

us, don't come to our side and our alliance in terms of the future of Iraq. There is no plan whatsoever. Without that plan, there are a lot of questions that need to be asked here in the Senate.

I sincerely hope my Republican colleagues who fashion themselves as fiscal conservatives will come to understand what we are faced with. They have voted for tax cuts which have bankrupted America. We now find ourselves in a position where the bankruptcy hole is getting deeper and deeper. We need to ask the hard questions. Some of them are painful.

We will never scrimp when it comes to paying for the support of our troops, nor should we; we will give them all the money they need. But when it comes to rebuilding Iraq, we need to ask some hard questions.

One question that needs to be asked, front and center, is the question of profiteering in Iraq. It is unconscionable, it is unexplainable, it is indefensible that Halliburton, Vice President CHENEY's former corporation, stands to gain up to \$7 billion in no-bid contracts for Iraq where they, in fact, are the single bidder on contracts. When we asked the Department of Defense, Why in the world are you giving Halliburton so much work to the exclusion of all the other companies in America, they said: We would like to tell you, but it is top-secret classified information.

Excuse me. I don't believe that. I think, frankly, having competitive bidding for work to be done in Iraq is only reasonable. It should be a supreme embarrassment to this administration that the company that continues to pay the Vice President, a company which had a close, personal, financial tie to him for so many years, is the company that continues to profiteer in Iraq.

There have to be other companies in America capable of doing this work that should at least be allowed to bid on the contract. But that has not taken place. Unless and until it does, I am afraid a lot of people will be skeptical about this plan to rebuild Iraq.

There is one last point I wish to make. The President basically announced on May 1 that military operations in Iraq were over. Recently, the American people were asked if they believe the war is over. By a margin of 89 to 10, the American people said, no, the war in Iraq is not over. When you wake up every morning, turn on your radio or television, and the lead story is another American soldier being killed, you realize the war is not over. When you reflect on the pricetag of \$1 billion a week to sustain the military operation in Iraq, you know the war is not over. When the President asks for \$87 billion in a deficit-ridden economy for a plan that doesn't exist to rebuild Iraq, you know, sadly, that the war is not over.

We can do better as a nation. We need to come together as a nation. We need to plan to find a way to bring security to Iraq in a responsible fashion.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator yield back the remainder of his time in morning business?

Mr. DURBIN. Yes, Mr. President.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2004

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.R. 2765, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2765) making appropriations for the government of the District of Columbia and other activities chargeable in whole or in part against the revenues of said District for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2004, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 1783

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I have a substitute amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Ohio [Mr. DEWINE] proposes an amendment numbered 1783.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that further reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

(The amendment is printed in the RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, as chairman of the District of Columbia Subcommittee, it is my pleasure to present to the Members of the Senate this morning a bill that has been approved by the Appropriations Committee.

Let me first thank the Senator from Louisiana, Ms. MARY LANDRIEU, my colleague, for her excellent work on this bill. She has worked very hard with me. I thank her for her efforts in drafting this appropriations bill that is before us this morning.

This bill provides \$545 million in Federal funds for the District of Columbia, and it also includes the city's own local budget of \$5.7 billion. The funds in this bill focus on a number of key priorities for the District of Columbia. I wish to highlight four of those priorities.

First is improving the lives and opportunities for children in foster care.

Second is enhancing educational opportunities for inner-city students.

Third is reducing and preventing crime in the District of Columbia.

Fourth is increasing the security in our Nation's Capital.

Mr. President, I wish to discuss the first priority at some length—improving foster care in the District of Columbia. No one who is familiar with our Nation's Capital needs to be reminded about the sorry state of the foster care system in the District of Columbia. No one who reads the Washington Post, no one who lives in the District of Columbia, no one who lis-

tens to the radio needs to be reminded of this. The foster care system in the District of Columbia is a scandal; it is a crime; it is a tragedy. The fact that it exists in our Nation's Capital makes it even worse. We have an obligation as Members of the Senate and this Congress to do something about it.

Senator LANDRIEU and I started well over a year ago to focus on the foster care system. We decided to have a series of hearings, where we would bring in experts from the District and from across the country to look at the foster care system in the District of Columbia. Our goal was to try to find out as much as we could about the foster care system in the District of Columbia, try to find out what was wrong with it, and try to find out what we could do as Members of the Senate, what the Federal Government could do to try to be of assistance.

