

I am particularly pleased that the bill significantly enhances the childhood immunization program under CDC, providing \$84.5 million more than last year and \$62.5 million more than the administration's budget request.

This additional funding is critical to the continued success of the program, which has faced dramatic increases in vaccine purchase costs, as well as new challenges in program outreach and in vaccine delivery infrastructure development.

In addition to its work in preventing and tracking diseases, the CDC also plays a critical role in our effort to maintain and control the onset of chronic disease among Americans. Seven of every 10 deaths in this country each year can be attributed to chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke and cancer.

CDC's work to improve our understanding of risk factors, such as tobacco use, poor nutrition and lack of physical activity, through applied research is the cornerstone of our Nation's effort to curb the current epidemic of chronic disease related deaths.

I would also like to commend the chairman and ranking member for preserving funding for the Health Professions Program at HRSA. This program provides vital support to academic institutions and students in an effort to improve the accessibility, quality and racial and ethnic diversity of the health care workforce. The administration's budget proposal would have decimated this program.

During this time of shortages in a variety of health care settings, the health professions and nurse education programs are key to our continued efforts to recruit motivated and qualified individuals for the health care workforce.

I have been particularly interested in the work of the Geriatric Education Centers Program, which provide training for health care professionals who provide care to our Nation's seniors, as well as support for faculty who teach geriatrics. Rhode Island has one of the highest concentrations of people over the age of 65, with persons over the age of 85 being the fastest growing segment of the population. As such, I am deeply concerned about the lack of health professionals specifically trained to address the health care needs of our rapidly aging population. The geriatric programs sponsored by HRSA, including one in my State, play a vital role in enhancing the skill base of health professionals who care for frail and vulnerable seniors.

As a final point with regard to the health related provisions in this legislation, I would simply add that I hope that Senate conferees will be able to work with the House to increase the current funding level for the Community Access Program (CAP) at HRSA.

I also want to thank Senators HARKIN and SPECTER for providing \$2 billion in LIHEAP funding. This is an 18-percent increase over funding provided in

the fiscal year 2001 appropriation bill. LIHEAP is an important program for residents of the Northeast and Midwest, and this increased funding is especially important now. The slowing economy and layoffs will make it increasingly more difficult for low-income families to be able to afford to heat their homes this coming winter. If these families cannot pay their heating bills then they will be forced to chose between heat, prescription drugs, housing, and food. This additional funding will help working poor families maintain economic stability during this difficult time.

As for education funding, I am pleased on many fronts. The bill provides an overall increase of \$6.3 billion, including a \$1.4 billion increase for title I, \$925 million to preserve the School Renovation Program, \$1 billion for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (after school) program, \$3 billion for teacher quality, and a \$250 boost in the maximum Pell grant to \$4,000.

I particularly appreciate the \$15 million increase for LEAP, bringing funding for this program to \$70 million. LEAP is a Federal-State partnership program which helps needy students attend and stay in college. I have worked closely with my colleague from Maine, Senator COLLINS, on this program, and I look forward to continuing to work with her, Chairman HARKIN, and Senator SPECTER to maintain this funding level in conference.

I also want to thank Chairman HARKIN and Senator SPECTER for including funding for a critical national cause I have long championed, along with Senator COCHRAN and others in this body—support for our Nation's school libraries.

The condition of our school libraries is a national disgrace; they either contain mostly bare shelves or are filled with outdated books. Without funding, the goal of the President's Reading First Program to ensure children can read and read well at an early age, will not be met.

While I am pleased that the bill provides a modest downpayment for this program at \$25 million, additional funding is certainly needed.

I want to continue to work with Chairman HARKIN and Senator SPECTER to provide increased resources for this critical program, so that it will work hand in hand with Reading First to improve our student's literacy levels and reading scores.

Certainly Chairman HARKIN's ESEA amendment to fully fund IDEA would provide the resources needed for the school library program and countless other programs, while meeting the needs of our children with disabilities and schools.

I strongly support this effort, and will work with the chairman of the subcommittee to press for this amendment to be retained in the ESEA conference. Indeed, we must pass this amendment to ensure that essential

initiatives get the funding needed to work.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT—S. 739

Mr. WELLSTONE. I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to Calendar No. 191, S. 739, the Homeless Veterans Program Improvement Act; that the committee-reported substitute amendment be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be read three times, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. SESSIONS. I object.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, this is the second or the third time I have come to the floor. My colleague from Alabama, though we do not agree on all issues, is a friend, so nothing I am about to say is directed to him. He has to object.

I would like to know which brave Senator has put an anonymous hold on this bill. With all due respect, this piece of legislation, which is called the Heather French Henry Veterans Assistance Act, is named after Heather French Henry, a Miss America who made this her No. 1 priority. Her dad is a disabled Vietnam vet. It passed out of the Veterans' Affairs Committee with bipartisan unanimous support.

It is the same piece of legislation introduced by LANE EVANS. There is nobody better in the whole Congress, House and Senate; he is the best when it comes to being for veterans. He has introduced this, moved through the House, and the VA has supported it. We had the Secretary there. He approves of this legislation—Secretary Principi. The VA reported there were 345,000 homeless veterans in 1999, a 34-percent increase in homeless veterans from 1998 to 1999. I bet a third of the males who are homeless are veterans. That is a scandal. I know my colleague from Alabama agrees with that.

What does this bill do? It increases the \$50 million authorization for the Department of Labor Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program. They basically contract out; the nonprofits do the work at the local level. These are effective job training programs for homeless veterans so they can get back on their feet.

The bill authorizes additional funding for community-based organizations which do the best work in providing different transitional services to veterans, whether it be programs that deal with addiction, whether it be programs to help veterans find more affordable housing.

