

that has provided the foundation for dispute resolution among allies.

In its role as an institution of collective defense, NATO's currently flexible methods for handling differences among allies maximizes U.S. influence. Frankly, this is most visible in the alliance's effort to mediate disputes between Turkey and Greece. We should not tinker with this success, the success that NATO has had in resolving differences because of the trust in which it is held by the members of this great alliance. I fear that the proposal would create the impression that the NAC has failed in its realm. I do not believe any of us would say that is true.

By introducing the proposal on this resolution of ratification, we would be communicating that the Senate regards Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic as more disputatious than NATO's current 16 members. I do not believe that is the sense of the Senate.

We should never, never in any way, undermine the supremacy of the NAC over all alliance matters and all alliance bodies. Yet, I fear that is what this proposal would do by creating a new body independent from the NAC.

Finally, this proposal would undercut its very own objectives. It would create the very tensions I assume it is intended to diffuse. Members of the Alliance will no longer focus primarily on the Alliance's core mission of collective defense, but will address the Alliance as a means to pursue their own strictly national interests. And, that will change the very culture of the Alliance.

How do you think Greece and Turkey are going to respond to this proposal? More importantly how will such a proposal affect their attitudes toward the Alliance?

It would certainly change the ways in which these two countries view their membership in NATO and their bilateral relationship within NATO. It will prompt them to become suspicious of the NAC. It will introduce greater tensions between them.

As well intentioned this amendment may be, it is nonetheless totally counterproductive.

In brief, Mr. President, this amendment would diminish U.S. influence in the Alliance. It would undercut trust between Allies. It will direct the very focus of our Allies away from NATO's core mission of collective defense. It will undercut trust within the Alliance. Ultimately, this proposal will weaken the Alliance.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this amendment.

Therefore, I urge, first of all, my distinguished colleague from Texas not to raise the amendment. But if she does, I urge my colleagues to oppose it.

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

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

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

CUTS IN EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, it's Friday noontime, and I want to make clear that the eyes of the Nation are going to be on the Senate of the United States next Tuesday when we will vote on a proposal that will provide a \$1.6 billion tax cut that will mostly benefit the wealthy individuals who send their children to private school. That is \$1.6 billion that could be used to support our public school system.

I think it's important for the Nation that parents review what has happened in the U.S. Senate over the last few days. Some very important decisions have been made by the Budget Committee. They have decided how to allocate the nation's scarce federal resources—and education doesn't get its fair share. And, next week, we will be voting on this \$1.6 billion tax break that will primarily benefit the private schools.

I take issue with those who believe we ought to support the Budget Committee's decision to cut \$1.6 billion from education. We should not abandon the public schools in this country. No challenge we face as a Nation is more important than strengthening the academic achievement and accomplishment of the young people in this country—the 48 million young people who attend the public schools in this country every single day.

On the one hand, Republicans want to use \$1.6 billion to support for tax breaks to help private schools. And, at the same time, our Republican friends on the Budget Committee cut federal education funding by \$400 million from last year, and \$1.6 billion below the President's level. Those who are making the speeches about the importance of public schools, if they stand behind the public school system, are going to have to answer the questions why they continue to cut crucial support for education.

Now, look at what the Budget Committee provided in this past week. We will have the chance to debate the budget when it comes up here in the next several days. But let's look at where our Republican friends place their priorities and what they said about public education. They cut \$1.6 billion below President Clinton's budget on public education. Now, money is not always the final indicator about what is a good program or what is a bad program; we recognize that. But it is a pretty good indication about where a nation's priorities are. If we go out and start to cut, as the Budget Com-

mittee did this past week, \$1.6 billion in discretionary assistance for the public schools, we know that education is not a national priority.

That means that they cut education and Head Start funding by \$1 billion below the level needed just to maintain the current services. In order for communities to be able to continue to serve the current number of children in Head Start, you would need an additional \$1 billion just to meet inflation. Right now, we provide enough funding in Head Start to serve about 40 percent of all the children that are eligible. But now some of those children currently in Head Start programs won't get the help the need.