This bill represents the first attempt by the Federal Government to directly impact this foster care system in a very meaningful way. What we did was listen to the testimony, listen to the foster parents, listen to the experts, and take their suggestions. What you will find in this bill are the ideas that came from these parents, from the experts, from the people who see this system day after day. We have provided some money, which we believe will help with these ideas and begin to change this system. It is the right thing to do.

As Members know, over the years, the District of Columbia has had an abysmal record in protecting the lives and well-being of the children in the District's care. Children in foster care have died, been abused, or they have languished for years in foster care, often bouncing from foster home to foster home without ever finding permanent placement with a loving family.

The statistics are shocking. Children in foster care in the District spend an average of 5 years in foster care before they achieve a permanent placement. I will repeat that. The children in the District of Columbia spend an average of 5 years before they ever find a permanent home. Obviously, that means some children languish in foster care much longer than 5 years. That is wrong, and we must do something about it.

During our subcommittee hearings, we found that the District of Columbia is unable to track its children in foster care. They cannot even keep track of them. We have this very sophisticated—supposedly—computer system, yet inputs are not being made, the tracking is not taking place, and complete data is not even available in the child and family services computer system for over 70 percent of children in foster care today. How can we keep track of these poor kids and determine their well-being when much of their personal information is not ever entered into this automated computer system? This simply must change.

While putting together this bill, Senator LANDRIEU and I learned a lot. We

learned that only about one-third of the children in foster care who need mental health services are actually receiving the services. Moreover, many children who come into care wait for weeks and weeks, or months and months, before they even receive that first mental health assessment.

Let's understand that these are not just your average children. These are children who, many times, have been neglected, abandoned, physically or sexually abused, or they have witnessed, many times, terrifying domestic violence. These are obviously children who need some initial, at least, assessment in regard to their mental health problems. For them to wait months before an assessment is just wrong. It makes no sense. It is just asking for trouble.

Clearly, we all understand that these kids, after experiencing trauma and abuse and neglect, are in desperate need of mental health services. We need to provide those services quickly to these children.

Furthermore, during our committee hearings on foster care, Senator LANDRIEU and I learned that there is a severe shortage of social workers in the District. That should not have been a revelation to anybody. We know that from articles we have read in the newspapers. But it was brought home even more starkly in the hearings we held—the shortage of well-trained social workers in the District of Columbia. Many of these workers are carrying extremely high caseloads, making it very difficult for them to do their job. Also, many of these caseworkers simply are not being provided the tools they need to get their jobs done.

We found there are several critical needs that, if addressed, could certainly go a long way in improving the lives of thousands of children in the District's foster care system, and it would expedite their placement in stable, loving homes. Therefore, this bill does contain \$14 million in new money to address these needs.

Let me explain what these new programs and ideas are.

No. 1, we provide for intensive early intervention. This means when a child comes into care, the case will be treated as an emergency situation. Just as hospitals triage medical trauma, the District's child and family service agency triage the emotional trauma facing children who are brought into their care. The earlier a child is stabilized, the better his or her chances of avoiding long-term damage. If a child can remain with an appropriate or qualified family member, he or she will face much less emotional trauma.

Some of the funds provided in this bill will allow the agency to staff such an early intervention program and will establish a flexible fund for the purchase of beds, clothing, and other items to ensure that a relative can bring a child into his or her home immediately without forcing the child to stay in a group home or foster home.

Second, early mental health evaluations and timely mental health services for all children in foster care. What does this mean? The bill provides \$3 million for the District's Department of Mental Health to ensure all children receive mental health assessments within 15 days of coming into foster care; further, that all mental health assessment reports are provided to the court within 5 days of assessment and that all children receive mental health services immediately after the court orders those services. This will help alleviate the current intolerable situation.

According to the District of Columbia Family Court, in most child abuse and neglect cases where mental health services have been ordered, there are long delays in providing these services to the child or to the family. It can often take up to 6 to 8 weeks, or longer, to complete an evaluation and up to 60 days after the evaluation before the mental health services are actually provided, even in very serious and dangerous situations. Under this bill, that would change.

