

and toddlers. By establishing better relationships with other public and private programs, early childhood programs under IDEA can be a resource for young children with disabilities as well as for children at risk of disability. It will make it easier for schools and districts to collect funds from other agencies, without allowing schools to abdicate their responsibility for making sure that disabled students get the services they need.

It also requires States to offer mediation, but makes it voluntary for both parties to determine whether they want to participate. In addition, the bill authorizes school districts to require parents to meet with representatives from parent training centers or other alternative dispute resolution experts to explain the benefits of mediation.

Schools have asked for additional leeway to discipline students with disabilities to help guarantee a safe learning environment for all students. This bill gives schools more discretion in disciplining students with disabilities, while still protecting those students. The bill provides the authority for school personnel to remove children with disabilities from their current placement into an interim alternative educational setting for up to 45 days in two specific cases: First, if the child carries a weapon or knowingly possesses, uses, or sells illegal drugs of controlled substances; or second, if the school obtains such authority from a hearing officer after demonstrating that maintaining a child in the current placement is substantially likely to result in injury to the child or others.

Although the bill provides more flexibility for schools to discipline students, discipline should never be used as an excuse to exclude or segregate children with disabilities because of the failure to design behavioral management plans, or the failure to provide support services and staff training. It is critical that schools use the new discretion with utmost care. Research tells us that suspension and expulsion are ineffective in changing the behavior of students in special education. When students with disabilities are suspended or expelled and their education is disrupted, they are likely to fall farther behind, become more frustrated, and drop out of school altogether.

Children who leave school become a burden on society. Dropouts are three times more likely to be unemployed than high school graduates. Nearly half of the heads of households on welfare and half of the prison population did not finish high school.

We have also made changes to see that the provisions of IDEA are more vigorously enforced by giving the U.S. Secretary of Education and State education agencies greater power to enforce the law, including greater discretion to withhold funds when violations are found and explicit statutory authority to refer cases of noncompliance

to the Department of Justice for enforcement action. We expect the Department of Justice to act on such referrals in a timely and appropriate manner. This referral authority is particularly critical for instances when a State fails to implement corrective action within the time specified in the State monitoring plan. We expect the Secretary to use enforcement authorities when applicable to ensure that failure to comply with the law will not go without remedy.

In addition, the Department of Education is expected to report annually on the status of State monitoring and compliance. We also expect the Department of Education to include parents more actively in the State and local monitoring process.

We must never go back to the days when large numbers of school-age children with disabilities were excluded from public school, when few if any pre-school children with disabilities received services, and when most children in school did not get the help they deserve. The goal of public education is to give all children the opportunity to pursue their dreams. We must be committed to every child—even the ones who aren't easy to teach.

I commend all the students, parents, teachers, and administrators who have left an indelible mark on this legislation. Their commitment to this law and their willingness to put aside the divisions of the past and find constructive compromises will improve the education of students with disabilities, and enable schools to implement the law as effectively as possible.

I also commend and thank all the staff members of the working group for their skillful assistance in making this process successful: Pat Morrissey and Jim Downing of Senator JEFFORDS' staff; Townsend Lange of Senator COATS staff; Bobby Silverstein and Tom Irvin of Senator HARKIN's staff; David Hoppe and Mark Hall of Senator LOTT's staff; and Kate Powers, Connie Garner, and Danica Petroschius of my own staff. I also commend the hard work of the House staff on the working group, including Sally Lovejoy and Todd Jones of the House committee majority staff; Alex Nock of the House committee minority staff, Theresa Thompson of Representative SCOTT's staff, and Charlie Barone of Representative MILLER's staff.

This bill deserves the support of every Member of Congress. It means a new day of hope and opportunity for children with disabilities.

I yield the floor and 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. CRAIG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period for the transaction of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each.

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

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, which were referred as indicated:

EC-1841. A communication from the Acting President and Chairman of the Export-Import Bank of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a transaction involving U.S. exports to the People's Republic of China; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-1842. A communication from the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Export Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, a rule entitled "Revisions and Clarifications" (RIN0694-AB56) received on May 1, 1997; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-1843. A communication from the Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, a rule including a definition (RIN3235-AH14) received on May 1, 1997; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-1844. A communication from the Under Secretary of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report on Bradley Vehicle Systems acquisition program; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-1845. A communication from the Under Secretary of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report on Chemical Demilitarization acquisition program; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-1846. A communication from the General Counsel, Department of Defense, transmitting, a draft of proposed legislation that addresses several management concerns; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-1847. A communication from the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, transmitting, pursuant to law, a rule entitled "Intergovernmental Personnel Act Mobility Program" (RIN3206-AG61) received on April 30, 1997; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

EC-1848. A communication from the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, transmitting, pursuant to law, a rule relative to employment, (RIN3206-AH66) received on April 30, 1997; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

EC-1849. A communication from the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, transmitting, pursuant to law, a rule entitled "Official Duty Station Determination for Pay Purposes" (RIN3206-AH84) received on May 8, 1997; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

EC-1850. A communication from the General Counsel, Department of Defense, transmitting, a draft of proposed legislation to reform government-wide acquisition; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first