Now, the Head Start Program doesn't solve all of our problems in early education. But what is undeniable is the importance of early intervention with children. What we have seen with the various Carnegie Commission reports, and the other reports, is that the earlier the intervention, the more confidence young children will have. The Head Start Program is a tried and tested program. If a child gets help in the Head Start Program, they are more likely to succeed in school and as adults. All you have to do is look at the Ypsilanti programs, the Beethoven project, and various other studies that have been done, and they show what the importance is in terms of early intervention. This Republican budget cuts \$1 billion out of that Head Start Program and other important education programs. It also cuts funding for the education programs \$400 million below even last year. It prohibits funding for any of the new programs.

So we are having a reduction of \$1.6 billion in discretionary funding for education, which includes cuts in the Head Start Program. That Head Start Program has had bipartisan support. President Bush increased it \$300 million or \$400 million a year. We ran into problems during that period of time that we weren't giving sufficient support and help for those teachers that were involved in those programs. And some of the quality issues were important to address, but we addressed them in a bipartisan way. We also indicated in the reauthorization of the Head Start Program some special funding for the earliest interventions, going down to 3-year-olds and 2-year-olds. That was very important. But this Budget Committee says no to those programs, no to even those that are in those programs, by cutting back funding.

The President of the United States is working hard to address the challenges that we are facing out in our public schools, particularly that we are going to need additional teachers in our schools and we need to rebuild the nation's school buildings. Because of enrollments rising and massive teachers retirements, we are going to need 100,000 new teachers. The President has committed enough funding for 100,000 new teachers in his budget to reduce class sizes in the early grades. The

President of the United States said, let's try a smaller class size for the early years, when the children are just beginning their education experience and they need more individual attention. But, the Republican Budget Committee has said no to the 100,000 new teachers and no to smaller class sizes.

Then the President of the United States introduced a plan to help disadvantaged communities—urban or rural—improve failing schools. A number of communities across this country, such as Chicago and my own city of Boston, are making dramatic improvements in educational opportunities for children. The President's program for creating educational opportunity zones is one of the most important investments we can make to get quick help for tough reform in these needy communities.

The President has proposed help for local communities that are going to take some dramatic steps to try to enhance academic achievement. He calls them "education opportunity zones." We have the record on these, where these are being tried across the country to try to provide additional help and support for those teachers. That program won't be given a chance to get off the ground. There won't be a nickel for that program that was advanced by the President of the United States.

Senator MOSELEY-BRAUN has introduced a very important program to modernize and rebuild the nation's schools. That is very important in every community in this country—whether you have to address overcrowded or crumbling schools. I believe that my own State has the second oldest schools in this country. We find that on a cold day where the temperature goes down to 20 degrees in Boston that 10 or 15 schools in Boston are effectively closed because of poor heating systems. Those children have to stay home. We are talking about a very modest program that will bring \$22 billion in bonding authority to the states interest-free. Senator CAROL MOSELEY-BRAUN has been fighting for that day in and day out.

But, the Republicans refuse to make a strong investment in rebuilding the nation's schools.

There is no funding for the High Hopes School College Partnership Program to help young people from disadvantaged communities reach their dream of going to college.

There is no increase in the Title I funding to improve students achievement in math and reading.

What has to happen before Republicans will stop the attack on public education? The Third International Math and Science Study was just released that shows our students aren't measuring up. We have had hours and days of discussion, and volumes of reports, that talk about the importance of early intervention programs, and the importance of programs that provide extra help in areas of math reading, and science. The Title I program for

needy children has made a tremendous difference in the reading and math skills of young people. We have been reminded as a nation about the importance of furthering our efforts in math and science. And yet, Title I and other important programs will not get an increase.

The Republican budget won't even allow for an increase in Pell grants that are so crucial to helping needy college students afford to go to college. About 80 percent of the children in the highest income bracket finish college, but only about 8 percent of students in the lowest 25 percent finish college. Many of those students cannot afford to finish. But the Republicans won't help more needy students get the assistance they need.

I can remember not long ago, at the University of Massachusetts in Boston, their tuition used to be \$1,100. They raised it to \$1,200, and they lost 10 percent of all their applicants—\$100. What is the profile of those students? Eighty-five percent of those students' parents never went to college, and 85 percent of them are working 25 hours a week, or more. One hundred dollars makes a major difference. A modest increase in the Pell grants, even an increase of \$300, is a lifeline to those young people so that they can finish college and get good jobs.