The third provision of this bill will provide for the recruitment and retention of qualified social workers and will begin to deal with this problem. How do we do this? The bill will provide \$3 million in new money for the repayment of student loans to encourage social workers to enter or to stay in the field. It will allow this money to be provided as an incentive to pay back student loans if the young social workers agree to continue to stay and work. It will take that burden away from that social worker.

One of the problems, of course, is a person wants to be a social worker, they want to do good, they want to stay in the field, but because of this low rate of pay and they have this big burden, this big debt, they cannot stay in the field very long. They have to do something elsewhere where they can make more money to pay back the debt.

This bill will help them ease that burden. It is no surprise that the higher the caseload per social worker, the lower the quality of service to each of the children.

The District, like many cities, suffers from a high turnover of social workers. That is not good for the kids. In fact, the national current turnover rate has doubled since 1991. Clearly, the relatively low pay and difficult working conditions of social workers have resulted in a child welfare workforce crisis in the District. Without doubt, steps must be taken to encourage more social workers to enter the child welfare workforce and we must improve the salaries, we must improve the working conditions and the training of workers, and we want to retain more of the qualified and experienced social workers. The reality is, the longer a social worker is there, the more experience they get, and we want to retain the experienced social workers.

The fourth provision of this new program is recruitment and retention of foster parents. The bill provides \$1.1 million to recruit and retain foster parents. CFSA has experienced difficulties with recruiting and retaining an adequate number of appropriate foster care parents. One reason for this is lack of availability of respite care for foster parents. This is one of the items Senator LANDRIEU and I heard foster parents tell us—good people who were very much overburdened. One mom who came in was taking care of many children. She said: If we just had the opportunity for a few hours to have a break, this would be of great help.

Foster parents do not have the same opportunities for respite as biological parents many times do. The funds in this bill would provide emergency respite, planned respite, and ongoing regularly scheduled respite care. This is critical to provide foster parents the rest they need to continue to stay on as foster parents.

The fifth provision is to improve computer tracking of all children in foster care. I talked earlier about the situation of the computer system and how bad it is. The bill provides \$3 million to move the agency's current client-server system to a Web-based architecture and to provide laptop computers to all CFSA social workers.

The subcommittee heard testimony from the General Accounting Office that CFSA's database lacks many active foster care cases and the system is often down. In addition, social workers do not have access to the database via laptop computers when they are with children, foster families, or while waiting in court. This would be a great opportunity to better utilize the precious time of social workers so they can use that time sitting in court or, when they are out in the field, to put the data directly, immediately into that computer. This is to better utilize the precious time social workers have.

Social workers now must return to the office late at night and enter the data of children in care. With laptop computers and Web-based access to information, social workers would then be able to enter key data from off-site locations. We want social workers to use that precious time hands on, dealing with kids, dealing with families. That is most important. Using technology better will enable them to spend more time with these families. We want them to spend time on case plans and working with the families. This will enable them to do that.

I spoke at length about the foster care initiative in this bill because it is so very important. It breaks new ground. It does something about which Senator LANDRIEU and I feel very passionately. We feel passionately about it because we learned so much about it in the hearings we held. This subject deserves this Congress's time. It deserves our attention. It deserves our money.

As chairman of this subcommittee, I and the ranking member, Senator

LANDRIEU, have listened to far too many horror stories about children dying or being abused in the District's foster care system. As a Federal partner with this city, I believe it is imperative we provide funds and seek ways to protect the lives of these very precious children. It is our duty and it is our moral responsibility to do so.

The second priority which this bill funds is enhancing educational opportunities for inner-city kids. This bill provides a total of \$40 million new money—I emphasize “new money”—for three interrelated components: \$13 million to promote excellence in traditional public schools in the District of Columbia; \$13 million to expand choice through high-quality charter schools; and \$13 million for opportunity scholarships for low-income students in failing schools to attend private schools; and \$1 million for administrative fees. That is \$40 million in new money for the District of Columbia's children to help educate them.

This is a balanced approach. It is balanced because, as I said, it is \$13 million, \$13 million, and \$13 million. It is evenly divided. The charter schools, \$13 million; public schools, \$13 million; and \$13 million for the new scholarships.

