

Of course, one of the issues is that when there is a "surplus," there is never enough spending to suit some people. Others think there ought to be a limitation on the role of the Federal Government. I happen to agree with that in terms of its involvement in elementary and secondary education.

So I think we will have a spirited debate. It is interesting, though. Everyone in the debate, I believe, would agree that we have a real responsibility and are determined to help strengthen the educational system in this country. The question will be, how do we do it? How do we best do it? What are the areas in which we can have the most impact?

I have to confess, frankly—and I know there is testing, and so on—I am pretty proud of the system that we have and the young people with whom I have occasion to deal. Frankly, my wife is a special ed teacher, so I have a little insight into that. As I tour around our State, I am pretty darn proud of the young people in my State. I think they do a great job. Quite frankly, many of them are better prepared for life when they get out of school than I was or perhaps some of us were that are a little older.

So are we where we should be? No, of course not. Are there areas that are particularly in need? I think so. And we are in one of those areas right now. The results in the District of Columbia are not up to the normal performance levels. There are many of those areas. So we need to work on that. But we also have lots of dedicated teachers who do a great job and lots of school districts that do a great job.

So I am anxious for us to move on this matter of education. I think we will be on it today. Certainly we will be on it for some days. Indeed, we should be. As we deal with this question—or any question, for that matter, but this one maybe even more than others—we need to set some goals for ourselves as to where we want to be in 10 years, where we want to be in 15 years, what we want our children to be able to do, what opportunities we want to be able to provide for them, so that as we deal with today's issues, and the issues that are in this bill and are before us—each one is a rather small step—that those steps are directed for the attainment of a goal with which we can all agree.

It seems to me that is very important to having a successful discussion of an issue of this kind.

We need to have defined what our values are, what our goals are, where we are headed, and what it is we want to have as a result of the efforts we have made.

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

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. DURBIN. I ask unanimous consent to be recognized in morning business.

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

AMERICA'S PRIORITIES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, as the Members of the Senate are returning this week from our Easter recess, many of us spent time in our home States talking with our families and leaders, trying to catch the pulse of America. I was back in Illinois and had the opportunity to travel across my State and have a number of meetings which had a profound impact on me in terms of our debate in the Senate. I think these recess periods are valuable because, as close as we think we are to people, there is absolutely no substitute for sitting down with them and having some conversations about the issues we are debating.

One of the issues we have spent a lot of time debating in Washington is the whole question of the tax cut. I think most of us believe a tax cut is a good thing to do. This may be a good time to do it. There is a lot of uncertainty in America now about our economy. I met a lot of people during the course of my time back home who have seen their 401(k) plans and IRAs and mutual fund savings take quite a battering over the last 5 or 6 months. It has happened to virtually all of us who were not quite smart enough to get out of the market at the right moment.

I still have a very positive feeling about where we are going, and I do believe we can get this economy back on track. But I, frankly, do not believe we are going to do it with the proposal we have heard from the White House for a \$1.6 trillion tax cut. This is a suggestion by the President that we will have such prosperity and such surpluses over the next 10 years that we can make dramatic tax cuts now and be able to pay for them 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, or 10 years from now.

It takes a lot of insight and foresight to look ahead and suggest where America's economy is going to go. One of the people most respected in Washington is Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the Federal Reserve. It was only 6 or 7 months ago that Chairman Greenspan suggested raising interest rates to slow down a hot economy. Since then, the economy has slowed down dramatically, and Chairman Greenspan has been racing week after week to lower interest rates to try to get things moving again.

So even the best minds at the Federal Reserve and the Chairman 6 months ago, 8 months ago, were guessing wrong about where America's economy would be today. I think it leads to a healthy skepticism by many people when President Bush says: I know what America is going to look like 5 years

from now; I know where we are going to be.