All of these programs that the Republicans have rejected or frozen are paid for in the President's budget. They are paid for. But, nonetheless, we see that the Budget Committee said no—no to each one of the President's programs to try to strengthen education. Then we are faced with billions of dollars of cuts from the President's levels. And at the same time, the Republican program provides a tax break for the wealthiest individuals in this country. And for what? To help improve public education? No! To subsidize the private school tuition they already pay.

If that makes sense, then my colleagues should vote for cloture next week. But every parent in this country ought to know what is happening on education, and every parent ought to know that we are being closed down from any opportunity to debate this issue—the most important debate we are going to be facing. It is Friday afternoon. We are going to have a little time to speak here on Friday afternoon, and a only little time before the cloture vote on Tuesday. Education is a key issue and it deserves a long debate. And, it deserves the discussion of other ideas, not just one way.

Mr. President, I can't believe that as an institution and as representatives of the people we constantly talk about education but our first order of business in education is to provide a tax break of \$1.6 billion that does nothing to improve public schools. This is their education program: nothing to strengthen teachers; nothing to reduce class size; nothing to modernize and rebuild schools; nothing to expand after-school programs; cutting back on the

Head Start Program that provides skills for children to go into the public school system. They say that this is their answer to their education. And we are being denied the opportunity to debate it.

Mr. President, I think this is really the kind of irresponsible approach on education that really does an enormous disservice to the parents in this country. We should improve our public schools, not abandon them.

I see my good friend from Connecticut on the floor who serves on the Labor and Human Resources Committee that governs education issues, and who has been tireless in advancing the cause of education. I am wonder if he is not as perplexed by the allocation of this \$1.6 billion. As I understand, the Joint Tax Committee has stated that the bill spends \$1.6 billion to allocate to private schools. Of the 35.4 million public school families, only 30 percent would be able to use this IRA. And those public school families would only get an average benefit of \$7—\$7 per family. Of the 2.9 million who send their children to private schools, 83 percent will be able to use it. And the private school families will get an average benefit of \$37.

I am just wondering if he is not as perplexed by that whole approach and that whole program—and the allocations of the benefits of this program—and whether he would agree with me that this really is a sham. When we talk about trying to strengthen academic achievement, academic accomplishment, and investment in the young people of this country in our public school system, is this what we should accept?

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, first of all let me thank my colleague from Massachusetts for joining me in speaking on this issue. With just a few hours remaining between now and Tuesday when this matter may be very well decided, the very questions he is raising may never have another opportunity to be aired and discussed—certainly not in this Congress and maybe not again for some time. So I thank him for providing a valuable opportunity to raise some tremendously important issues.

My fervent hope is that people all across this country between now and Tuesday will listen to what is going on here and will raise their voices and address the American Congress. My hope is that they will say—this is my money you are talking about, this \$1.6 billion over the next 10 years that you want to go for a tax break that gives only \$7 to public school parents, and maybe \$37 a year to private school parents. My hope is that they will tell us clearly that this is not exactly our nation's highest priority when it comes to the education of our children. That instead we should be talking about school construction, about the need for smaller class size, about the need for early childhood education, and the need for funding for special education.

These next few days may be the only time for the remainder of this year

that we are going to have to talk about the educational priorities of this country. So I am hopeful that the questions that the Senator from Massachusetts has raised will raise the temperature of this debate. I am hopeful that the nation will focus its attention on this issue.

The education of our children is one subject matter that joins people all across the political spectrum—whether you are a conservative Republican, a liberal Democrat, or somewhere in between. Everyone in America understands that if you try to talk about making this Nation strong and vibrant in the 21st century and simultaneously fail to invest intelligently in the public educational needs of this Nation, you are engaging in hypocrisy. This Nation cannot be strong, cannot be vibrant, and cannot be a global competitor unless we are willing to make the commitment that the overwhelming majority of people in this country want to make to improve our schools and to give our children the opportunities they deserve.

I want to remind people of the numbers—they aren't terribly complicated. There are 53 million children in school today in elementary and secondary schools—53 million. Forty-eight million of them go to public schools—48 million. Five million go to private schools. Yet, this bill that we are going to be asked to vote on come Tuesday provides the lion's share of the dollars—fifty-two percent of the money—to only 5 million children and their families. These families get \$37, and the kids who go to public school and their families get \$7.