Let us make no mistake about it. This is new money. It is not taking it from the public schools. It is not taking it anywhere else from public education. This is money that Senator GREGG has worked long and hard to come up with, other Members have worked long and hard to come up with, to put together in a package that is balanced, that is reasonable, and that we will be talking about more on the Senate floor later.

It is for the kids in the District of Columbia and it makes sense. This is a plus-up in funding. This is new money. It is for the kids in the District of Columbia.

Turning to the bill itself, I will read directly from the language of the bill. We will be discussing this later. I think the bill says it very well on page 21, when we talk about these scholarships. It provides students and their families with the widest range of educational options, because that is really what we are talking about: public schools, charter schools, and, with this additional \$13 million to scholarships, options for the parents, options for the students.

I am pleased to report that this three-sector approach to improving DC schools is wholeheartedly supported by Mayor Anthony Williams. He has been out front in leading the charge for this plan. He was on Capitol Hill yesterday very eloquently describing why this is needed for the District of Columbia.

The plan for the District has wide support, but the most important supporters for this program are the thousands of low-income parents of schoolchildren in this city whose children are languishing in failing schools. Under this bill, the priority for children to be able to get these scholarships is children who are in what are described as

the failing schools. These parents want an opportunity to try a new approach. I believe they deserve that opportunity. Their hope is for a brighter future for their children.

The third priority funded by this bill is reducing and preventing crime in the District of Columbia. The Federal Government entirely funds the DC courts and the Court Services and Supervision Agency. This bill provides a total of \$377 million for these agencies, which is \$18 million more than the President's budget request. Most of these additional resources are to integrate the 18 different computer systems that track offender and litigation information.

In addition, the bill provides additional resources to allow the Court Services and Supervision Agency to enhance its supervision of high-risk sex offenders, as well as offenders with mental health problems and offenders with a history of domestic violence. I submit that these are the most dangerous offenders. These are offenders who are the most likely to cause harm and damage to the citizens of the District of Columbia, and to the tourists and visitors who come here every single day.

Senator LANDRIEU and I held a hearing. We heard from the people in the Government of the District of Columbia and the Federal officials who are charged by law with supervising these individuals who are out on parole and probation. What they told us was these are the most high-risk offenders. They are out on the streets. Right or wrong, they are out on the streets. They told us these are the most dangerous individuals.

I must say from my experience years ago as a county prosecutor that there is no doubt these are the most dangerous offenders. What we learned is that the ratio of the supervisors to these offenders today is only 42 to 1, many times. In other words, 42 offenders to 1 supervisor. What our bill would do is to take that ratio down to 25 to 1. It is the right thing to do, and we are going to do it with this bill. We are targeting those dangerous offenders. This is a boost to safety in the District of Columbia.

Additional resources also will expand the Agency's use of GPS-based electronic monitoring equipment to ensure that offenders are not near locations such as schools or specific residences.

The fourth priority in this bill is increasing security in the Nation's Capitol. Since September 11, we all understand the importance of security in the District of Columbia. Therefore, the bill includes security funding, including resources to complete a Unified Communications Center which will be the center for coordinated multiagency responses in the event of regional and national emergencies.

Funds also are included to continue to prepare the District's largest hospital, Washington Hospital Center, and its only dedicated children's hospital, Children's National Medical Center, for

bioterrorist and chemical attacks. We began this process last year and further funding is in this year's budget.

The bill also continues to provide funds to reimburse the District for increased police, fire, and emergency personnel costs associated with the presence of the Federal Government.

Let me again thank Senator LANDRIEU, who is the ranking member of the subcommittee. It is always a pleasure to work with her. She has done a great job on this bill. She and I share the same concerns for the children and the residents who live in our Nation's Capital. We have worked very closely together on this bill. I believe we have put together a bill that is within budget. It is a bill that focuses on improving the well-being of the District's children and protecting the safety of all those who live and work here.

So I thank Senator LANDRIEU, I thank the Chair, and I will at this point yield to Senator LANDRIEU.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I begin by thanking the chairman for the breadth and depth of those excellent opening remarks, which demonstrate beyond any doubt his commitment to the budget before us and to the plans that it supports.

I also acknowledge our strong working relationship and commend him for his leadership on so many important issues for the District and also for the Nation at large. He has gone into great detail about the child welfare issues, which is one of the issues that he has led on not just in the District but in his home State and around the Nation.

