

EDUCATING CHILDREN

MR. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I had a chance to speak before the National School Board Association yesterday. Sometimes it is only when you speak that you realize how strong your conviction is on an issue. I have come to the floor of the Senate to make an appeal to all Senators, starting with Democrats.

The President, in his inaugural speech, talked about leaving no child behind. And the President, in his education proposal, also spoke about leaving no child behind. I think that is a wonderful value and a wonderful vision for our country. That, by the way, is the mission of the wonderful organization called the Children's Defense Fund headed by Marian Wright Edelman.

If we look at the arithmetic of the President's tax cut he is proposing this week for the country, and if we are to stay true to the theme of accountability—the President in his education proposal called for accountability—I would like to hold the administration accountable on the floor of the Senate, and with amendments and with debate, in what I think is going to be a historic debate.

The non-social Security surplus—putting the Social Security trust fund aside—is \$3.1 trillion. President Bush calls for \$1.6 trillion in tax cuts. The argument is: There is \$1.5 trillion left. What is the problem?

The problem is, first of all, when you look at the \$1.6 trillion and when you look at the \$3.1 trillion surplus, it is not really that, because we all know the Medicare trust fund money will be kept separate, and now all of a sudden \$3.1 trillion in surplus becomes \$2.6 trillion. When you add to that the tax extenders—the tax credits that we all know will be extended—and the payments that will go to farmers and other groups of citizens in our country, we are now down to \$2 trillion. And when you understand that there will be Social Security trust fund solvency issues, which, if we do not deal with those issues, will mean that either benefits are cut or the age eligibility goes up, it may be less than \$2 trillion. That is \$2 trillion.

On the other side of the equation, the \$1.6 trillion in tax cuts—once you now understand that we will no longer be paying down part of the debt, and interest payments go up—becomes \$2 trillion—\$2 trillion and \$2 trillion—\$2 trillion in tax cuts, only really \$2 trillion in surplus; and there will be no resources for our investment to leave no child behind. There will be no resources.

So the only thing you have is a proposal, A, with vouchers, which I think is a nonstarter and I think ultimately will be discarded. Then what you have is telling States and school districts: You do tests every year, starting at age 8—third grade—all the way up to eighth grade. But we are setting the schools and the children and our teachers up for failure because we are not

providing any of the resources to make sure that all of those children will not be left behind and will have an opportunity to achieve.

Fanny Lou Hamer is a great civil rights leader from the State of Mississippi. She once uttered the immortal words: I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired.

I am sick and tired of symbolic politics with children's lives. Where in this budget, where in the arithmetic of the tax cuts and the surplus, will there be the investment to make sure that no child is left behind?

Two percent of all the children who could benefit from Early Head Start, 2 years of age and under, benefit today. That is all we have funded.

With only 50 percent of Head Start, only 10 percent for good child care for low-income families, much less middle-income families, when are we going to fully fund the IDEA program, which we made a commitment to school districts and States to do? Not in this budget. Not in this budget.

I say to Senators and, in particular, since the majority leader is on the floor, to Democrats, it is extremely important that we have a civil debate, but it should be a passionate debate. We ought not to believe that in the call for bipartisanship, we should not as Senators speak up for the values and the people we represent. On present course, the best we are going to get is a decade; if we fold and if we do not challenge the tax cut proposals and the plan of this administration, the best we will get is not one dollar for investment in children, in education, in health care, in prescription drug costs; and the worst we will get is deficits going up again.

I would like to, as a Democratic Senator from Minnesota, make three suggestions:

A, we should hold the President and this administration accountable for the words, "leave no child behind." I take that seriously. I don't let anybody get away with saying my goal and my value and my vision is to leave no child behind, when I see only a pittance, if that, of investment in the health and skills and intellect and character of our children so we leave no child behind.

B, Democrats ought to be able to present a set of tax cuts which do not provide the vast majority of the benefits to the top 1 or 5 percent of the population. A lot of what President Bush is unfolding this week doesn't add up. You have the waitress, the single parent, making \$23,000 a year with two children. She is not helped, because the tax cuts are not refundable. These tax cuts overwhelmingly go to the most affluent and powerful citizens. We should be able to present a clear alternative.