Take a look at the same economists President Bush is relying on. What did they guess 5 years ago for today? They told us America would find its economy in such a shape and the Federal budget in such a shape that we would have a \$320 billion deficit this year. It turns out that our surplus is about \$260 billion. So they missed it by \$580 billion 5 years ago when they tried to guess where we would be. So I think you might understand why this Member of the Senate and many of the people I represent are skeptical when the President says the best thing for America is to guess we are going to be so well off in 5 years or 10 years that we can create tax cuts now.

Many of us believe we are on the right track in terms of the general drift of our economy, though we are in a slow period; We do think if we make the right decisions now we can get back to see the growth of income in families, the increased value of our retirement plans, more jobs, more housing. But we have to make the right decisions now.

If there is going to be a tax cut, and I think there should be, it should be a sensible one, one that we can justify, not only today, but which might look good a few years from now. If we are going to have a tax cut, for goodness' sake, everybody in this country should profit from it. Everybody should benefit. All taxpayers should benefit.

Under President Bush's proposal, the \$1.6 trillion tax cut, 43 percent of the benefits go to people making over \$300,000 a year. These are people who have a monthly income of \$25,000 or more. They are the big winners in the President's plan.

I am sorry, but I do not believe those are the people on whom we should be focusing. Yes, they are entitled to a tax cut, as every American family should be, but they should not receive a disproportionate share of any surplus.

Let me give you two illustrations. A man came up to me Saturday night in Chicago and he said: You know, Senator, you just don't represent me in Washington, DC.

I said: What do you mean?

He said: I think you ought to vote for President Bush's tax cut because it would help people like me. I am one of those leaders in the economy who makes a difference, and you, in fact, have criticized the President for the tax cut that would help me.

I said: Tell me a little bit about your circumstance.

He says: I pay taxes. I paid a lot of taxes last year. I paid \$900,000 in Federal taxes last year.

How many people do you run into who paid \$900,000 in Federal taxes? I didn't know the man. But just a rough calculation—you don't have to be H&R Block to figure this out—suggests that man's income last year was \$3 million or \$4 million, maybe more. He paid

\$900,000 in taxes and he was critical that I didn't support the Bush tax cut that would have given him over \$46,000 of tax breaks last year.

I said to him: I understand that you have been an important part of this economy. Of course you should be considered when it comes to tax cuts. But you have done pretty well, haven't you?

He says: I have, but my portfolio has taken quite a hit over the last 6 months.

I said: Numerically, virtually all of us can tell that story.

But it is hard to imagine that this is the man we should be focusing on when we talk about getting America's economy and people moving again.

I had another conversation a few days before that stay in a little hotel in Chicago late one night when I went to do some laundry down the hall at about 9 o'clock. There was a house-keeping lady who was kind of laughing at the Senator who was out doing his laundry. But I said we kind of lead ordinary lives when we are not in the spotlight.

We started talking. This lady is a single mother who raises a few children and works as a housekeeper in this hotel. I said: How are you doing? She said: I thought I was doing pretty well, Senator. She said: I was keeping up with my bills and everything, but this winter the heating bills have really hit me hard. I paid the same amount as I did last year for my heating bills, and I am \$1,000 behind. Now I have to pay \$1,000 more. I have to pay for the heating bills, and now I am working with the gas company to figure out how to do that. She said: I really try to pay something on those. I have really tried. I am \$1,000 behind.

I was thinking to myself, as I was flying back to Washington, about those two people I met. Frankly, both of them are good, God-fearing American citizens. But I have a great deal of concern about that lady who is a house-keeper and is working at night trying to keep her family together, paying her bills, and who ran into an unexpected expense of \$1,000 because of her heating bills. Sadly, the Bush tax cut provides no tax benefit for them. If anything, it is about \$220 a year. For the man who makes \$3 million or \$4 million a year, the Bush tax cut is worth \$46,000 more. For the lady who is trying to figure out how to pay for the \$1,000 heating bill, it is \$200. That doesn't strike me as fair.

If there is going to be a tax cut in this country, it should be a tax cut that really benefits all the taxpayers and gives everyone a chance to have some spending money and have their taxes reduced.