We have been working together now for almost 3 years, sharing the chairmanship, depending on the majority of this Senate. It has been a joy to work with someone who shares so many of the same goals and objectives.

As Senator DEWINE has outlined, our bill is small in size but it often carries a powerful punch, because it is a bill that supports a city but also a symbol. It is a city of 500,000 residents but it is a symbol in many ways of this great Nation and home to the Federal Government. Because of that, oftentimes on this bill—and we will experience that over the next couple of days—there will be some rigorous debates about issues surrounding this bill, which is understandable because this is a budget for a city but also a symbol.

I hope, as we move through the debate on this bill, that we can provide more light than heat, and I hope colleagues from both sides of the aisle will come to the floor with that in mind.

I want to begin my brief opening remarks saying that Senator DEWINE and I in many instances share not only the same views about the District, but we also share the same priorities, which makes for a great working relationship and very smooth operations. One of the subjects he and I feel very strongly about is committing to the financial stability of the city. We both recognize

the great work the Mayor, the City Council, and Congresswoman ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON have contributed, as have other officials who have the hands-on responsibility for the financial support and operations of the city. I commend them for their work.

This is particularly important because this city in just recent history was under the direction of a Control Board, established by this Congress because the city was in a huge deficit position. Mismanagement was rampant and that became necessary. Senator DEWINE and I served at the time when that Control Board has been moving out, so it has been an imperative, and our first priority, that the safeguards and guidelines and parameters that keep this city moving in the direction of surplus and strength continue. I am proud to say that we have accomplished that goal in partnership with the city leaders, who get the most credit for keeping their city in a strong financial position. That is so, even with the very difficult times the city has faced, in terms of being a target, in some cases the No. 1 target, of terrorism in the whole Nation.

Along those lines, one of my priorities, shared with the leadership as well as the other Members—Senator KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON, Senator DICK DURBIN from Illinois—we have put into this bill a \$25 million infrastructure investment because we want to be a strong, reliable partner for the financial security of the city. That is on top of the \$50 million that was put in last year, which helps one of the major infrastructure challenges of the city, which is to clean up the Anacostia River. We have to remember this region is a region of two rivers, not one. We hear a lot about the Potomac but not a lot about the Anacostia. Both are great and contribute a lot to the health and vitality of the region, and the cleaner these are, for esthetics, for health and recreation, is important.

The city cannot do this on its own. It is a regional effort, and we are proud to step up, in the place of a State because there is no State, to serve in that role on the budget, to help them with these great infrastructure needs. I am thankful for the allocation of funds for that effort to the chairman of the Appropriations Committee and the ranking member, Senator BYRD, who has been strongly in favor of this particular undertaking, which will cost hundreds of millions of dollars, to be done over the course of the next couple of years.

The next issue on infrastructure, briefly, is one on which we are making some progress. We have budget constraints and we do not have, as much as we would like, unlimited money. We have budget constraints because there is not much money, but wisely the chairman has allocated funds to infrastructure initiatives—parks, recreation, and some help with transportation. Again, transportation is not just a challenge for the District residents, but it is a real challenge for the

region. We have at least begun to lay down a small mark for help with transportation. I will get back to why that is so important at the end of these brief remarks.

Helping with the financial strength of the city, continuing to improve it, making sure the CFO is supported and his office is independent, streamline the management, and helping keep the city on a strong financial course is something I am proud of and is reflected in this bill.

The second important focus—and these are not in terms of priorities because they are all sort of equal, but I wanted to reflect, maybe, perhaps this is one we would agree is the top priority—is security for the Nation's Capital. Again, our bill reflects an ongoing commitment for investments in bioterrorism and investments, last year particularly, in the bill for interoperability for police officers in the District and the Federal agencies, as the District remains the No. 1 target in the Nation. That commitment is also found in this bill. It is an ongoing commitment I share with the chairman.

Senator DEWINE did a beautiful and thorough job describing the child welfare initiatives in this bill. I will not repeat what he said. I will only say thank you to the Washington Post, particularly, for continuing to bring to light the deficiencies in the child welfare system, to thank my own staff and all the Members who contribute, and to say the District of Columbia is not alone in its struggle with reforming its child welfare system and improving foster care and increasing adoptions and establishing a family court. All cities, all communities, and all States are struggling with those same challenges.