Finally, I would be willing to debate anybody, anywhere, anytime, anyplace over tax cuts that go to the very wealthy versus prescription drug costs for elderly people. You don't do that on the cheap. I would be willing to debate

anybody on tax cuts that go to wealthy, high-income citizens versus expanding health care coverage for the 44 million people who have no health insurance at all. I would be willing to debate anybody over tax cuts going primarily to wealthy people versus doing more for children, so when they come to kindergarten they really are ready to learn.

If we can't stand for these values and can't have this debate, then what in the world do we stand for? One more time, I summarize: The \$3.1 trillion becomes about \$2.6, \$2.7 trillion right away, because we are not going to touch the Medicare trust fund money, nor should we. Then we all know we are going to extend the tax credits. So all of a sudden it is about \$2 trillion. And the \$1.6 trillion in tax cuts automatically, once we understand we now have to pay the interest that we wouldn't have paid if we were paying down the debt, goes to \$2 trillion.

Where is going to be the investment in the children? Where is going to be the investment in education? Where is going to be the investment so that we make sure no child is left behind? When are we going to do something about the fact that we have the highest percentage of poor children among all the western European and all the advanced economies in the world? When are we going to do something about the fact that single elderly women also are among the poorest citizens in our country? Where is going to be the investment?

You don't proclaim the goal of leaving no child behind and then expect to do this on a tin cup budget. That is all we are getting from this President and his priorities. It is time for debate on the floor of the Senate about the priorities of our country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAPO). The majority leader.

MR. LOTT. Mr. President, I believe the time is reserved for the next hour or 40 minutes or so for the Democratic leadership. Since there is no Democrat seeking recognition at this point, I yield myself time out of my leader time to make some brief remarks.

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

THE BUDGET

MR. LOTT. Mr. President, I look forward to the debate the Senator from Minnesota was discussing. I agree; just because we should and will have a civil debate doesn't mean we should not have that debate and lay out our differences of opinion very aggressively and passionately. I look forward to doing that.

The good news today, while there is a lot of gloom and doom in certain corners, is that tax relief is on the way for working Americans. They deserve it. We have a tax surplus, \$5.6 trillion in overpayment by the American people.

Now, we will argue over exactly how that \$5.6 trillion tax surplus should be

used. We agree that Social Security should be set aside, put in a lockbox. If you listened to the campaign debate last year, you would have thought Vice President Gore came up with that idea. He needs to check with Senator DOMENICI and others who actually came up with the idea of having a lockbox on Social Security.

We should continue to pay down the debt in an orderly way, as was suggested by Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the Federal Reserve System, over a period of years, and we can eliminate it earlier than was indicated. We ought to do that on a steady basis. We can have additional investment in areas where we really need it—in education, in health care, even in defense.

To the President's credit, he is saying in the defense area, let's take a look and see what our needs may be in defense; let's look and see if there might be someplace where we can save some money in defense while we clearly are going to have to do more in terms of having readiness and modernization and quality of life for our men and women in the military. We need to assess what we are going to need in the future. He is going about it in an orderly fashion. That is a good idea.

There is no question that working Americans need some tax relief. You talk about breaks for the wealthy. What about the single educated young woman making \$30,000 a year in the 28-percent bracket? That is not rich. We have these brackets now that force people into higher and higher brackets at very low income levels. That is fundamentally unfair. We are talking about tax relief for all Americans across the board. It is very fair to do it that way.

I thought we had fundamental agreement last year that we need to do something about reducing the marriage penalty. The President proposes that we double the child tax credit. I don't believe there are a lot of Democrats who are going to speak against that. He encourages more use of charitable contributions without being first penalized with taxes when you take some of your savings and put it into charity. He has a whole package of good ideas, and it is a very fair proposal because it is across-the-board rate cuts.

There is another benefit here. We are not just talking about the fairness in the Tax Code; we are talking about the need for some economic growth incentives. Look at what President Kennedy did, what President Reagan did, and how much their tax relief was as a percentage of GDP. As a matter of fact, President Bush's proposals are actually below what the Kennedy-Johnson package provided for way back in the 1960s. In each case, we had economic growth; we had an increase of revenue coming into the Federal Government.

