jonesboro High School once a week to mentor high school student.

And these programs are not just being put into place in our larger towns, they're also cropping up in rural communities.

In Monticello and six counties throughout Southeast Arkansas, the Southeast Arkansas Foster Grandparents Program has helped improve literacy and reading test scores for hundreds of children. In this program, senior citizens serve as literacy and reading tours to K-3 elementary school students twenty hours a week.

The Boys, Girls and Adults Community Development Center in Marvell, a Save the Children grantee, has been providing educational, cultural and recreational activities, as well as mentoring for children after school. 60% of the children participating in this program have improved their grade point average. It works.

Studies show that one-on-one attention raises the academic scores of children and improves their self-esteem. With just a little extra help, a child who is struggling with reading or math can catch up with the help of volunteers or mentors and excel.

We can utilize organizations like AmeriCorps and our older volunteers in the Senior Corps program. Encourage high school students to mentor elementary school students who need a little extra attention, to see an older peer being a part of their life makes a difference.

The bottom line is we don't need to reinvent the wheel. Good examples already exist in our communities, initiatives like the ones I've mentioned today. By providing added resources to the states, we can emphasize the successful programs and make them available to more students.

I'm also asking states to inform parents about the quality of public schools by issuing a Safe Schools Report Card. My own state of Arkansas will begin releasing a more comprehensive report card next year.

All states should collect this information and make it readily available to parents and the community. This information will help parents and schools officials better address the most important issues at the local level.

Above all, we must continue to share information and ideas, to talk to one another. Our country cannot possibly meet the challenges of the 21st century if each community operates in a vacuum and there is no mechanism to pass on what is working and what isn't.

During the August recess I will hold five "Back to School" meetings with students, parents, teachers, school administrators and concerned citizens.

These meetings will be a good chance to discuss the various components of my Safe Schools Act as well as other important education issues like school construction, class size, school discipline and parent involvement.

I welcome the chance to listen to those who care deeply about our public