

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

say that on the floor of the Senate and say it in every possible way. I also think it is true that all parties have to be engaged. There is a role for European leadership and a role for Arab leadership.

Certainly, Israel and the United States have to be engaged, also. That is the good part of the President's statement. I think there has to be active support from the U.S., the EU, and the Arab States in strengthening indigenous Palestinian pressure for reform, in advancing the consolidation and control of these competing militias, and insisting on the transparency of government and judicial operations and on more effective leadership. Second, we have to attend to urgent humanitarian needs. Basic public services are breaking down. Power cuts are frequent and there are shortages in a range of products, from school books to critical medical supplies. Ordinary Palestinians are unable to get the medical treatment they need.

The Palestinian economy has to be allowed to develop. We have to rebuild the physical infrastructure and revitalize the economy as the Palestinian Authority is effectively bankrupt, and any semblance of a modern economy is disappearing. We need to understand that vital social, economic, and security functions have broken down. This is leaving an enormous vacuum. I fear that far more radical and more extremist groups would be eager to fill this vacuum.

I believe this was an important missing piece in what the President said. The conditions on the ground for the Palestinian people have to change if, in fact, the democracy that we call for and the reform we call for will lead to the election of what we would consider to be responsible leadership. We are going to have to be very engaged in this process. Israel is going to have to step up to the plate and be very engaged.

Yes, we need to be clear on the need to end the terror; yes, we need to be clear on the need for reform; but also, yes, we need to be clear in calling for the sustained and vigorous engagement of key actors—the United States, Israel, moderate Arab leadership, the European Union, and we must be clear that the conditions on the ground change.

All you have to do is read the paper every day and look at the conditions on the ground. You see a complete lack of hope among Palestinians. You see people not being able to move. People have no access to jobs or to schools. There is very little hope, and this is not the stuff of social stability. We need to address these issues if, in fact, we are to be able to get this crisis back on the political track, with some sort of political process that truly might lead to an end to this violence.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Vermont is recognized.

HISPANIC EDUCATION

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, first, I thank the Senator from Massachusetts for raising the issue of problems in our educational system. He referred to Hispanics. What makes that dramatically worse is that, as a whole, in the Nation we are in deep trouble with respect to competition, international competition, and the status of our educational system. When you realize how far behind the Hispanics are from a base that is far behind the rest of the world, it doubly amplifies the need for us to be very deeply concerned about our educational system.

POWERPLANT POLLUTION

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I wish to shift the talk now to pollution and spend a few moments talking about homeland security in relationship to that.

The citizens of this Nation have been hearing a lot about the war on terrorism. They read daily in the papers about our troops overseas. I think often of our men and women overseas and pray for their safe return to their homes and families. I have the greatest respect for those who serve in the national armed services. I have fond memories of my time in the service myself. I learned about the world, about commitment, and about service during my years in the Navy. I would not have traded that time for anything.

There is a war on, and we all need to remember that we conduct the business of this Nation in accordance with that reality. This war continues to be a top priority for this administration. The administration indicates that we have the opportunity to protect hundreds of thousands and possibly tens of thousands of people by taking the right steps now to root out terror. In fact, this Congress passed a massive supplemental appropriations bill to assist in those efforts. We are also debating a Defense Department authorization bill that adds to that cause.

Here in the Capitol, we have begun debating the need for increased security at home and the creation of a new homeland security agency. I fully support the President in his efforts to address these great challenges, and I agree with the efforts the President has put forth following the lead of Senator LIEBERMAN.

I think this Congress should move quickly and pass legislation creating the Department of Homeland Security.

Let us all pause for a moment and consider what we are doing.

Over the last few months, we have listened carefully to the administration about their efforts to conduct this war both home and abroad. We can prevent the loss of life in the future, they say, by investing in homeland security and the war on terrorism, and I do not disagree with these efforts.

But if homeland security is about protecting our citizens from harm and

even death, I have a suggestion for this administration that they may not like to hear.

I hope they are listening.

It has to do with public health. It will not cost the Federal Treasury a penny. It will save thousands of lives. It will reduce hospital visits. It will save consumers money.

What is my grand idea?

Well, it is not new. And it is something we can do today with long lasting results for every man, woman, and child in this Nation. Here it is. It is simple. Reduce powerplant emissions. Let me repeat that: Reduce powerplant emissions.

Studies show that 30,000 Americans die every year due to powerplant pollution—30,000 deaths from powerplant pollution alone. Incredible.

Let me work slow through a list of real, but depressing, statistics on powerplant pollution.

Powerplant pollution results in 20,000 hospitalizations each year, 600,000 asthma attacks, 5 million days of lost work due to pollution-related illness, and 18,000 cases of bronchitis.

Powerplant pollution has resulted in mercury advisories in 44 of the 50 States. In these 44 States, our citizens are asked not to eat the fish caught in the lakes and streams.

Because of powerplant pollution, 6 million American women and children are exposed to mercury levels well above those considered safe by Federal health authorities.

According to the CDC, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 10 percent of women in the United States have mercury levels above those considered protective of newborns. As a result, as many as 390,000 children are born each year at risk for neurological development problems due to exposure to mercury in the womb.

The March issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association found that millions of people who live in areas polluted by fine particles have about the same increased risk of dying from heart or lung disease or lung cancer as people who live with a cigarette smoker. Here is the problem. You can ask a smoker to go outside or to quit, but you cannot kick a dirty powerplant out of your backyard.

This is simply the beginning of my list regarding the impacts of powerplant pollution.

There is acid rain, smog, lung disease, heart disease, asthma, on and on.

Actually, I would like to touch on asthma for one minute. I have a chart indicating what is happening because of these problems. Many of us know children who have contracted asthma. For asthmatics, like the boy in the picture beside me, it is a frustrating and dangerous condition that disrupts many lives.

Just this year, a respected public health journal published the first study showing a direct connection between the onset of asthma in young, healthy children and their exposure to ozone.