The problem was, in the 1980s, we had an insatiable spending appetite by the Democratically-controlled Congress that kept pushing up spending. Unfor-

tunately, we could not convince President Reagan to veto more of those bills. I hope President George W. Bush will press aggressively for his proposal on tax relief. I know he is doing it. He is going today to have an event with a young woman in business to show how this tax relief would help her.

As a matter of fact, we checked on a lady who was here a couple years ago, expressing concern about Government mandates and regulations and taxes, named Harriet Cane from the Sweetlife, a small restaurant in Marietta, GA. She had eight employees. She was struggling to make ends meet. She was doing more and more herself. She did the mopping, the preparation.

Well, we checked with her to see how she is doing. Guess what. She is out of business. She said: What drove me out of business was a lot of things, but Government mandates and regulations and taxes contributed mightily to it. When she heard what President Bush is talking about, she said: That certainly would have helped me. For the young entrepreneur, this tax relief will be very positive.

There is a fundamental difference. There are people here who think that any money we can take from people to bring to Washington, we have the brilliance on how it should be spent.

I have a fundamental faith in the people to decide what they should do with their own money that they worked hard to earn. Now they are paying 28 percent, 15 percent, 33 percent, 36.5 percent. When you add it all up, you still have people in this country paying 40, 50 percent of everything they earn for taxes, to bring it to Washington so the brilliant Members of Congress and the bureaucrats can decide how they think it should be spent.

I don't agree with that. I think the family can decide how to best spend money for their children's needs, whether it is buying clothes or a refrigerator, a different car, or a tutor for education. The same thing is true in education.

States such as Minnesota put a lot of money into education. Other States don't put as much into education. Quality education is not consistent across this country, between States and within States, including my own State.

My State has put a high priority on education. We are beginning to make progress. We are going to be paying teachers more. Our universities have been competing more aggressively for research money in physics, acoustics, and polymerscience.

I still believe education should be run at the local level and decisions should be made there. I think we should have a program that leaves no child behind; we should improve reading, but we should also improve math and science skills.

The Federal Government can help with that. By the way, not everybody even agrees with that. My predecessor—a Democrat, I might add—in

the House and in the Senate thought there was a great concern about the Federal dollar and Federal control following the Federal dollar. I don't agree. I think we have a role to play in early childhood education and elementary and secondary and in higher education. We have been doing a better job in higher education than in elementary and secondary.

I think money should be given to the States and the localities, local education administrators and teachers and parents, with flexibility so they can decide how to spend it. People in Washington don't like it. They want to tell you to spend it here, there, or somewhere else. Pascagoula, MS, might have different needs from Pittsburgh, PA. We may need more teachers, or maybe we need more remedial reading programs, or maybe we need to fix a leaky roof. But the Federal Government doesn't know what the priority is.

We are going to have a good debate. I look forward to it. When I check with my constituents, the people working, paying taxes, pulling the load, people out in the forests who are being told, "By the way, you can't cut trees anymore and you can't have roads to get to those trees," and people working in the shipyards or oil refineries, they are wondering what will happen. They don't have to have a national energy crisis. The problem is we haven't been producing more energy because we want to shut down our resources—coal, oil.

Let's debate education and energy policy and we will get a result. I believe the American people will be better off when we get those done.

If we don't have a budget plan of how to use this tax surplus, it will be spent by the Washington Government. That is a mistake. I think the working people deserve help. Should we be concerned about low-income needs? Yes. We should address that in a variety of ways, and we are going to do that.

Yes, I think it is time to get on with the debate. I commend the President for what he proposed. He will bring it up to the Congress Thursday. We will have a chance to study it. I am pleased that he said let's make the income tax cuts retroactive to the first of the year. I think that will be even more positive for the economy.

THE NOMINATION OF ROBERT ZOELLICK

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, there is one other subject on which I want to touch. Later today we will consider the nomination of Robert Zoellick to be the U.S. Trade Representative. That vote will occur at 4:15 p.m. I am satisfied that he will be confirmed, and he should be confirmed. He has a tremendous record in terms of education and experience and previous administrations in the private sector. I believe he will be a strong USTR.

I want to add that I am very much concerned about what I see happening