

HISPANIC EDUCATION

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, over the period of these past weeks, a number of us have tried to report to our Senate colleagues and to the American people about the state of education in the nation, and of our public school system. We had supported and passed a very important piece of legislation last year called *Leave No Child Behind*. That was a bipartisan effort.

We take a great deal of pride in working together to achieve what I think is most families' number one concern. Perhaps lurking in their minds are questions about terrorism, but if you go beyond that, if they are young couples, they are concerned about education. Perhaps if they are older, they are concerned about prescription drugs and the issue of health care. But the quality of education is something that is universal in terms of the concerns of families across this country.

Most parents want their children educated. They want their schools to teach. And the actions that were taken last year gave us a great opportunity to achieve this goal.

Over the period of the past weeks, we have tried to point out where we are on this road toward achieving quality education. We have tried to go over the various aspects of the legislation.

Our committee is now focused on implementation, and following the administration's proposal as it is drafting the rules and regulations. We want to make sure they are going to be in accord with the law that passed. There is no reason to doubt that will be the case, but it takes careful review. Our constituents want us to make sure that is the case.

Secondly, as we saw during the course of the debate, money in and of itself is not going to provide reform. But reform without resources is no reform at all.

Last year we had education reform, and we had resources. But we are now in a situation, as we are looking forward to this fall—and it is not that far away; many children will go back to school in August; and we are almost to the 1st of July—that at the present time we have to ask ourselves, how did we end up last year, and what can we look forward to this coming year in terms of our public school system?

This morning I would like to talk about what is happening in the public school system to a very special group of children—Hispanic children—that are emerging as an enormously important force. Hispanics are already an important force in every aspect of American life.

Last week our Committee released "Keeping the Promise: Hispanic Education and America's Future." When we talk about the words, "no child left behind," we mean no child left behind. No child in any part of our country being left behind.

This excellent report, which was co-authored by the Congressional His-

panic Caucus, and our Democratic Hispanic Education Task Force, is an excellent report that is available to our colleagues in the Senate and also to the American people, to tell us about what is happening. The news is not good.

We are committed on our side of the aisle, and we hope we will be joined by others, to try and do something about it. Because if we are truly going to be committed to leaving no child left behind, we do not want to see Hispanic children being left behind. But that is what is happening.

We have legislation that has the title, "No Child Left Behind," but it is irresponsible to not live up to our commitment. Look at what is happening in the schools across the country. When you look at the state of education, you'll find that we are leaving Hispanic children behind.

The fact is, we have seen, over the period of the recent years, an important growth in terms of those Hispanic children.

The number of Hispanic school children has grown by 61 percent since 1990—a rate faster than any other community. If we look at the growth in the immigrant student population from 1970 to 1995, that population has grown from 3.5 million to 8.6 million. If we look at the growth in limited English proficient students, we see, again, the dramatic growth by 105 percent and these are children that are attending our public schools. So, we have seen the growth in the numbers.

It is interesting, a great deal of that growth has been in different areas of the country. We have had an over 250 percent growth in the population of Hispanic children in Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee; a growth of over 140 percent in Iowa, Kentucky, Nebraska, Minnesota, Nevada, and South Carolina. Many of those school districts have not had the opportunity of developing either bilingual or language support programs to help these children develop their English and other academic skills. They need help and we can't set them adrift.

As a result, we find many of these communities are not serving these population. The results are coming in, and they are enormously distressing. Across the country, Hispanics—Hispanic children in the Nation's largest Hispanic serving school districts—are trailing Anglo students in reading achievement by an average of 30 points. In math, they fall behind by an average of 27 points. We also have the rather startling statistics that on average across the country we are spending \$1,000 less per student in economically disadvantaged schools than in schools with large concentrations of high-income students, in terms of investing in those children for education. Again, not that money is everything, but we're finding out that students are being shortchanged, not only in terms of investment, but in terms of qualified

teachers instructing Hispanic students in many classrooms.