Because budgets are tight, when budgets are cut, the first things, of course, that are cut, in many instances, are the services for children and courts and judicial systems that help to support excellent child welfare services in the Nation.

We are trying to fight against those budget reductions, adding money to this bill, with accountability, with mandates for new management, and with a new system to try to increase reunifications where possible, so children are not separated endlessly from their families and to give those families support. If that is not possible—and in many instances, as the chairman knows, it is not possible—then to move those children quickly through a caring and loving system that enables those children to get safely into a new family who will raise and nurture and love them, and to minimize the time in foster care.

That is not done by waving a magic wand or by rhetoric or by bumper stickers or by slogans. There is no substitute for that kind of work other than just tough slogging in terms of new policies and new investments. No one has done that better than this chairman. I thank him for that. This

bill reflects a significant increase, in partnership with the District, working with them, to create a new court system, to create new opportunities in the child welfare system.

The fourth area the chairman and I focused a lot of time on, and I think we are making some progress, although it will be the subject of much of the debate on this bill, is in the area of education. I want to say what is in the underlying bill is a significant improvement over the shortsighted and very problematic education initiative that was placed in the House bill on the District of Columbia. What the chairman has laid down is a significant improvement over that shortsighted and problematic initiative which was basically a vouchers-only, take-it-or-leave-it approach by the House, which is going to be rejected pretty unanimously here in the Senate.

In its stead, there is a three-sector improvement approach offered by this bill which, in my opinion, still needs some significant work. But, as I said, it is a major improvement over the take-it-or-leave-it, vouchers-or-nothing approach by the House. The three-sector approach, as the chairman has outlined, is an equal amount of money distributed to charter schools, to public schools, and then to private scholarships for low-income children who are struggling.

Let me talk about charter schools for a minute and say something on the record. I will get back to this at a later time, when the debate gets underway.

There is not a district in this country, not one, not in Ohio, not in Louisiana, not California, not New York, that has made a stronger and better effort for charter schools than the District of Columbia, and that needs to go on the record as this debate starts.

There are more children per capita in charter schools in this District than any place in the Nation. With limited resources and with a relatively small jurisdiction, this community is making a superior effort in charter schools. Every one of them is excellent. We know they are trying new things that are important. They don't get enough credit for that. I want the Mayor and ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, who has been a strong supporter of charter schools and public choice, and Mr. Chavez, members of the DC Council, and members of the school board who have supported this charter school initiative to feel proud of what they have done. They do not get as much credit as they should. Those charter schools provide a real choice and real opportunities.

I am proud that in the bill last year Senator DEWINE and I helped fund, at the request of many of our colleagues, the first urban boarding school for low-income children in the Nation—the first low-income boarding school for children in the Nation—so they can stay in school Monday through Friday and have an opportunity to go home on weekends, if they choose. Sometimes their home life is not conducive to academic excellence and achievement.

With accountability and oversight, we created that school. I am proud to say those children are extremely happy. And some of them were able to go to Greece because of the generosity of the Greek Ambassador. Nothing could thrill me more than to see real progress being made in opening up new educational opportunities for children.

The charter school movement is healthy and underway, and it doesn't need our criticism and it doesn't need our undermining; it needs our support.

The other leg of that is the investment in public schools. The progress is slower but it is still substantial, as is true of all major cities struggling with this issue throughout the country. But any number of improvements have been made. Later on in the debate, that information will be spread on the RECORD. But those two legs of the investment are universally supported.

There are additional investments. Leave No Child Behind does not meet the full requirements to which the District is entitled, but at least it is a \$13 million increase to help the public school system meet the new accountability requirements and excellence that we seek in all of our schools when we are using public funds, and to help support charter schools.

The piece on the scholarship program sector, as I said, needs improvement. But because it is a three-sector approach and not just vouchers and take it or leave it, it is far superior to the House provision. With some adjustment, it could potentially receive votes of some Members on the Democratic side and have universal support on the Republican side. We will get to that later in the day.