Do you think that taking \$1.6 billion and providing people with a \$7 tax break, or even a \$37 tax break if your kid goes to a private school, is an intelligent investment of your money? Do you think it is the best investment given all the other needs we have—with schools falling apart in our inner cities, with special-education costs rising every year? It's not uncommon to spend \$50,000 or \$100,000 a year to meet the needs of one or two children who require special-education. Eighteen percent of the budget in my State for education goes to special education. Do you think that meeting these needs is a lessor priority? Do you think that reducing the average kindergarten class size from 32 kids is a lessor priority? If you do, then don't say anything over the next 72 hours, because that is what you are going to get. But if you have a sense of outrage, a sense of outrage about what you think is a misplaced priority, if you think that we ought to be doing a far better job than what this bill calls for, then we urge you to speak out.

Mr. KENNEDY. I must say that the Senator makes a powerful case. We urge those who are watching to write to their Members of the Senate. The vote is on Tuesday. Get busy and let them know that they shouldn't be voting to cut off this debate on how to

support public education. We are just trying to have this debate and offer amendments on our own ideas.

I firmly believe that we should be building schools and not be building new tax shelters for the wealthy. We should be reducing the class size and not reducing aid to public schools.

But I will ask the Senator one final question on this: Does the Senator also find it extraordinary that just this past week the Budget Committee—on a party line vote—have passed a Republican budget that will cut \$1.6 billion in education funding below the President's budget, to cut \$1 billion below current services for education and Head Start, and to provide no funds for new teachers, smaller classrooms, or for safer, more modern school buildings? Does the Senator agree with me that last week our Republican friends cut \$1.6 billion from education programs that are tried and tested and proven to be effective and helpful, and then came to the floor of U.S. Senate and said that they are really the friends of public education because the Coverdell bill to provide tax breaks to the wealthy will solve the problems in public education? Is he troubled by this juxtaposition where one day they are cutting the heart out of the public school budget and then coming onto the floor and emphasizing that their goal is to help public schools? The problem is that they can't answer the question that the money is going to private schools. And the bottom line is that if they get cloture, does the Senator agree with me that we would be seeing a significant reduction in our national commitment to the public schools of this country, if we continue to support the Coverdell bill and permit these cuts to go ahead?

Mr. DODD. The Senator from Massachusetts has said it very well. I couldn't agree with him more. The great irony, you know, is that most people do not follow the activities of the Senate budget committee. If you want your eyes to glaze over, try to follow a budget debate, whether you are talking about local, State, or national budgets. It can get pretty arcane—budget stories get buried away in the back of your local newspaper. But what the Senator from Massachusetts just told you is absolutely the truth. There was a budget agreement reached that will set the priorities for education for the coming months and years in this country. This agreement has just cut \$1.6 billion out of priorities like Head Start, Title I, and Safe and Drug-Free Schools. This agreement failed to provide funding to reduce classroom size, to train teachers and to provide early education. All of these programs are being cut, and simultaneously we are being asked to provide an additional \$1.6 billion in tax breaks—\$7 to a public school family and \$37 to a private school family—as if by doing so, we were making some great commitment to education.

I have spoken to students from every single public high school in my State

in the last 10 or 12 years, and I try to make it to my inner-city public high schools every year. I spoke at Manchester High School last week, the week before at Harding, a public high school in Bridgeport, CT. I try to listen to what is going on in these schools. I have some wonderful schools in my State that have tremendous resources and great commitment by the local communities to support them. I am very excited when I go and visit those schools. I just wish I could take people with me on these visits because, unfortunately, in this country the only time we hear about public schools is when something goes wrong—when a violent act occurs or something falls apart. It is the old adage that the only planes that the media reports about are the ones that don't fly. We rarely hear about the planes that fly. And every day in this country there are teachers and students and families that are doing a terrific job in providing for the educational needs of their families.

But, I also have other schools that are not doing as well, that are suffering financially, that have encountered tremendous obstacles in trying to meet the special problems that large inner-city schools and rural schools can face. Clearly, there are needs in these schools. My concern here, as the Senator from Massachusetts has expressed, is that on Tuesday we are going to vote to limit debate, that we will not be allowed to bring up amendments that we think would offer some alternatives for meeting these needs and for creating real choices for families.

