

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 benefitting 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

third graders, going through age 13. This will be in addition to the testing that now takes place.

The first point I want to make today about this legislation is that we have to be very clear in the language that there is no abuse of testing and that at the local and State level, school officials and those who administer this test will be able to rely on multiple measures. We want to be very careful that this testing is consistent with National professional standards of testing. That is very important. Quite often there is confusion between accountability, which we are all for, and a single standardized test. They are not one in the same thing.

The second point is if, in fact, we are going to have this mandate on all of the States to do this testing, there has to be money committed to administer these tests. This should not become an "unfunded mandate." States and school districts will be interested in that.

Most important of all, if we are going to have a massive requirement which puts all of the emphasis on testing, we also should make a massive commitment by way of resources to make sure all of the schools, teachers, and children have the same opportunity to do well on these tests.

Right now, we do not have that. What we have from the President is a tin cup budget for education. I have said it over and over and over again in the Senate, and in articles, one cannot realize the goal of leaving no child behind on a tin cup budget. At the moment, we have very little by way of increase in expenditures for education under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. That, to me, is unconscionable. If we are going to now basically say to every State, every school district, every school, every child, take these tests and this is going to be how we will measure how you are doing, we will set up a lot of schools, teachers, and children for failure unless we give them the resources to make sure the children can do well.

I will be very interested to see when we move to this bill, whether or not there is a new, bold commitment to the title I program for kids who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Now it is funded at a 33-percent level. I will be interested to see whether or not there is a commitment to afterschool programs, whether or not there is a commitment to additional help for kids in reading, and whether or not there is a commitment for rebuilding our crumbling schools. I will want to see whether or not we have a commitment to smaller class size and whether or not we have a commitment to recruiting good teachers. If we don't do that and we don't live up to what is our responsibility, we have put the cart before the horse. We are going to hold the schools, children, and teachers accountable where we should be held accountable.

Where is the investment, I ask. I probably will offer a trigger amend-

ment, if, in fact, this bill comes to the floor, which will say that no state will be required to implement the new testing under this bill until we fully fund the federal share of the IDEA program, which is a program for kids with special needs. How can we not fully fund this program? Right now, we are funding IDEA at one-third of what we owe. We need to pay for everything that we owe. How can we not fund that? How can we not fully fund the title I program? How can we not fund teacher recruitment, smaller class size, investing in crumbling buildings, before we start saying we will have tests every year?

What the President has done, what the administration has done, and what too many Democrats seem to be accepting is the idea that tests are the reform. The tests are the way we assess reform. I do not believe we will be doing our best for children in America if the only thing we will do is force tests on every State and school district in the country without at the same time giving the schools and teachers and children the resources to do well.

If we want to make the argument that to invest money and not have any tests is to not have any accountability, fine; let's have accountability, if the testing is done the right way. My argument is if all we do is have the tests and we have hardly any new additional investment in education and in children, what we have done is have accountability but it is a waste of time.

Quite frankly, until we get serious—the President is not; not in the budget—it does not matter the words we utter. It is not the photo ops. It is not visiting children in schools. Where it matters is whether or not we are willing to make the investment.

Senator HARKIN and I had an amendment that called for \$225 billion more by way of investment in education over the next 10 years. That must be kept in the Budget Conference Committee. That amendment is all about investment in children. Unless we do that, unless we make that kind of a commitment, we are not doing our best for children.

My hope is that Democrats will make it very clear to our colleagues on the other side that anything and everything that helps children and education, we are for. Any way we can work together, we should do so. But we are not going to throw our support behind an education program which calls itself BEST—which does not come anywhere close to how we can do our best for children—all for the sake of \$2 trillion in Robin-Hood-in-reverse tax cuts, with over 40 percent of the benefits going to millionaires.

This President so far has not shown the commitment to make the investment in children and education. I hope the Democrats will stand up for children and stand up for education. We will make it crystal clear that if we are going to have this mandate of all these tests, the resources are going to come with it. That is the second point.