Finally, it talks about more comprehensive homeless centers that will be available in the country's major metropolitan areas; in other words, a place where there can be medical care, where there can be job counseling, and where there can be social services.

My understanding is—and I don't know how many veterans organizations

have now sent in letters, but I can safely say there is not a veterans organization in the country that would oppose this legislation. I could travel to any State, any center, and I could go to a homeless shelter. I used to organize with homeless people, visit with homeless veterans, many Vietnam veterans. This legislation provides some support services for them—job training, counseling for veterans struggling with addiction, other social service programs.

There is a Senator who has put a hold on it, and I cannot find out who he or she is. These anonymous holds drive me up the wall. I have never put an anonymous hold on a bill—never. I am putting a hold on just about every single piece of legislation that any Senator on the other side of the aisle wants to put through here until this piece of legislation goes through. I have come out here twice or three times. I can't find out who objects to it. I would love to debate a Senator about why he or she opposes this homeless veterans bill.

So I am going to come to the Chamber every day, every single day, and I am going to ask unanimous consent to pass this bill. I hope that whoever opposes it will tell me why. In the meantime, I am putting a hold on just about every single piece of unanimous consent legislation that is proposed from the other side of the aisle, which I hardly ever do.

This is a great way to proceed in a bipartisan manner, to have some Senator, who has apparently very little courage, put an anonymous hold on a bill which provides more homeless assistance to veterans, who will not come out here to debate it, and basically stops it dead in its tracks. I have been around here 11 years. The only thing I can figure out is I just put a hold on pretty much everything that comes from the other side of the aisle. I will review them one by one, but I will not do it anonymously.

Let me say to my colleagues, many of whom I enjoy and like and rarely am angry with even if I disagree, I am sorry. I apologize. But I am putting a hold on just about every single piece of legislation that comes through here from the other side.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CANTWELL). The clerk will call the roll. The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THOMAS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

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

Mr. THOMAS. I ask that I may speak up to 10 minutes in morning business.

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

SENATE PRIORITIES

Mr. THOMAS. Madam President, I rise to reflect a little bit on the issues

we have before us and the idea that we have some things to do that are priorities. I think most of us would agree to a certain set of priorities, and that we ought to be dealing with those priorities and moving forward with what we have to do. We have known this for quite a long time, as a matter of fact.

I am sure the folks on the other side of the aisle will get up and say the Republicans are blocking everything; that is not true. We need to put a priority on what we are seeking to do and get those jobs done.

We have three more appropriations, I think, out of the 13 with which to deal. We ought to be doing that and we are working on one now.

Conference reports, which will be coming back—handle those.

Certainly, I think everyone is committed to the idea of doing an economic stimulus package. I understand there are different points of view, and it is understandable because I don't think anybody knows precisely what it is that will have the most and quickest impact on the economy. Nevertheless, we need to do that; we need to do some things that are short term that have an impact. Most of us understand that.

We need to finish up airport security. That has to be done, of course, before we go.

Somewhere along the line, of course, bioterrorism is something that needs to be done.

We had hoped as part of the stimulus package or related to it we could get a date or do something with energy. If there is anything that impacts the economy, certainly it is an energy policy. An energy policy also, of course, is becoming vital to what we are seeking to do in the Middle East.

The idea that here we are in kind of a shutdown, when we are kind of in a press to get things done, and it seems like an opportunity to stick on everything that everybody has ever wanted to do is not a very good way to manage this place. It is not a very good way for us to set the priorities that this country needs, which is our job, and then to get on with doing it.

I have to say it gets a little discouraging sometimes for us to be going along with all this to do and somehow we can't seem to get with it. We have not even voted in the last 2 days in a rollcall vote.

I know it is a difficult thing to do. I am not critical of anyone particularly. But I think collectively we ought to come to the snubbing post and say we have these things to do and here is what we have to do to them and put aside some things that have been hanging around forever and put them on something that is going in, which is always the impact and effect of coming down to the end.

I have to share a certain amount of frustration with what is happening. We are not going to agree on every issue. To not understand that is naive. But we could agree on saying we have to get this job done. Some have to give up

this or have to give up that, but we have to do it.

I feel very strongly about the energy issue. I have been part of the group that has worked on that for a very long time. I do believe it has, indeed, always been important to have a policy, to do something more about domestic production. But it is even more important now, and clearly so.

I can't think of anything, as a matter of fact, that probably has more impact on the economy than the availability and cost of oil and we produce that oil and the cost of production.

These are the kinds of things we can do. So I am hopeful that as we work towards adjournment time, which can't be too far off, we will set a list of priorities. We should say: These are the things we need to do. Here are our priorities. Let's do them. Let's get on with it.

Madam President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

Mr. SESSIONS addressed the Chair. The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator withhold?

Mr. THOMAS. Yes. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, AND EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2002—Continued

AMENDMENTS NOS. 2042, 2045, AND 2054,
WITHDRAWN

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I have offered three amendments today: Amendment No. 2042, a wage index adjustment amendment; amendment No. 2045, calling for a study on AIDS prevention program funding; and amendment No. 2054, an amendment dealing with a study on student loans, with the goal of reducing fraud and abuse in student loan programs.

Having worked with the leadership and the floor managers on these amendments, I withdraw all three amendments at this time, with the understanding that amendments Nos. 2045 and 2054, with modifications, would be made part of the managers' amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I have spoken with the managers of the bill, and what the Senator from Alabama has said is correct. If, for some reason, the managers cannot agree to these amendments—and they have indicated they would—the Senator would have a right to reoffer these amendments.

Mr. SESSIONS. I thank Senator REID for his courtesy, as always.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The three amendments are withdrawn.

Mr. REED. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.