

the cost of fertilizer. All of this is directly linked to the cost of energy.

We can explore and debate future energy policy, but we have to be very honest in dealing with the reality of the challenge facing families today. That is why I am hoping—and I hope the Senator from Nevada agrees with me—that there can be an agreement very soon between the Democrats and Republicans to reorganize this Senate and to move forward.

There are so many issues of importance to this Nation that need to be addressed and addressed quickly. We have before us the whole issue of education. This bill was pending in the Senate before we took up the tax bill, and we will return to it. The sooner the Senate gets organized, the sooner we are in business under the new leadership of the majority leader, TOM DASCHLE, the sooner we can return to issues of education.

There has also been talk about issues involving a Patients' Bill of Rights. That is something which I have supported. It means when your doctor makes a decision for you and your good health, it will not be overruled by an insurance company. That seems pretty basic to me, but we need to pass legislation to make sure the health insurance companies and the HMOs do not go too far and make these medical decisions.

Energy is another issue. We want to work with the President and the White House. We should go to that issue. We should work on it. There are some important issues to be resolved. One of them is whether or not we should drill in Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This is a piece of real estate in Alaska that is owned by the American people and which has been set aside to be maintained as a wilderness.

There are not many places on Earth that are set aside and maintained as a wilderness. Many of us think, particularly in this fragile ecosystem in Alaska, with the wildlife that is there—some of it is very rare, with species that are not found in other places—that for us to invade that territory to be drilling for oil and gas is to run the risk that we might disturb that balance, and, once having done that, we may face consequences which we cannot repair. The best of intentions of the Congress and the President notwithstanding, Mother Nature and God have decided how certain things will exist.

If we want to bring in the trucks and the pipelines and start drilling away for oil and gas, we should stop and ask the hard question: Is this really our best alternative to find fuel for America's future?

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, it is estimated, has 180 days' worth of energy for the United States. Mr. President, 180 days is, of course, almost 6 months, but that represents energy that is taken out of Alaska over a 10-year period. It means a very small part of our energy picture.

Even with drilling in this wilderness and running the risk of disturbing this ecosystem forever, we are still going to find ourselves dependent more than 50 percent on foreign oil and energy to sustain the United States. Many of us think that before we start drilling in wilderness areas such as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, we should explore alternatives, including conservation.

I see another Senator on the floor. I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator's time has expired.

The Senator from Wyoming.

SENATE AGENDA

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I want to talk about the direction the Senate has been taking. Certainly, we have many things to do. We have moved through a number of important issues—the budget and meaningful tax relief. We now move to education and energy.

I have to respond to the comments of the Senator from Illinois on energy and suggest this energy crisis did not just happen in the last 5 months. It is interesting to note that for the past 8 years we have not had an energy policy. We have let ourselves get into a position where we are totally dependent on OPEC and foreign production, and it has put us in this position.

It is also interesting to note that it may not always be a shortage of oil but that refining may have something to do with it. We have not built any new refineries over the last number of years, and the idea of accusing someone of causing the problem—we need to take a look at it.

We have many things to do, there is no question, but we need to deal with domestic production and we need to deal with the transportation of energy. We in Wyoming could produce energy for California if we had a way to get it there. We need refineries to refine gasoline. We need to get away from having to develop 15 types of gasoline. It is easy to get away from the facts and get off into blaming somebody for this behavior.

The Senate needs to move on to education. It has been on this issue for quite a long time. It has not moved. We have had a certain amount of obstruction. When there are still 300 amendments, it is a little hard to talk about wanting to move forward, but perhaps we will be able to do that.

I hope when we do, we take a long look at where we want to be in education. Too often, we get so involved with little issues that are either political or they have to do with one minute thing. The fact is, we do not have a clear vision of what the role of the Federal Government is in education, and we need to define that role.

In elementary and secondary education, the Federal Government provides about 7 percent of the funding. Why should they also provide all the rules and regulations that go with it?

That has been the position many have taken: If we are going to give them any money, then we have to tell them how to do it.

One of the arguments, of course, is how do we help support education, have a policy on education, but allow the differences that exist in the local education facilities.

What is needed in Chugwater, WY, is different from what is needed in Pittsburgh, PA. We have to allow flexibility for local school boards and States.

I hope to take a look at where we want to be and have a vision of where we are going. Of course, we want high-quality education. We want accountability for education. We have to have quality teachers. We need to have choices for families, whether it is charter schools or schools of choice as we have in my hometown. The public schools have a different approach to it. Parents can decide where they want to send their children. These are the items about which we have to have a vision instead of coming out every day and wrestling over something that has very little impact. Where do we want to be 10 years from now or 15 years from now with regard to education.

Our hope as we change leadership—and that is not the end of the world—is that we move to govern and we move to do the things for the American people that we want to see happen over time: Where do we want to be and what is our role in getting there, that we can measure; high standards; we have to have funding that works; increased flexibility for local control; provide options for students. Those ought to be our goals. We should state how we will get there.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the hour of 12:30 having arrived, the Senate will now stand in recess until the hour of 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:31 p.m., recessed until 2:16 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. INHOFE).

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. 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.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business until 3 p.m., with Senators speaking for up to 10 minutes each, and that the time be equally divided in the usual form.

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

Mr. REID. 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.

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

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

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 10 minutes in morning business.