Another concern of mine is that the Bush tax cut doesn't provide any tax relief for people who do not pay income tax but pay payroll taxes. Twenty-one million Americans go to work every day, and because their income is low, they don't pay income tax but they pay the payroll taxes. They pay for Social

Security and Medicare. Sometimes it is a substantial part of what they earn. To say that these people are not taxpayers I don't think is fair. They are working people who pay their payroll taxes and see it taken out of their paycheck. I think they are entitled to be in this conversation about tax cuts to get America moving again.

When it comes to the tax cut proposals, I sincerely hope that when the conference committee meets, it is going to move closer to what the Senate suggested and bring the President's tax cut down to a level we can justify, that doesn't rely on inflated projections about where our surplus might be, and try to make sure we invest in our priorities for this country. And when it comes to the tax cut itself, let's try to make that fair for all families—not 43 percent of it for people making over \$300,000 a year but for that housekeeper in that hotel in Chicago doing her level best for her family and who just needs a helping hand now, and for families who, frankly, have low-income jobs but are going to work every day. They may not pay income taxes, but they see those payroll taxes come out of every paycheck. Include them in any tax assistance you provide.

One of the most significant votes during the course of the debate on the budget came as a result of the amendment of the Senator from Iowa, Mr. HARKIN. He offered an amendment that said President Bush's \$1.6 trillion tax cut should be reduced so that we can put more money into two things: First, national debt reduction; and, second, education. I think Senator HARKIN was right. I am glad his amendment passed on a bipartisan basis.

The national debt is our national mortgage. The national debt is about \$5.7 trillion. It has never been larger in our history. We collect \$1 billion a day in Federal taxes to pay interest on the old national debt. It doesn't hire a teacher. It doesn't build a road. It doesn't protect America. It services the old debt.

When Senator HARKIN suggested that we put more money in debt reduction, I think he was right. If there is going to be a surplus this year, let's start retiring the national mortgage. The best gift I can leave my kids or grandson is to have less of a debt burden for my generation. I think that makes sense.

I am glad Senator HARKIN prevailed. The White House did not approve of his amendment. They opposed it. But a bipartisan majority on the Senate floor supported it.

The second part of Senator HARKIN's amendment also goes to the key issue of education. Senator HARKIN proposed \$250 billion in new spending by the Federal Government for education over the next 10 years. I think Senator HARKIN is right on the money.

As I talk to people across my State of Illinois, they say education is very important. For many of us, without education, we wouldn't be where we are today. Neither my mother nor father

went beyond the eighth grade, yet I was able to go through high school, college, and law school and stand in this Chamber today. I brought the report card home every 6 weeks. It was a big event in our house. My parents may not have had a great formal education, but they knew what education was all about. I think families across America know that education is really the ladder we all climb for success in America.

Senator HARKIN said in his amendment, cut back on President Bush's tax cut and put the money in education. Where would we put it?

I had a meeting in Naperville, IL. Naperville is the fourth largest city in my State. It is a great community. The mayor took me around. We went to a local high school, Naperville Central. They are very proud of the fact that they just took an international test in math and science and came up first. It is a good school system. But it is a school system facing a lot of pressure right now because of cutbacks in funds and property tax caps. They are doing their best to keep good teachers and to make sure they still have the best students. That is one of the better off school districts in my State. In my old home, East St. Louis, and parts of Chicago they are really struggling with limited funds.

Senator HARKIN said we needed to invest more Federal dollars in education in the areas they have focused on with these investments. The local level I think is what most people understand.

First, the key to success in education is good teaching. I can recall some excellent teachers in my life who made a difference for me. I can recall some who weren't so great where I had to kind of weather the storm, get through and hope for a better teacher in another course and another year.

Senator HARKIN is talking about investing money in teacher training so that we have the very best teachers in the classroom. We have a lot of teachers who are going to retire very soon. We want to make sure they are replaced by young, idealistic, and energetic teachers who can really motivate our students to learn. There is no substitute for that. If the Federal Government can assist in teacher training, recruitment, and retention of good teachers, I think that is money well spent.