Those teachers who are working in some of the most difficult circumstances often need training and support to help those students, and may not be qualified in terms of technical training. We want to make sure they are going to get that training. But these are dedicated people working in very difficult circumstances. The fact is, they lack those kinds of professional qualifications. The number of unqualified teachers working with Hispanic students in predominantly minority schools is twice the national average.

We have unqualified teachers, we are not investing in these children, and we are seeing the results.

The fact is, you can say there must be other circumstances contributing to it. Sure, there are circumstances. But the good news is, when you invest in these children, you find that they make progress towards meeting high standards. We have seen examples of that. In Miami, the gap in math between Hispanics and Anglos has been narrowed by 6.7 points—faster than the progress made in the state of Florida. In the most recent years Houston has narrowed their achievement gap in math by 6.5 points over Texas. The gap has been narrowed very significantly in recent years, and that is because we have invested in those programs, have invested in an infrastructure to serve Hispanic kids in those districts, and that has made a difference: extra academic assistance for those children; supplementary services; afterschool programs; upgrading the skills of their teachers; and reducing class size.

As a Nation, we are moving away from that. Instead of moving in the correct direction, we are moving in the wrong direction.

We have a responsibility here. When we look at the budget submitted by the administration in key areas of investment in quality teachers, in recruitment and professional development and retention of teachers, we find there is an empty promise. We had a significant increase that was worked out by the Democrats and Republicans last year, some \$742 million. The increase this year is effectively zero.

We have to ask ourselves: Don't we need to invest in quality teachers? The answer is yes. Are there results if we do not? The answer is yes. How is it reflected? By the deterioration in the quality of education that is reaching a major constituency.

We can ask: Does the administration understand what is happening out there in terms of children, in terms of limited English proficient and immigrant children? Last year we had an increase of \$219 million in programs to serve those children, empowering local communities to implement proven, effective programs to help in the successful transition of these children into American Society.

What do we have this year? Zero. Don't we take into consideration the

results of what is happening across the country? Last year we saw a downpayment. This year "no child left behind" ought to be a priority instead of some of the tax breaks for the wealthiest individuals. That is the result. We have zero. We have zero in terms of the quality of teachers, zero in terms of helping these children move into the education system.

This is one of the most discouraging aspects of the President's budget. Let's look at the dropout rate by ethnic group. What every educator will tell you, if these children are 20 to 30 points behind in terms of a particular grade level and they slip one grade and perhaps two, you can predict, as certain as we are standing here, that child is ready to drop out. One-third of Hispanic high school children are enrolled below grade level.

What has been happening in recent times? We find out we are not investing in these children. We are not giving them the teachers, not getting the smaller class sizes. What is the result? We see a dropout rate by ethnic group. Over four million Hispanic immigrant children—800,000 migrant children. We made a commitment in that bill last year to help States, as many of these children are moving among the States, to assist the States in terms of following records and coordinating their academic efforts. Without that, we see what happens: a 44 percent dropout rate for the children of immigrant students.

Many of these are legitimate immigrants who come here whose children are American citizens. These are American citizens that are going to be a part of the American dream. They are dropping out at 44 percent, Hispanics at 28 percent, which is four times the rate of Anglo students.

Our leader on this issue has been the Senator from New Mexico, JEFF BINGAMAN, who has made the most compelling case about trying to develop a program to identify the dropouts, to figure out what can be done, model programs that can assist school districts.

Last year we had a very modest program. Unfortunately, this is one area where we could not get the administration to agree. We did have inclusion of a dropout prevention program—a very modest program of \$10 million. But this year, zero. Here we go, with a 44-percent dropout rate, and now we see how we are going to respond to that. The administration says zero. It is not important; it is not on our national priorities.

This is going to mean, we all ought to understand, when we are out here making statements and speeches about the conditions and what are the tests and what others show, the challenges out there in terms of Hispanic children, they are going to slip and fall further and further behind. Unless we are going to address these issues, this promise about no child left behind is an empty promise.

