

Our States are having to deal with \$70 billion in deficits by cutting funding for education, health care, transportation and other critical needs.

The people in my State need a safety net now to help get them back on their feet, and that safety net relies on states having adequate funding. We need to help the States get through this critical time.

Last, it should not blow an even larger hole in the Federal budget. Keeping our military strong, tracking down terrorists, defending our homeland, giving our young people a good education, making health care more affordable, and building infrastructure are the types of priorities that the Bush plan will crowd out.

I hope that my friends on the other side of the aisle and at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue will listen to the hardworking Americans outside the beltway. I hope that they will work with us to get a real, responsible and effective stimulus plan to get America's economy moving again.

When my father was called upon during the Second World War, he was proud to serve his country. He earned the Purple Heart as one of the first G.I.'s to land at Okinawa.

Today we are engaged in a war on terrorism and on the brink of another. But rather than being asked to sacrifice, we are asked how much we want our taxes cut.

I visited Fort Lewis, McChord Air Force Base, and Everett Naval Station during the recent break. These young men and women are serving our country and women are working so hard to protect our security. Their families are being asked to sacrifice, as these men and women prepare to deploy.

It is amazing that at the very time we are asking these troops to leave their families and head overseas to respond to a foreign crisis, we are asking for a tax cut at home that puts our budget in crisis.

It is hard for me to imagine how a private first class making \$16,000 a year is going to benefit from this tax cut. Yet he—or she—is prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice to protect America's national security.

America's defense needs, our homeland security needs, our education and health care needs will be jeopardized by the massive new Bush tax cut.

What America needs now is not a plan to stimulate the deficit, but a real plan to stimulate our economy and put Americans back to work.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I first thank my colleague from Washington State for her eloquence, standing up for those working Americans, middle class Americans, those on the front lines who are being asked to put their lives on the line in defense of our country and our freedoms. I appreciate very much her comments and would like to associate myself with her comments today.

Ms. MURRAY. I thank the Senator.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN ADMISSION POLICY

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I rise to express my deep disappointment at news reports today that indicate the Bush administration will try to overturn the admissions policy at the University of Michigan, in my great State. As many people know, the Supreme Court will soon hear a case that will decide the future of racial diversity in all institutions of higher education. The University of Michigan's admissions policy so far has been upheld by the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals as constitutional. Unfortunately, those who want to dismantle all admissions programs that consider race have taken this all the way to the Supreme Court.

It is important to note this case is not about racial quotas. Let me say that again. It is important to note this case is not about racial quotas. The University of Michigan does not have racial quotas for admission. I am opposed to racial quotas and this, in fact, has been the law of the land since the Supreme Court's decision in the Bakke case in 1978.

The University of Michigan's undergraduate admissions policy simply takes into account student diversity as one of many factors that are considered for admission. Incidentally, the most important factors for admission are the applicant's grade point average and test scores. Race is one factor of diversity, but it is not the only factor. I think this oftentimes is missed in the discussion about the university's policies and what affirmative action means. There are several other factors the university considers, including if the applicant comes from a socially or economically disadvantaged background, if the applicant is a white student from a majority minority high school, if the applicant comes from an underrepresented community, such as one of Michigan's many rural communities throughout northern Michigan, southern Michigan, up in the Upper Peninsula, or if the applicant is an athlete.

I think it is important to emphasize there is a category where there are certain points that are given and you can either be given points as an athlete or points for racial diversity or points for other kinds of categories—not all of them but one. Certainly, there are a number of factors that are considered in this process to create a balanced student body for the university.

The university considers a long list of factors, including if the applicant is a child of an alumni or if he or she has written a terrific essay. So there are many factors.

All of these factors help the University of Michigan select a diverse, well-rounded student body that is not just racially diverse but economically and geographically diverse as well.

Do we not believe that students from our small towns and rural communities

add a unique and valuable perspective to our academic institutions? What about our students who come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds?

I know many Michigan families in the Upper Peninsula who lost their jobs because of the iron mines closing. Don't their children deserve an equal opportunity to attend one of the State's best academic institutions, and in fact I would argue one of the best in the Nation?

I might add that my son, Todd, is also an alumni of the great University of Michigan.

This debate is much greater than the admissions policy of one university. This is about whether we are going to have equal opportunity for all Americans. This is about whether we support policies that help provide the opportunity for Americans of all backgrounds to have a chance at the American dream regardless of where they live, regardless of their ethnic background and their religious background, or whether they are male or female, whether they are an athlete or not a good athlete—a wide variety of factors that go into making those decisions. And shouldn't all young people have the opportunity?

We already have policies called veterans preferences to help our veterans. I certainly am very supportive of doing that. We have set aside programs for women-owned and minority-owned small businesses and some categories for small businesses in general. There are certainly preferences that make good sense in public policy.

Shouldn't we also give a helping hand to all young people who want to go to college to be able to create the brainpower to drive the economic engine of this country with new innovations and new opportunities to continue forward an American economy that is as strong as it can be?

President Bush's decision to try to dismantle the University of Michigan's admissions policy comes at a very tough time for our Nation's minority community. Over the past month, the Republican Party has undergone a makeover—a change in leadership. But it would be very unfortunate if it is a change in style and not of substance.

Despite the White House's recent proclamation of issues that impact our minority community, I was very disheartened to see that they immediately renominated Charles Pickering to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals despite his controversial record on civil rights and his defense of someone convicted of burning a cross on the lawn of an interracial family.