The second thing we are talking about is class size. I have had teachers come up to me in the Chicago area and say the Federal initiative to reduce the number of students in the classroom is the best thing that ever happened to them.

Imagine yourself as a parent trying to raise your kids at home. I can recall when my wife and I had our first child. We doted on that little girl. We spent all that time. And then came along a son. Then came another daughter. Pretty soon it looked like a mob scene in our house. We tried to keep it under control with three kids. Imagine your classroom every day with about 30

kids. It is a tough thing to make sure you focus on every child's desk and what they are doing and trying to give a little help to those needing a little extra help. Teachers say, if you can reduce that class size to 20 or so, it makes a profound difference in their effectiveness as teachers.

In Federal investment in education, we want to make sure we put that money where it is needed so that we can have smaller classroom sizes.

I also think we ought to take a look at the schoolday. The schoolday that ends at 2:30 or 3 in the afternoon isn't realistic anymore. Usually kids don't have people to whom to go home. They have a period of 3 or 4 hours where they could stick around school and be involved in activities. That is good. But for too many of them it is just dead time—time to watch television and hang out at the mall or on the street corner. That is not the best time to be unsupervised. That is when juvenile crime goes up. I think afterschool programs make sense, so kids have supervision.

We have Gallery 37 in the Chicago public school system in which Mayor Daley and his wife have been involved. They are about to expand that to provide more opportunities for kids after school. I find that all around my State that has happened. That ought to be a national program, so that we have afterschool programs for kids who may need extra help with their studies or may need an opportunity to learn how to play a musical instrument, to get involved in an art class, or perhaps just to play basketball. It may be something that will enrich them or enable them to learn a little bit more about computers.

All of these afterschool activities are good, but we really need to focus on it to make the schoolday reflect the reality of American families.

The same thing is true with the school year. Three months off in the summer so the kids can go work on the farm—there are not a lot of kids working on the farm, even in Illinois. The question is whether or not there should be a summer school opportunity for enrichment for children.

You find that kids, if they have tested well at the end of the school year, and they are gone for 3 months, when they come back they lose lots of what they learned. So when we invest money in summer programs to enrich kids, and give them new opportunities, and they continue to learn, it is a good investment in continuing education.

I think taking money from the \$1.6 trillion Bush tax cut, which goes primarily to wealthy people, and putting it into education so kids have a chance in the 21st century in America makes a lot of sense. That is why I was happy to support the proposal from Senator HARKIN, the bipartisan amendment which passed, to cut it back and make sure we have more money invested in education.

We celebrated Earth Day last Sunday, too. I think that is worth a com-

ment or two, as well, because if we are going to make investments in America, we certainly ought to make investments in environmental protection.

Some of the things that have happened in the first 90 or 100 days in the Bush administration have been very troubling, such as this whole debate over arsenic in drinking water. I happen to believe we ought to take a serious look at what we breathe and what we drink and what we eat to make certain that it is safe.

All of us are concerned about public health statistics that show an increase in cancer, in pulmonary disease, factors that lead us to question why is this happening now in an America that is so modern, in an America with so many health resources. I think, in many instances, it gets down to the basics—the water we drink, the air we breathe, the food we eat.

When the administration came in initially and said they were not going to stick with the Clinton proposal of reducing the arsenic content in water, there was a cry across America because families said: Why are we doing that? Wouldn't we want to make water safer? We know that arsenic is a carcinogen. It causes cancer: lung cancer, bladder cancer, skin cancer.

For years now, we know that Europe has had a safer arsenic standard. We know the National Academy of Sciences tells us we should move to the safer standard. Why would the Bush White House reverse that position? But they did.

Last week you may have heard Christine Todd Whitman at the Environmental Protection Agency say they were going to reconsider this decision. This debate goes back and forth. But I tell you, when it gets down to something as basic as the safety of the water we drink, we expect the White House to be listening to families across America and not to special interest groups that are pushing for relaxed environmental standards.