Let me say in closing that the last 2 years have been unprecedented in the amount of discretionary Federal dollars that have gone to this city. Just this year alone, this budget reflects \$124 million over the President's request for the District of Columbia. That is a substantial amount. That reflects the confidence that is being built in this Congress in the leadership of this city and the willingness to step out on issues that can help this city be the great city it was intended to be, and it is well on its way to being—across the board, whether it is in health care, transportation, public services, education, et cetera.

Nobody deserves more credit as a group than the city leadership collectively. They have done a very good job working together in that regard.

I close, however, with a challenge that Senator DEWINE and I are faced with this year; that is, the landmark report that this city faces a structural deficit of \$400 billion to \$401 billion between their revenue capacity and their cost of providing services. This report was done by an objective agency. It was conducted by the GAO at the request of Congresswoman NORTON and myself and others to really look at the structural deficit, if there were such a thing as a structural deficit, even

though the city is in surplus, even though they are moving in the right direction by streamlining their operations. If you look at the path for the next year or two, there are dark clouds on the horizon. We want to basically know what the reason is for those dark clouds. Is it something that is under the control of the city or the Congress to fix?

I will paraphrase the study and will submit it for the RECORD.

While the city could continue to adjust and streamline its practices and make sure that fraud and abuse are taken out of the system, there is in fact a structural imbalance. Even if they did that perfectly—and no city does—they still would have a structural imbalance because their tax base is strained to almost a breaking point. That means their sales taxes are high, their property taxes are high, their fees are high. To continue to go back to the residents of the District and ask them to contribute more would be detrimental to the economic growth and vitality of this city.

We have in this bill a marker—basically a \$3 million Federal share to contribute to the infrastructure, which is a small but I think substantial marker that the chairman and I are willing to lay down to say we understand there is a structural deficit, that we don't have the money right now to fix it, and that we are not even sure how to fix it nor have the answer but recognize there is one. Hopefully, that will be the subject of future hearings to help the city of Washington be the best city and the symbol for the Nation.

Finally, let me summarize. As the chairman said, this bill also includes \$172 million for the operation of the DC courts, an \$8 million increase over the President's request. We talked about that. There are certain things for which we are directly responsible. One of them is the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency. I am very proud that the chairman has gotten that ratio down from 40 to 1 to 25 to 1, which will help. I again commend the Washington Post for their excellent series that helped to call our attention to this glaring and terrible problem. It is a tragedy that exists in the District. More work needs to be done.

But this bill and what it represents I think is a significant compliment to the city and its leadership. The considerable investment in the future for the residents of the District is something of which our people around the Nation can be proud.

I urge our colleagues as we move into the afternoon and the debate regarding education that we attempt to fill this Chamber with light and heat because this issue, the children who depend on our deliberations, their families, and the taxpayers deserve no less.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. MURKOWSKI). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECESS

Mr. DEWINE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess until 1 p.m.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:10 p.m., recessed until 1:01 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. HAGEL).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2004—Continued

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, as we proceed with the District of Columbia appropriations bill, I again thank Senator LANDRIEU for her great work on this bill. We will be proceeding later on today on the issue of the District of Columbia vouchers. I thank Senator LANDRIEU for her contribution to this discussion.

We are working on some possible amendments, but I wish to take this moment, if I can, to also thank Senator FEINSTEIN for her contribution to that section of the bill. As I have stated publicly in the past—I said it yesterday in a press conference—that section of the bill which has to do with vouchers, the scholarship section was significantly improved because of what my colleague from California, Senator FEINSTEIN, contributed to the bill.

She came to me and Senator GREGG and said: I have some suggestions; I have some changes; I have some ideas that I think need to be in this bill to improve the bill, to bring more accountability; to ensure the bill's constitutionality; and also to make sure that the Mayor of the city of Washington is much more directly involved in running this scholarship program.

We took those suggestions from Senator FEINSTEIN. She drafted sections of the bill, and we incorporated them in the bill. Those changes are now in the bill that is now before the Senate. I appreciate very much her work.

I yield, without losing my right to the floor, for a question from Senator LANDRIEU.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I thank the Senator for his comments. He is correct that there have been some improvements made to this section of the bill, but it remains a work still in progress. There are many Members on the Democratic side and some Members on the Republican side who are still not comfortable with the language. There are some who are absolutely opposed to the underlying concept of private school vouchers or scholarships.

I thank the chairman for remaining open and working on some amendments and language. That is taking