

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. AL-LARD). Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I wish to say a few words as we embark on debating ESEA. I hope not to be very long. First, I am glad we are debating this bill, because education is such an important issue to America as we move into the 21st century. We have moved into an economy that is based on ideas. Alan Greenspan put it best. He said that high value is added no longer by moving things—when you make a car with moving things, such as putting in a carburetor here or brakes there—but, rather, by thinking things. All the new technology, such as the Internet, information systems, allow an idea to be transported quickly and inexpensively, which gives ideas so much more power.

In that kind of society, we can't afford to have an educational system that is even second. As we all know, our education system, at least elementary and secondary, isn't even in the top 10. If we want to stay the leading economic power of the world, which I think we all do, we have to make our educational system better.

In the past, the Federal Government has stayed away from education. I argue that there is a national imperative for us to be more involved, not to dictate to the localities what they have to do—that has been a mistake this Government has entered into far too much in the past—but certainly to help and aid in education.

I note that education in America is funded by the property tax, by and large. That is the least popular tax in America, and it puts a real cap on what can be done. Education is done locally, and so there isn't too much ability, when you have thousands and thousands of school districts, to have people think beyond the day-to-day need of providing teaching and other educational services in schools.

The need of the Federal Government to be involved with resources and just as important, if not more important, taking ideas and helping spread them, ideas that have worked in one corner of the country but don't spread to the rest of the country because it is not a capitalistic system—usually we spread ideas because somebody makes money by doing that, but that doesn't happen in public education—is vital.

So when the Federal Government says we should have higher standards, that is a good thing. I believe and I agree with those who believe in higher standards. I don't believe in social promotion. If you are reading at a third-grade level, you should not be in the seventh grade. I agree with my conservative friends in that regard. But I think my more liberal friends are right in that we have to help keep the bar high, and conservatives are right about that, but we ought to help people get

over that bar. If education were completely left up to each locality, that probably would not happen. The bar would not be set high enough and the effort to help people get over the bar might not be forthcoming. So, in my judgment at least, we need more Federal involvement. I think the American people share that judgment. From the data I have seen, that is pretty clear.

Another problem we face is that our system is probably going to be under more stress, not less, in the future. The number of people enrolled is expected to increase by 11 percent. The schools age; the same exact school was in better shape in 1990 than in the year 2000. I have recently visited school districts, fairly affluent ones, on Long Island where the facilities were simply a mess. They had been built during the baby boom in the fifties, sixties, and seventies, and, quite frankly, even those rather affluent districts didn't have the money to fix the schools. They were sort of a mess; they were not great places to look at. Paint was peeling from some of the ceilings.

Most importantly an area I have chosen to focus on, which we will talk a little bit about, is the fact that we are going to have a crisis in teaching. We don't today, but we will in the next 5 or 10 years because so many of our teachers are over 50 years old and they are going to retire. Quite frankly, many of the new teachers who take their place are not up to speed, or at least not of the same quality as the old teachers.

When we have a starting salary of \$26,000, which we do for teachers in America, and the private sector can pay double that, particularly in certain areas such as math and science and technology, we are not going to be getting the best.

In the past, we had captive audiences with cohorts of groups who would teach in the 1930s and 1940s. There were lots of Depression babies. "Go get a civil service job so you will never risk that horrible feeling of being unemployed and unable to provide for your family." In the 1950s and 1960s, women taught; they didn't have other opportunities.

I had so many great teachers when I went through New York public schools.

The last cohort which is now retiring in large numbers is my generation—I am 49—the Vietnam war generation, as you may recall. Young men were given a draft exemption if they taught and hundreds of thousands did. They made very fine teachers. But we don't have those captive audiences, so we have a crisis in having quality teaching.

I will be talking more about that when we do our Democratic amendment. I am happy to have the Inspired Scholarship Program as part of it. We will talk, hopefully, about other amendments that are on this floor, including some of mine which would allow teachers, if they taught for 5 years, to forgo repaying their student loans—we would provide a test in math and science—to give teachers a \$4,000-a-

year stipend so they would continue teaching. We have some true excellence. I will be talking about all of those later.

What I would like to talk about now is just two things, one on this bill. I truly pray that the majority leader will not cut off debate quickly. We have debated education. We debate it only once every 5 years. The last time we did I believe was in 1994—6 years ago. Originally it was 5.

In the area where about 37 percent of Americans consider the most important thing the Federal Government can do, to have a 1- or 2-day debate really doesn't make much sense. It doesn't live up to what this body is about, which is helping people in need.

To say that because we passed Ed-Flex—a nice program but really rather minor in what it does, and only one new State has joined since we passed again the bill last year, or earlier this year—and to say that educational savings accounts, which I believe the President might veto, but even if he does not, don't deal with the hard-core issues of higher standards, better teachers, better classrooms, and smaller class size—to say, having done those two things, that we have done enough and sort of wash our hands of it and walk away would be nothing short of disgraceful. Yet that is the talk.