Whether we are talking about carbon dioxide in the air—which is part of global warming—whether we are talking about lead or whether we are talking about arsenic in drinking water, the Environmental Protection Agency is supposed to be just that: an agency to protect the environment, not a revolving door so that special interests and corporate interests can come through and change regulations to their liking.

I am glad they are going to reconsider their position on arsenic in drinking water. But I certainly hope that is not an isolated situation where they found religion. I hope that it reflects a new idea in the Bush White House about true environmental protection.

We can take a look at some of the energy concerns across America, and they are directly linked to the environmental questions. The people who have talked to me for the last several months in Illinois about increased heating bills and the high natural gas

prices now are talking about increases in gasoline prices at the pump. I don't know if it is happening across America, but it is certainly happening, again, for the second year in a row, in Illinois, where we are seeing this runup in gasoline prices at the pump.

Yesterday, two of the major oil companies reported record profits. It is no surprise; the families and businesses I represent are paying more at the pump, and that must translate into profits for some. The question is, When the President's task force on energy policy comes in with a report in a few weeks, will they take into consideration the consumers, the people who are paying the bills—the higher electricity bills, the higher heating bills, the higher gasoline bills? It is not appropriate or fair, as far as I am concerned, for them to just look at it from the corporate viewpoint.

I know the President and many of his people in the White House have been closely aligned with the oil industry in Texas. I understand that. That is part of their background. But I think their responsibility now goes far beyond the industry. It is time for them to be sensitive to the families and consumers who are paying the bills.

A lady came to see me yesterday in Chicago and talked about the increase in gasoline prices. She has a small business, a messenger service. She said: Senator, here we go again. It hit us last year and it is coming back this year. I have to lay off people. I can't afford this.

I had some people who came to me from a steel company in Chicago, Finkl Steel. They have had an increase in natural gas prices, which means an increase in the cost of their product. They find it difficult to pass along this cost to their consumers as they are struggling to keep everybody working in their plant.

These energy prices, as they are going up, have a direct impact on employment. We have to try to find an energy policy that accomplishes several things. First, it gives America a reliable source of energy; second, it makes certain consumers are not disadvantaged in the process; and, third, it respects our environment.

I certainly hope the Bush administration comes in with a proposal on this and that they will, in fact, take all three factors into consideration, and not just the profitability of the energy industry.

So we have an important debate ahead of us in Washington on a number of issues related to education, environment, energy policy, and certainly health care. I left health care for last because it is something that I think we have forgotten, and we should not. The people I represent have not forgotten it.

I went up to Palatine, IL, to the clinic run by the Cook County Bureau of Health Services and Northwest Community Health Care. I was there with the mayor, Rita Mullins. After we went

into this clinic, Dr. Rodriguez came up to me and the first words out of his mouth were: Welcome, Senator. We need universal health care.

That was the first thing he said to me. He had a waiting room full of people with small children who were uninsured, people who were charity cases for that clinic.

Each day in America more people lose health insurance. At a time of prosperity, when those of us in Congress are supposed to be sensitive to the real problems of families, we are totally ignoring the obvious. More and more people are uninsured. Fewer and fewer families have peace of mind when it comes to health insurance. More and more employers are cutting back on health insurance coverage for their employees, and they are making it difficult for those employees to protect their families.

I know a fellow who had a small business with only about 10 employees. One of the children of one of his employees had a serious health problem. As a result of that health problem, the employee incurred very expensive medical bills. The health insurance company came back the next year and said: We are increasing your premiums by over 50 percent because of the one child in the one family. Because of that, the business was forced to drop health insurance coverage and to merely give their employees the amount of money they had traditionally spent for health insurance policies in the past. At least they did something, but it was of little or no help to the one man and his family who had been hit by all these medical bills.

That is the reality of the America in which we live. There are virtually no proposals before Congress to deal with this problem. We cannot overlook it because the people who get severely ill in this country end up showing up, at some point, at the hospital when they are facing an acute illness. They do get treatment, at the expense of the system, at the expense of everyone else who pays for health insurance premiums across this country.

