

The importance of this day and this resolution is underscored by the challenge it addresses. Our Nation's early literacy problem is well documented. According to the National Institutes of Health, approximately 20 million school-age children have difficulty reading. Only approximately 2.3 million of these children are served in special education under the category of learning disabilities. The remaining 17.7 million children who are poor readers do not meet the eligibility requirements for the learning disability category. Some are provided assistance in the form of compensatory education, but others are overlooked altogether.

Often it is only after a child develops a significant problem that any intervention at all occurs. Typically, a child has reached the third or fourth grade before reading failure is diagnosed. At that point, what might have been a slight lag in learning had it been caught early has developed into a more serious and challenging learning disability. For students that have reached the third grade without the ability to read, every paragraph, every assignment, every day in the classroom is a struggle. They constantly battle embarrassment and feelings of inadequacy, fearing that their classmates, their friends, will discover they cannot read. It is no wonder so many children without basic reading skills lose their natural curiosity and excitement for learning, for reading is the gateway to academic success.

Last year, the President and Congress worked together to complete a major reform of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. With the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act, two new programs, Reading First and Early Reading First, will bring new federal resources for reading instruction and early reading intervention. I am delighted that my Reading First proposal was incorporated into the final education reform package, and even more excited that nearly \$1 billion in Federal funding has been allocated to this initiative in the first year. It is my hope the new services will reach children before a problem develops and before they fall too far behind their peers.

Although I have great faith that these new programs will effectively reduce the rate of reading failure throughout our country, nothing can replace the learning that takes place between parents and their children. Much of the learning and preparation that make reading possible occurs long before a child ever sets foot in a classroom. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, children who were read to three or more times in a week by their parents are almost twice as likely to be able to identify every letter of the alphabet. They are also more likely to be able to count to 20, write their own names, and read or pretend to read. It delights me to see the 2-year-old daughter of my chief of staff read to her stuffed animals. She

takes a book, sits with them on the couch, and pretends to read them a story. When a child enters kindergarten already recognizing letters and familiar with books, she or he is better prepared to learn and less likely to encounter difficulty in learning to read.

This year, the Maine Education Association is hosting festivities throughout the State on Read Across America Day, and I hope to attend Eliot Elementary School in York County this Friday to join in their celebration of reading. I encourage my colleagues not only to support this resolution, but also to make time to visit a classroom and help children discover the joys of reading. I can tell from first-hand experience that taking the time to read to children is not only a worthwhile investment but also a wonderful experience, and I know the Presiding Officer reads often to her twin sons and experiences that some joy. I have read to children in more than 70 schools across the State of Maine and never tire of the joy and satisfaction such experiences bring.

I often read books by Maine authors, such as "Blueberries for Sal," or "Miss Rumphias" to show children that they, too, can grow up to author books. I never tire of the joy and satisfaction of going into a classroom and reading to children. Indeed, Madam President, the last school I visited was the Edna Libby School in Standish, ME, a wonderful elementary school. I read to the students and I answered their questions. Then the reading coordinator presented me with a pin that I am wearing today. It is the "Read Across America" pin. It pictures the United States as well as Dr. Seuss's famous cat. That should be the inspiration for all of us.

The NEA has graciously agreed to donate one dozen Dr. Seuss books to any school visited by a Senator on Friday, March 1. I congratulate the NEA for the success of its Read Across America Program, and I applaud all of our schoolteachers, librarians, and most of all, our parents, for their commitment for teaching reading.

I hope we can pass this resolution this week in time for Reading Across America Day and bring even more attention to the benefits of parental involvement and reading to our children.

Mr. REED. Madam President, I rise to join my colleague, Senator COLLINS, in support of a resolution to declare March 2nd Read Across America Day. We submitted this resolution, S. Res. 211, on February 15.

Read Across America Day is an annual reading motivation and awareness program begun by the National Education Association, and supported by more than 40 national non-profit and association partners, including the American Library Association, American Association of School Librarians, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Girl Scouts of the USA, International Reading Association, Learning First Alliance, the Library of Congress—Center

for the Book National Institute for Literacy, National PTA, Reading Is Fundamental, and YMCA of the USA. The celebration includes activities in schools, libraries, and communities across the nation that bring reading excitement to children of all ages.