There has been no commitment by this administration to support hate crimes legislation or legislation to prevent racial profiling. There has not been a commitment to fully fund election reform measures to ensure that minority voters are not disenfranchised as they were in the 2000 election.

Unfortunately, this administration seems to be all talk and no action. We

need to come together in a bipartisan way to act and not just to talk. On the one hand, the President talks about the importance of expanding opportunities to all Americans. And we all talk of that, and that certainly is something with which I agree, but the administration's policies do not back up this rhetoric.

There is still time for the President to file a brief in the Supreme Court case—one that supports the University of Michigan's admissions policy. I urge him to do so. Now is the time for us to come together and work together to make sure there is opportunity and access to our great institutions of higher learning in this country and that educational opportunities are available to every young person and to every American. I urge the President to reconsider the course that he appears to be taking and to join with us who understand the policy of the University of Michigan and to understand the importance of every young person having the opportunity to go to college.

I yield the floor.

Madam 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.

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

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

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the time during further quorum calls be evenly divided on both sides.

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

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

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

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING'S BIRTHDAY AND CIVIL RIGHTS

Mr. REID. Madam President, when I finished law school, I went back to Las Vegas. One of the first opportunities I had to do something socially was to listen to Martin Luther King speak at the old Las Vegas Convention Center. As I look back, that was really a good choice that I made. I am so fortunate that I, over the years, have been able to hear stirring speeches by people on this floor, by the finest extemporaneous speakers I have ever heard, Henry Cisneros, and Dr. Martin Luther King.

The reason I mention that is because that is a special day in my life. This Monday we are celebrating a national holiday, the birthday of the man who I

listened to in Las Vegas, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

This year, in particular, with controversial remarks and votes related to issues of race having affected this body itself, it is important that we reflect on the life, legacy, and the message of Dr. King.

The Senate may not be in session next week—it may be; it may not be—it certainly will not be in session on Monday, so I would like to share some of my thoughts on this subject this afternoon.

In one of his famous, stirring speeches, Dr. King shared with us his dream for American society. I was working as a Capitol policeman here in Washington when he gave that speech. I was in law school. I can remember the buses. I had never seen so many buses. Hundreds and hundreds of buses came here. And, of course, he gave that famous speech.

Despite the suffering he individually endured and African Americans, as a group, have experienced, Dr. King articulated hope, optimism, and encouragement. He spoke of an America in which all people were united, free, and equal, and of a time when people were not discriminated against or limited because of their race or ethnicity or religion.

Today we are closer to that place and time because of his efforts, accomplishments, and sacrifices, and that of countless other African Americans. These men and women confronted enormous obstacles to make life better not only for African Americans but for all Americans.

America has made great strides in improving the status of ethnic and racial minorities. Today, African Americans are leaders in our communities, the arts, sciences, business, and world affairs. We no longer accept legal discrimination in America in any form. We no longer allow the use of poll taxes that prohibit African Americans from voting. We no longer tolerate discrimination in public accommodations such as water fountains, lunch counters, movie houses.

In addition to making political, legal, and social gains, Blacks are now enjoying unprecedented economic success. African-American unemployment and poverty levels are at record lows. There continues to be a significant rise in African-American homeownership and a dramatic increase in loans to African-American entrepreneurs.

We must be aware, though, that the slumping economy the past 2 years has threatened to undo much of the progress, and its impact is disproportionately felt by people of color. I talked about one of those issues this morning; that is, 34 percent of African-American teenagers are unemployed. They want to find jobs.

So despite all of our progress as a society expanding opportunities for all, we can do much better. We have a lot more to do and challenges we have to overcome. The population of Blacks

and other minorities continues to increase and flourish in Nevada and across America. But African Americans often lack the services and resources they need to receive a quality education and, in turn, achieve a better place in our society.

Almost half a century after Brown v. Board of Education, most minority students still attend schools that are predominantly minority. On average, they are in larger classes, have older books, receive less challenging lessons, and have teachers with less training in the subject being taught.

Fortunately, Congress passed a bipartisan Leave No Child Behind education reform package, which became the law of the land last year, to correct certain inequities by making sure well-trained teachers are in every classroom, setting higher standards for all students, and providing schools with resources to meet these new standards.

To continue improving the quality of education, expanding opportunities for all Americans, our next step must be to raise the standards for safety, character, and discipline in our schools and to fulfill the promise of our education reform. To do this, we must have a budget that comes from the White House that doesn't skimp on funding for our schools. Passing a bill that says leave no child behind is good, but we are leaving many children behind if we don't provide the funding.

There are some schools, because of a lack of funds, that are going on 4-day school weeks. I don't know of a school district in America—I am sure there are some—that is not having tremendous funding problems. The fifth or sixth largest school district in America is Las Vegas, Clark County, some 250, 260,000 students. That school district has deep financial problems. Many of these problems are a result of the unfunded mandate that we passed on to the school district in Clark County and other school districts around America with Leave No Child Behind. They are required to do things, and we have not provided resources to help them.

While we have made substantial progress, Blacks still lag behind financially and are disproportionately represented among America's poor. Congress should increase the minimum wage, not only to help youths and African Americans but all of our Nation's citizens, especially single mothers, who benefit more than any other group. In addition, providing unemployment and health care benefits for those who have been hindered by the recession will help dislocated workers and their families get back on their feet and continue to improve their lives. We also need to find creative, effective ways to narrow the earnings gap between Whites and African Americans.

Making these improvements will take the dedication of all Americans. Our Nation's efforts to recover from the tragedy of September 11 remind us that by working together, we become a