There are several things I think we can do. First, I believe we should provide tax benefits, deductions, and credits for small businesses that offer health insurance. Give them a helping hand in the Tax Code. If the President can find \$1.6 trillion for a tax cut, primarily for the wealthiest people in this country, for goodness' sake, can't we find a tax break for small businesses so they can provide health insurance for their employees? I think that is good for the family who owns the business as well as those who work there.

Secondly, I have introduced legislation called caregivers insurance. This is what I am trying to achieve. We entrust the people we love the most in our lives to those who are paid a minimum wage.

Who am I talking about? Our children and grandchildren in daycare, our disabled friends and relatives who need

a personal attendant, our parents and grandparents in nursing homes. They are primarily attended to and watched by those making the minimum wage, and these people who are keeping an eye on the folks we love the most generally don't have any benefits; they certainly do not have any health insurance in most instances.

The plan I propose, caregivers insurance, would make all of these licensed workers in daycare facilities, personal attendants to the disabled, and those working in nursing homes eligible for Medicaid coverage in their States. The State of Rhode Island is doing this. I think every State should do this—so that it is part of that job.

The turnover in these businesses is 50 percent or more each year. If we are going to keep good daycare workers, if we are going to keep good working people at nursing homes, we ought to give them the peace of mind of having health insurance. That is something we should do in this Congress. I hope the caregivers across America to whom we say we are willing to entrust our children and our parents can come together and prevail in this Congress for this health insurance protection. So as we get into this debate, the serious part of it in the appropriations bills, we have an important agenda ahead of us.

The President will have completed his first 100 days as of next Monday. At that time, people will make an assessment. I think the President deserves good marks in some areas even though I sit on the other side of the aisle from his party. I certainly acknowledge that he has shown a sensitivity to many issues to which the American people are sensitive as well.

But I think the basic question is whether this White House is really focused on the average family, the working family, the people who are good citizens in their neighborhoods and in their parishes and churches and synagogues and temples, people who are paying their taxes, obeying the law, doing their best to raise their kids, whether this administration keeps them in mind when it talks about a tax cut plan that should be benefiting these families as much as the wealthy—sadly, the Bush tax cut really is focused on helping the wealthiest among us and not these families who make up the core values of America—and whether the President's plan on education really thinks about families across America in the cities and rural towns in Illinois and the suburbs around Chicago, families who want their kids to have the very best education, whether the President is really prepared not only to give a speech about education but to provide a budget which funds education at levels so that education quality is maintained and improved for this country.

Finally, of course, when it comes to the environment, that the people at the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of the Interior will

think about their public responsibility to the legacy we are leaving our children. This Earth should be cleaner. It should be safer. There should not be questions about the water we drink, the arsenic levels in it, the air we breathe, and whether or not we are doing our share in America to deal with global warming. We need to have the courage and the leadership in the White House to be sensitive to environmental issues that will affect generations to come.

The assessment of the first 100 days will be made by many, but the most important assessment will be made by that family back in Illinois, or whatever State they may be from, who will ask this basic question: Does this administration, does this White House, and does this Congress really care about me and my family? Are they making decisions for special interest groups or for those who have all of the power in Washington or are they remembering the real America, the families in each community who make this the great nation it is?

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

EDUCATION

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, maybe I should have taken the time to look at some notes. Instead, I will speak extemporaneously about the education bill.

I will take a few moments to talk about an issue that is near and dear to me, given my own background as a teacher and my great passion about children and education. I will talk about the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Before we went on break, I objected to a motion to proceed to this bill. The main reason I objected was I did not know what was in the bill. As a legislator, as a Senator from Minnesota, who gives, if you will, a special priority to children and education, I wanted to know what is in the bill.

The second question, of course, has to do with appropriations. But, first things first. I wanted to know what is in this bill, and there are some questions I want to raise right now in anticipation of what will probably be a very rigorous and vigorous debate about education before the Senate. This is as it should be.

The title of this bill is called BEST. President Bush is arguing we can do our best for children and for education by the Federal Government requiring that every school throughout the United States of America having annual testing starting at age 8 with