March 2nd is a fitting day for such a celebration of reading, since it is the birthday of Theodore Geisel, otherwise known as Dr. Seuss, the beloved children's author and illustrator. His books have inspired, and continue to inspire, generations of children to discover the joy of reading. Moreover, Dr. Seuss' inventive use of rhyme make his books an enormously effective tool for teaching basic reading skills to children.

According to the latest results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), from 1992 to 2000 the reading scores of fourth graders remained flat. What is most alarming is that the gap between the highest and lowest achieving students is widening—the average score for top students increased, while the average score for bottom students declined even more significantly.

These results indicate that our students need a great deal of help to learn to read and achieve. Addressing the reading deficiency of our Nation's students is essential, and clearly an area where Federal resources and support can bring about positive change.

This is why I was pleased to join Senator COLLINS in supporting the inclusion of the Reading First and Early Reading First programs in the No Child Left Behind Act signed into law earlier this year. These programs provide professional development for teachers to improve reading instruction and support reading initiatives for younger children. Coupled with resources for up-to-date and engaging school library books through the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program, which I authored and offered with Senator COLLINS as an amendment to the No Child Left Behind Act, we are taking steps to boost children's reading skills and love for reading.

I urge my colleagues to join us in supporting this resolution in order to show our commitment to the importance of literacy and to celebrate the joy of reading.

BROADBAND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. HOLLINGS. Madam President, the communications bill by Congressmen TAUZIN and DINGELL that the House will vote on this week is blasphemy. Hailed as a way to enhance competition, it eliminates it. Touted as a way to enhance broadband communications, it merely allows the Bell companies to extend their local monopoly into broadband.

I know the Bells' tricks, based on past performance. In 1984 when Judge Harold Green broke up AT&T's monopoly in long distance, he required AT&T

to sell long distance services at wholesale. This resulted in brisk new competition among MCI, Sprint, and GTE that lowered prices for consumers. AT&T's local business was split into seven Bell companies. But they retained their monopoly in local service, guaranteeing no competition, but a guaranteed profit for them.

In the early 1990s the Bells decided they, too, wanted to compete in long distance. Congress agreed in the 1996 Telecommunications Act, but first we employed the Judge Green approach by requiring access to the Bell network by competitors. For one full year, the Bell lawyers hammered out a step-by-step process how to open their networks. They came up with a 14-point checklist, and once they complied, the Bells could offer long distance in their region. They were so eager, they told us they would comply within a year. Thus, the 1996 Act passed in the Senate by a vote of 91 to 5 and in the House by a vote of 414 to 16.

But instead of moving into long distance, the Bells immediately launched a 6-year stonewalling in the courts against competition. First, they claimed unconstitutional what their lawyers had just written. They lost at the Supreme Court. And instead of competing, they extended their monopoly by combining: Southwest Bell bought Pacific Bell and Ameritech calling it SBC; Qwest bought US West, Bell Atlantic bought NYNEX and GTE calling it Verizon; and BellSouth joined in holding off competition.

Time and again the FCC and State commissions fined the Bells for violating the checklist they wrote. So far they have been fined upwards of \$1.8 billion. But what do they care? The Bells merely write off these fines in their rates and continue their monopolistic conduct.

To their credit, Verizon and SBC moved to qualify for long distance in a few States, but today the Bells control roughly 93 percent of the last lines for communication into every home and business in America. They contend that they are forced to provide access to their network while cable is not. But the move should be toward competition, not monopolization; and the Bells should simply comply with the law they wrote.

Now comes the Bells' grand maneuver—Tauzin-Dingell. It veritably repeals access requirements and the roadmap for opening the Bell markets to competition. Worse, the FCC and all State commissions' safeguards as to pricing and service by the Bell companies are repealed, further strengthening their monopoly control.

Pass Tauzin-Dingell and long distance companies will have to either submit or sell to the local Bell monopoly. The competitors spawned by the 1996 Act are already on the ropes. Just the threat of enactment of Tauzin-Dingell has caused the capital markets to freeze their financing, and some 200 companies have dropped like flies. Pas-

sage of Tauzin-Dingell will squash them totally and the country will return to an AT&T-like monopoly control of communications.