The irony of this bill is it is called a choice bill, a bill to give people choices about education. I would like the choice to represent the millions of families who think maybe the special-education needs are larger than a \$7 tax break. And I have a lot of mayors and a lot of taxpayers in my communities who watch their property taxes go up because of the cost of special-educational needs. Why not give me a chance to offer an amendment that would allow this body to vote on whether or not they think that priority is higher than a \$7 tax break?

How about early education needs? I would like the opportunity to offer an amendment on early childhood education. There are 13 million children every day in this country that are in child care settings. There are 5 million kids in this country who don't have anywhere to go after school. You tell me what you think is more important—that I try to do something for those 13 million kids who are in child care, much of it of appalling quality, or the 5 million children who are home alone or wandering around in malls getting involved in trouble after school? You tell me where you want your money to go—a \$7 tax break or a \$37 tax break if you are in a private school, or would you like to see me as your Senator put some resources into after-school care to get these kids off the street?

We would like to offer an amendment on school construction to improve the quality of public schools. We have schools falling apart across this country, as the Senator from Massachusetts has pointed out. You tell me where you want your money to go—toward improving these facilities so these kids have a decent place to learn, or do you want a \$7 tax break? I happen to believe most people in this country, if given the choice to be here to vote on Tuesday, would want their tax dollars to go for things like early childhood education, school construction, classroom size, and special education.

They may differ on the priority they would give to those different issues, but I would be willing to wager that given the choice of voting for any one of those options over the choice of spending \$1.6 billion over the next 10 years for a \$7 tax break, they would say that those issues are higher priorities.

So I am hopeful that over this weekend and on Monday, people across this country will be heard on this issue. After Tuesday it will be too late. We won't get the chance to bring up the issue of choice again. This may be the only significant debate we are able to have on the quality of education in this country.

So the Senator from Massachusetts and I and others are taking to the floor here today to try to raise the level of awareness so that the public will know what is at stake. It is an important debate and one that should be aired fully and thoroughly. We ought to have the chance to bring up school construction, classroom size, early education, special education and other ideas. This procedural debate is over whether or not we are going to be allowed to even raise these issues, to even discuss them and ask our colleagues to vote for them.

Whether or not you agree with each and every one of these other priorities, shouldn't I be allowed to raise the concerns of my constituents? Mr. President, when I traveled across my State a few weeks ago and met with all my mayors, 169 cities and towns, and traveled to various parts of my State and asked them to tell me what they thought the priorities should be in this coming session of Congress, almost without exception, special education was on the mind of every single mayor in every town. Shouldn't I have the opportunity to raise that issue?

I have communities in my State, Mr. President, that are small communities that have small populations, and yet it is not uncommon for those people and those towns to spend \$50,000 or \$100,000 on the special-educational needs of a child or two children in that community. And we all understand the value of doing so.

We made a commitment years ago that the Federal Government would meet at least 40 percent of the costs of special education. But we have never contributed more than 8 percent—we have never kept our promise. So, if you said to me, What do you think is more

important, what do your constituents care more about, lowering their taxes and providing some help from the Federal Government to educate a child with special needs or giving a \$7 or \$37 tax break? I would have to say that a \$7 or \$37 tax break misses the mark.

Proponents of this bill will argue that this bill will give families more choices, that it will give them the option to enroll their children in private schools. There are many fine private schools in this nation and they do provide an important choice for families. But, Mr. President, I recently took a look around the Washington, DC, area to try to determine what the cost of a private school was just in this city, northern Virginia, and Maryland. The average cost is somewhere between \$10,000 and \$17,000 a year. Does anyone honestly believe that a \$37 tax break is going to make any difference to a family trying to make a choice whether or not to send its child to a private school or a public school—\$37?

I am not making up these numbers. These numbers come from the non-partisan Joint Tax Committee that did an analysis of this bill. And the Joint Tax Committee said that the average benefit for private school families is only \$37. Where is the logic in this? Where is the logic in this, with the limited resources we have? And our resources are limited. The days are far gone and over when we could just write checks and spend money without any consideration of the fiscal implications for our Nation. Limited dollars are all we have. So with these limited dollars, what do we do with them? Do we spend \$1.6 billion to give a \$7 or a \$37 tax break? With \$1.6 billion, I may not solve every one of the issues I raised here. School construction needs top \$112 billion nationwide; finding 100,000 teachers to reduce class size is expensive; early education and afterschool care is expensive; special education is expensive. I am not suggesting that the \$1.6 billion would in every way solve these four problems I have mentioned, but I would rather spend \$1.6 billion on improving the school facilities where we send our kids, reducing class size so the kid can learn better, reducing taxpayer costs on special education, and providing early childhood and afterschool care for families, than spend it providing a \$37 tax break for someone going to a private school or a \$7 tax break for someone going to a public school.