Finally, there are some fairly serious policy questions left outstanding. One of those policy questions has to do with what is called the Straight A's Program. The question is whether or not we are now beginning to go to block granting to, seven States. This, theoretically could affect a large number of children in America. It would mean we would all of a sudden move away from safe and drug-free schools, move away from afterschool programs, move away from certain programs that we have passed as a national community. We want to have separate funding for these programs, we want to make these programs a priority, for every child, no matter where he or she lives. To move away from that Federal commitment without some fairly strong language that makes sure all of the children are going to benefit; that makes sure this is not abused in any way, shape, or form; that makes sure this is not used for extras as opposed to what can help children do their very best; I think we have to be vigilant on this question.

I think this could shape up as a historic agreement if it is real. But if it is not real, and the President is not willing to back his rhetoric with resources, and instead he puts most of these resources into tax cuts for, basically, wealthy people at the top, and does not make this investment in education for children, Democrats should speak up for kids. We should speak up for education. We should speak up for our school boards and our school districts and our States.

As far as my State of Minnesota is concerned, I have been in enough meetings with enough schools and enough teachers. We are going through a very difficult battle at the State level, as well, on the education budget. More than anything, what all of the good teachers tell me is give them the resources to work. And, by the way, in addition, what the really good teachers say is they do not want to be forced into some sort of straitjacket education, where everybody is teaching to low quality tests and to the lowest common denominator. This is the educational deadening. If we are going to use tests, they must be high quality. We have got to get it right, do it the right way.

Maybe every Senator has been in a school. I have tried to be in a school every 2 weeks for the last 10½ years. If you get to the school level, you get down in the trenches, you realize a lot of what purports to be reform, may, in fact, not be so good for kids in schools. It may, in fact, be counterproductive. It certainly will be, unless we get the investment in resources.

For my own part, I objected before spring recess to move forward with the bill, and I will continue to object until I see what is in the bill, and then we will see whether we go forward in the debate. I hope, unless the President comes forward with a real investment of resources, that Democrats and some Republicans will directly challenge

this piece of legislation. I don't want to have a piece of legislation that has this great acronym "BEST" with all of the symbolic politics that purport to do so well for children and, in fact, do not. We shouldn't play symbolic politics with children's lives. We ought to be able to do well for kids and get the resources to the school districts, the resources to the States, the resources to the schools, the resources to the teachers, and the resources to the kids. At the minimum, we ought to do that.

That would be my commitment in this debate that is to come.

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

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

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. CORZINE. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about our environment, and the right of all American families to clean air, clean water, and a clean future for generations to come.

Maintaining a clean and safe environment should not be a partisan issue. All of us live on the same planet. We all breathe the same air. We all drink the same water. When it comes to our global environment, we are one community.

In fact, when Americans voted last November, they voted for two Presidential candidates who both professed a strong commitment to our global environment. Former Vice President Gore obviously made environmental protection a top priority. But President Bush also made several promises to improve environmental conditions.

Unfortunately, as we celebrate Earth Day, Americans around the country are growing increasingly concerned that these environmental promises have not been kept. Instead, we have seen a series of actions that threaten to have significant and adverse effects on the quality of our air and water, and on the natural resources that our children and grandchildren will inherit.

First, President Bush reneged on a campaign promise to regulate carbon dioxide emissions. Then he caused an embarrassment abroad by announcing the United States' withdrawal from an international initiative to address global warming. He went on to block new protections against arsenic in our drinking water, even though scientists have clearly found that Americans face unacceptably high cancer risks from arsenic in drinking water under existing standards.

These actions are out of step, in my belief, with the American people. Certainly they are out of step with the people of New Jersey. Americans understand and reject the outdated no-

tion that we need to sacrifice the environment in the name of the economy.

Unfortunately, the attack on our environment continued in the President's budget, which would slash funding for EPA and natural resource programs by 15 percent over 10 years. This would significantly weaken our commitment to environmental protection in many ways.