At present, there is no legal restriction upon the Bells or anyone from providing broadband. The problem is not availability, but demand. In fact, broadband is already available to 80 percent of Americans.

But only one in four Americans who have Internet in their homes are signed up for broadband. Who wants to pay \$50 a month for faster access to their e-mail? Content providers are awaiting copyright protection legislation before they render more content for broadband users, and the lack of legislation protecting privacy on the Internet keeps users away.

Where there is an availability problem, of course Congress should assist in extending broadband to rural and economically depressed areas. Bills for rural subsidies and tax credits are now pending in Congress. But the first order of business is to defeat the monopoly grab of Tauzin-Dingell, and then enforce the intent of the 1996 Telecommunications Act.

KEEPING AMERICA'S PROMISE: EXERCISING VIGILANCE AND LEADERSHIP IN SUPPORT OF CIVIL RIGHTS

Mr. BIDEN. Madam President, each year, we pause in February—Black History Month—to celebrate the outstanding achievements of African-Americans past and present, and the extraordinary contributions they have made to American history. When the annual tradition originated more than 75 years ago, “black history” was barely studied. African-Americans had been in this country at least as far back as colonial times, but the history books largely ignored the black American population and the experiences that sprang from it.

However, prodded by the vision and ambition of Dr. Carter G. Woodson—one of this country's great historians and the son of former slaves—all of that began to change in 1926. In that year, we first recognized “Negro History Week” and later, in 1976, expanded the celebration to span a full month. Now, Black History Month is celebrated all over North America.

Our Nation is far different today from the nation that existed when we started this annual tradition. Racial discrimination—once buttressed by our legal system—is no longer sanctioned by law. Segregated lunch counters and water fountains—commonplace only a few decades ago—are now relics of the past. Barriers like poll taxes and other shams—once tolerated—are no longer permitted to bar African-Americans from voting.

Yes, America is a far better and much richer country today because of the enlightenment delivered, in no small part, by the leaders and foot soldiers of the movement for civil rights.

They awakened a nation to the cause of equality and justice for all—and, because of their courage and foresight, America is stronger. We are undoubtedly better thinkers because of it . . . and better citizens because of it.

Yet, it is that sense of accomplishment that is, perhaps, our greatest enemy. Having survived the civil rights movement and then reaped the benefits that struggle produced, we are inclined to believe that our work is done, that racial disparities don't exist. But that simply is not true.

While we may no longer tolerate legal discrimination and segregation—more than ever before—we live segregated lives in segregated neighborhoods. We worship in segregated churches, synagogues and mosques. And nearly a half century after the landmark desegregation case *Brown v. Board of Education*, our kids still attend largely segregated schools.

Now is no time to rest on the accomplishments of yesteryear. We must remain vigilant in our efforts and true to the vision of legends like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Shirley Chisholm and Thurgood Marshall and Barbara Jordan—all of whom knew what we now know—namely, that America can only be great when all her citizens are afforded an equal opportunity to grow and learn and, themselves, be great.

I was called to the U.S. Senate 30 years ago, inspired largely by this promise of equal opportunity and by the legions of civil rights workers who risked life and limb to ensure that America kept that promise.

When I commenced my service in 1972, we were living in tumultuous times—only a few years before, this country had witnessed the assassination of her bravest sons; we had survived a war abroad; and our security at home threatened, then, by unfriendly foreign powers and a deeply divided public—was uncertain. I thought then, as I do now, that vigilance and strong, outspoken leadership could usher in the healing and transformation we so desperately needed.

Today, as America commemorates Black History Month, we are again facing troubled times. The tragic events of September 11th have tested our commitment to keeping America's promise to all her citizens. We honor the nearly 3,000 innocents who died in New York, at the Pentagon and in that field in western Pennsylvania not by cowering in fear or by abandoning our guarantee of traditional civil rights. Rather, we honor their lives by, again, remaining vigilant and by exercising strong leadership in opposition to intolerance and prejudice in our society. We honor them by remaining true to our democratic principles and sense of justice. We honor them by seeking opportunities to speak out against hatred and unfairness and inequality.

During this Black History Month and every month, we must remind ourselves of the great road we've traveled