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

Mr. CARPER. Thank you, Mr. President.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, sometime later this afternoon we will take up legislation on which we have been working for the better part of the last month; that is, to define as best we can the role of the Federal Government with respect to public education in this country.

There are a number of points about which Democrats and Republicans or independents disagree. There are also a number of areas around which we can rally and around which we can agree. I want to take just a moment to address some of those points.

In this country, the role of the Federal Government for the last 30 or 36 years has been really to level the playing field for young people from especially disadvantaged backgrounds to make sure they have an opportunity to be successful when they walk into kindergarten at the age of 5. We do that through programs that provide nutritional support for children; programs to try to ensure that healthy babies are born; to try to ensure that children who can benefit from Head Start have a chance to be in that prekindergarten program; to try to ensure that children in the elementary years and beyond have the opportunity to get extra help in reading, if they need it; if they need extra help in mathematics, they will get that assistance, too; to try to ensure that we recruit some of the best and brightest young people to be our teachers; and to better ensure that not only do those teachers go to the wealthiest school districts in our country but they go to those districts in which the need is the greatest.

The Federal Government has for almost four decades sought to ensure that all children who enter our schools, whether they are in Delaware or the other 49 States, have a real chance to be successful.

There are 49 States in America today which have established rigorous academic standards, spelling out clearly what they expect students to know and be able to do. More than half the States today offer or require many of their students to take tests to measure the progress of those students towards their State's academic standards in

math, science, English, social studies, or a variety of other subjects. Almost half the States in America today have worked to put into place accountability systems. By that, we simply mean consequences for students who do well or do not do well; for schools that do well or do not do well; for educators who do well or who do not do well.

I think we agree here in our Nation's Capital between the Congress, across the aisle, and with the President that there is an important role for the Federal Government to play.

We agree that it is important for the Federal Government to infuse more resources into our schools. We agree that it is appropriate that those schools adopt rigorous academic standards—not standards we set in Washington but standards adopted in the 50 States—in core academic subjects such as math, science, English, and social studies.

We agree, first of all, on the idea of more resources. Some would have enormous resources and others more modest. We agree on the premise that more resources need to be invested.

Second, we agree on the need to invest those resources with more flexibility for the States, with greater flexibility for school districts and the schools.

This past week, during the recess, I was in several schools in Delaware. I will mention one of them, a little elementary school in the town of Seaford, DE, in the southwestern part of our State, roughly 100 miles from here—not even that as the crow flies.

In meeting with the school principal and a number of the teachers, they have a host coordinator who helps students succeed. That is a person who coordinates the efforts of 50 mentors in that school. That is a person who is there as a paid staff member from the Delaware department of—we call it the kids department. It is the department that represents families and provides services to families.

One of the things I heard in that visit is something I want to share with my colleagues today. This school takes money, raised by local school property taxes—they are local funds, and they receive State money and Federal money—and what they are about is trying to raise student achievement so that all the kids in that school will be able to read at grade level, write at grade level, do math at grade level, do science at grade level, or do better than that.

I was struck when I heard how West Seaford Elementary is using extra time/money to be able to provide the resources and the help that kids need to read better or do math better. I was struck how they are using title I money with some of the flexibility legislation that this body gave them under the education flexibility legislation adopted roughly 2 years ago.

I was struck to hear how the State's State employee from the kids department works at that school every day as the go-between for the school and a

family or families in crisis. This is a family crisis therapist who knows the social service network and knows how to take a family and a child who is hurting and get them the help they need.

The point I am trying to make is this—I have taken a long time to make it. When we set rigorous academic standards for schools—when we say to them: We expect you and your kids to reach those standards; we are going to give you more money—when we give them that money with more flexibility, we have a right to demand results. The States have a right to demand results. The school boards and the parents have a right to demand results.

So what we have is a trilogy, if you will. There are more resources targeted to where they are needed, in programs that work. The money is given more flexibly to school districts which are empowered to use that money more flexibly, with literally teams of teachers, administrators, and parents deciding: Do we need another school counselor or do we need another reading specialist? Do we need to put a paraprofessional in a classroom, or a number of them? Or do we need to hire more teachers? Do we need to have a coordinator for a mentoring program or do we need to put that money into hiring a new science teacher?

Those are the kinds of decisions where I think, more often than not, schools will make the right decision. We have to give them that flexibility.

The fourth point on which I think we agree is that we should empower parents to have greater decisionmaking authority in the education of their children. There has been a lot of debate in this Chamber this year and in past years that part of what we ought to do is to give a voucher. They can take that voucher and send their children to a public, private, or parochial school. We are not going to do that this year. I understand it is being done on a limited demonstration basis, and it ought to continue in those places. There are other ways to empower parents to make choices for their children and they involve public schools. I want to mention two of them today.

One of those is public school choice. The other is the establishment of charter schools. I will start with the charter schools first. Charter schools are public schools. Charter schools are not private schools. They are not parochial schools. Charter schools are public schools. They are public schools in my State and in 35 or so other States, where the faculty, the administration, and the parents have been uniquely empowered to harness the energy of that education staff, to harness the energy and creativity of the parents, the administrators, and the community, to raise the level of achievement for the students.

They are given, in some cases, less money, at least for brick and mortar costs for their schools, than our other traditional public schools. In many