I want to mention one of the most distressing and disturbing develop-

ments we have seen with the cutbacks taking place. This is with regard to Los Angeles County. They are reducing their school year by 17 days because they haven't got the resources to hold classes for 187,000 of the children just in Los Angeles County. We have the facts about different communities that are under a similar situation, and that replicates this.

So, Mr. President, I think this is the result of a really almost indifference by the administration in terms of this commitment. I see my friend from Nevada who is also a key figure in the whole issue on the dropout prevention. He has spoken eloquently about this. I am so grateful for his work. I hope he will continue to take that interest in this issue. We cannot let this continue to fester.

Mr. REID. May I ask a question?

Mr. KENNEDY. Yes.

Mr. REID. The reason the Senator has talked about dropouts is because by keeping a child in school we save our society money, time, and aggravation; is that a fair statement?

Mr. KENNEDY. That is exactly correct, Mr. President. If we have a troubled youth, for example, who is held in Massachusetts inside route 128, it is about \$80,000 a year; it is anywhere from \$35,000 to \$45,000 outside of route 128. We need to make sure we are going to have programs that are going to encourage those children to stay in school, and work with them for supplementary services and develop programs that can be helpful to parents and members of their family to keep them motivated.

Mr. WELLSTONE. May I add 10 seconds to what Senator KENNEDY said. This would have to be confirmed. There was a wonderful judge in Minnesota who said to me there is a higher correlation between high school dropouts and incarceration than cigarette smoking and lung cancer. Just think about that.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, 87 percent of the people in our prison system are high school dropouts. I think that says it all.

We have a number of Senators in the Chamber. It is my understanding the Democrats have approximately 15 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. There is 12 minutes 40 seconds remaining.

Mr. REID. I know the Senator from Minnesota wishes to speak for 5 minutes, and the Senator from Vermont wants 10 minutes. I ask unanimous consent, even though this will go over into the Republican time for a couple minutes, that the Senator from Minnesota be recognized for 5 minutes and the Senator from Vermont be recognized for 12 minutes.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, if I am inconveniencing my colleague, I will follow him if that is better.

Mr. JEFFORDS. No, that is fine.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that be the order.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

JUSTIN DART—AN INSPIRATION TO US ALL

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I thank Senator HARKIN for last night coming to the floor and talking about Justin Dart, probably one of the greatest 10 individuals I have met in my life, for what he has done for people with disabilities. His courage and leadership was quite unbelievable. He has inspired many of us.

I send my love from the Senate floor to his family.

THE PRESIDENT'S MIDDLE EAST PLAN

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I think it is important to come to the floor of the Senate today and briefly respond to the President's statement of 2 days ago on the Middle East. I want to say to the President that I think his vision is very important. His statement has a very strong beginning and a very strong end.

There is one gap in his statement that concerns me and about which I wish to discuss. The President, rightfully so, talked about the need for reform and the need for democracy for the Palestinian people. He is quite right to put on this emphasis. Right now, what we also have to focus on is how we change the environment on the ground, so that the elections that our President has called for actually lead to a more responsible leadership. I think this is a gap in what the President outlined on Monday. That is to say, we might not like the result we get from the democratic elections he has called for. It could well be that Chairman Arafat can say right now: Fine, I will be chosen, no question about it. Some have suggested that Hamas might win such elections, or even worse.

From my point of view, one of the things we have to understand is that none of this will work in terms of the vision the President laid out—two states and two peoples living peacefully, side by side with secure borders. None of this will work unless the conditions on the ground are changed so that indeed when there are elections, we see a responsible leadership elected to office.

When I talk about the need for "conditions on the ground" being changed, there are at least three factors, if you will. Factors: One, people have to have hope. The Palestinian people have to have some hope. Two, there has to be a growing economy. Three, people have to be able to move from place to place.

So what I want to emphasize is, yes, when the President says the terror has to stop, we can all agree, and we should be strong and united in making sure we