We should be debating amendments that will make our schools better. There are lots of them. Some of the proposals will pass; many will fail. To have that debate not only helps educate America but it also helps educate each of us. It helps educate one another of us and helps us come to consensus because I believe we will not wait 5 years to do another education bill. I believe within the next 2 or 3 years the crisis, which is looming largely on the horizon now, will be so upon us; whether the new President is AL GORE or George W. Bush, we will be talking about education with frequency. We had better get used to it, and we shouldn't delay that now.

A number of us have gotten together and agreed to do an amendment about school safety dealing with guns. We don't want to have 20, 30, or 40 amendments. There is no attempt whatsoever to delay or bog down this bill. We want to see this bill moved and passed. But school safety is an important issue.

The fact that so many of us believe strongly in gun control and have come together and put together one amendment which will be offered by the Senator from New Jersey, Mr. LAUTENBERG, who has been such a leader on this issue, is no attempt to divert us or to slow this bill down. If we wanted to do that, we would have asked for many amendments.

If the majority leader, in his wisdom, should decide to pull the bill because there is that one amendment, I think most Americans would believe we really do not want to debate education and that it was just an excuse.

The second thing I would like to talk about a little bit is the block grant,

which is really the main debate we will be having.

Is the Federal Government going to be involved in education and just giving the money unfettered—how I would characterize it—to the States or to the school districts or, rather, we should say: Here is a need and here is some money; We are not forcing you to use it; This is not a mandate; But if you want the money, you have to meet certain rules, certain standards, and apply under certain standards.

The greatest area I have experience with in this realm is the issue of crime. We tried the block grant route with crime. It was a fiasco. Governor after Governor, locally-elected official after locally-elected official—the LEA program, the law enforcement assistance grant, a block grant devised by Jimmy Carter and certainly supported by many Democrats—just wasted the money.

We had instances of a tank being purchased by one State. I think it was in the State of Indiana where the Governor purchased an airplane under LEA so he could fly to Washington to discuss crime issues. Money was wasted.

A few short years after LEA was passed and the money was appropriated, it was withdrawn with its tail between its legs. That issue could be repeated in education. I wasn't around. I was actually in high school when we passed the block grants in 1965. Again, this was done by Democrats. Imagine it is 1965—it was a Congress that was overwhelmingly Democrat—and the same thing that happened to crime happened in education; money was just wasted.

Here is an example. There were blank checks: \$35,000 was spent on band uniforms, \$2,200 was spent on football uniforms, \$63,000 was spent to purchase 18

portable swimming pools, and \$16,000 was spent on construction of two lagoons for sewage disposal.

Do we want to repeat that? Do we want to see that kind of waste and patronage when we give a locality money? They don't have to sweat to raise the taxes for it. They are getting free money, and we say, basically, spend it on what you want. It is a formula for disaster. That is what it seems we are headed towards. It is just incredible to me.

There is an even deeper point, which is this:

We are all critical of our present educational system. We say it is not working the way it should. Instead of changing, instead of trying to improve it, instead of saying here are ways, such as reducing class size, or making classrooms better, or having better teachers, or having standards, or having some accountability, we just give the money to the very same school districts we criticize and say: Do whatever you want with it. It is illogical.

The only way there should be a block grant is if we think the school districts are doing a great job and simply don't have enough money.

That is not a conservative argument. You hear more of that from the liberals. Yet the conservatives in this body are supporting block grants—no standards, little accountability, no direction, spend it on what you wish. I am utterly amazed.

I think there are a lot of good debates we can have. I understand the desire to keep schools locally controlled. But a block grant, a formula for waste, and much of it going to the Governors so that money doesn't even trickle down?

If you ask the American people if they prefer a block grant or prefer

tethered money to reduce class size, or to raise standards, or to improve the quality of teachers, there is no question what they would desire.

I hope my colleagues will listen to the debate we are going to have on this bill. As I said before, I hope it is a fulsome debate. I hope it is a long debate. We cannot spend time on any issue that is more important than education.

I hope they will look at the proposals I have brought forward to improve teachers. They are not ideological. Some involve tax breaks, some involve raising standards. I hope we will decide that the role of the Federal Government should be to raise the bar—because enough localities have not—and help people get over that bar rather than just give them a sack of coins and say, "Do what you will."

I look forward to this debate. I think it is one of the most important we can have.

I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in adjournment until 9:30 a.m., Wednesday, May 3, 2000.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 7:21 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, May 3, 2000, at 9:30 a.m.

NOMINATION

Executive nomination received by the Senate May 2, 2000:

THE JUDICIARY

JAMES EDGAR BAKER, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE A JUDGE OF THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE ARMED FORCES FOR THE TERM OF FIFTEEN YEARS TO EXPIRE ON THE DATE PRESCRIBED BY LAW, VICE WALTER T. COX, III, TERM EXPIRED.