Consider, for example, the President's request for funding for water infrastructure funding. The President is reducing the funding for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund and wastewater loan program by \$450 million in this budget year. Yet more than 40 percent of our Nation's waters are not safe for fishing and swimming. In my own State of New Jersey, 85 percent of the water does not meet the quality standards of the Clean Water Act. I cannot and will not support a budget that will take us to even lower standards of protection.

I also am concerned about the administration's proposal to cut funding for clean air programs at the EPA. More than 100 million Americans today breathe air that does not meet the standards of the Clean Air Act. Yet President Bush's budget cuts EPA's clean air programs by 6 percent next year, from \$590 million to \$564 million. This could have a serious impact, especially for those more vulnerable to dirty air: the young, the old, and the infirm. Just this week we saw new scientific evidence of the carcinogenic impact of breathing soot in our air. I know it will have an impact in my State where the air quality in 9 of our cities and countries is among the worst in the Nation. We need to move against this.

While the cuts to programs like clean air and clean water may tend to get the most attention—and maybe they should—I am especially concerned about the cuts in the President's budget for EPA's enforcement operations—the so-called compassionate compliance. We can have lots of strong laws on the books to protect our environment, but if they're not enforced, they're worth little more than the paper they're written on. We in New Jersey have seen the consequences of underfunding enforcement. For example, our State reduced funding for our water pollution control enforcement program by 26 percent. I repeat, 85 percent of our waterways do not meet the clean water standards. That is a major reason why we continue to have such significant water quality problems in our State. We are not enforcing the rules that we have on the books. I hope we will not repeat this kind of mistake at the national level.

The President's budget also underfunds initiatives to conserve energy and to develop clean energy technologies. Overall, the budget cuts for the Department of Energy are \$700 million next year. This includes a \$103 million cut in renewable energy research and development, and a \$20 million cut

in energy conservation programs. These cuts come at a time when our Nation is once again confronted with the need to reduce our dependence on foreign oil and to develop a comprehensive energy policy. An energy policy that addresses this challenge should have renewables and energy conservation as centerpieces. Instead, this budget puts them on the chopping block.

The President's budget also threatens our Nation's land and wildlife resources. It would weaken the protections of the Endangered Species Act, underfund land conservation initiatives, and generally weaken the Department of Interior's efforts to protect and preserve our Nation's great natural heritage, including our national parks. This will undermine numerous efforts by our States to fight the effects of sprawl and over-development, including the one spearheaded in my own State of New Jersey by our then-Governor, Christie Todd Whitman. She implemented a 100,000-acre open space initiative as Governor. I am concerned because in New Jersey the Sierra Club estimates that we are losing 10,000 acres of our dwindling open space a year. In New Jersey, these are real issues for us. We are the most densely populated State in the Nation.

The budget goes beyond cuts in some cases; for example, it eliminates the popular Wetlands Reserve Program. This is a voluntary program that creates incentives for farmers to manage their lands as wetlands. Finally, the budget proposes to drill the pristine Arctic Refuge in Alaska at the expense of rare species and fragile ecosystems.

Let me say that I would always prefer to give the President the benefit of the doubt. His actions, and the things he has to do, are difficult for everyone. But it is simply wrong to give big corporate interests such overwhelming influence in the development of environmental policies. The mining industry may do a lot of good, but it should not control policies over public lands. The oil and gas industries play important roles, but their short-term interests should not undermine the broader public interest in protecting our precious natural resources. We need a more balanced approach then we have been getting thus far in our discussion of the environment.

It is a great disappointment to me and many of my constituents given how important the environment is to each of them and their families. I have certainly heard that as I have traveled across New Jersey in the weeks leading up to Earth Day.

I hope we in the Congress will do what we can to help restore a balance to our Nation's environmental policy. I assure the people of New Jersey that I will continue to do all I can to resist efforts that would lead to dirtier water and dirtier air and erode our national heritage. The stakes are vital to our country and to my State. The American people deserve better.