What am I missing? The math here just does not add up. We have limited resources, we have limited financial capacity, we all know this. We are being told that we have a staggering problem in the quality of school facilities. We have a significant problem in special education. We have a significant problem in early education and afterschool needs in this country. We have a significant problem in the size of classrooms. Everyone understands these are legitimate problems. So, do I take that \$1.6 billion and try to do something

about school construction, special ed, class size, and early education and afterschool care, among others?

Mr. President, over the next few days there will be a lot of TV talk shows about other issues that seem to have captured the attention of the American public. It will be interesting to see, come Sunday, whether the national talk shows think that the quality of the education of our children is of interest to the public. Even if you disagree with me on where our educational priorities should be, I expect you would agree that this would be healthier debate to have on national TV shows—about what we ought to be doing with our tax dollars and educational system—than what I suspect will be the topic of some of the talk shows.

But without debate and without the discussion, this notion of choice will be lost. I am not going to have the choice on Tuesday, as it stands right now, to offer any of the ideas that I have raised here today. I think I ought to have that right, as one Member of this body. I think my constituency in Connecticut cares, at the very least as much and I would argue significantly more, about special education, early education, school construction and class size as they do whether or not someone gets a \$37 or a \$7 tax break or a \$7 tax break. I think they care about these issues. Even the ones who disagree with me, I wager, Mr. President, think I ought to have the right to raise them and ask the 99 other Members of this body whether or not they want to vote for these ideas or against them.

But as it stands right now, I am going to be denied that opportunity. That may be the only opportunity this year to raise these issues in a meaningful debate. We spent 5 days here discussing whether or not we should to name the national airport for Ronald Reagan. I voted for this proposal. But to spend five days—five days—on whether or not to rename an airport and then to be told I cannot get an hour on an education bill to talk about school construction. I do not get 5 minutes to talk about early education and afterschool care. I don't get 5 minutes to talk about special education. But I get 5 days to talk about whether or not we rename an airport. You tell me what the priorities are around here.

If you wonder why I am frustrated and sound a little angry, it is because I am, because I hear people all across this country saying education is key to our nation's future. This country cannot meet its obligations and the challenges in front of it unless our young people get a proper education. And 53 million of them are sitting today in a classroom studying and trying to learn, with teachers who are trying to help them, and parents who are worried about them. I do not understand how we think we are going to convince them we are doing something worthwhile in giving a private-school child a \$37 tax break and a public-school child

a \$7 tax break. That is what this debate comes down to.

I plead with the public, please let your Members know that at the very least you think these ideas ought to be raised for debate and discussion and we ought to have the right to decide in a democratic fashion whether or not their votes, representing your ideas, are going to be cast in favor of a tax break for a few or trying to do something with that \$1.6 billion that could affect the quality of public education in this country for years to come.

I urge you over this weekend, and I urge the media, to spend at least as much time between now and Monday venting this issue as we have on an issue that, frankly, has very little to do with the quality of life in this country. We need that kind of debate. We need the opportunity to cast some votes that offer real choices—real choices—about the educational priorities of this country.

CONNECTICUT'S NCAA TOURNAMENT WIN

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, on a happier note, I was up until about 12:30 this morning, along with some other people from the Nutmeg State. It was not Minnesota that we were facing on a wooden floor in Greensboro, NC, but it was a dogfight—Huskies versus Huskies, the University of Washington versus the University of Connecticut basketball team. I know none of these young people I see here today were up that late. They were studying very hard, if they were up that late.

The March Madness that we talked about last night watched Richard Hamilton, with zero time left on the clock, fade back and, over the outstretched arms of a 7-foot center from the University of Washington, hit a shot that was nothing but net.

I know I speak for all 3.5 million people in Connecticut when I say we are proud of our Connecticut Huskies and the job they did. If Senator HELMS and Senator FAIRCLOTH, my colleagues from North Carolina, were here, I would challenge them, because on Saturday we are going to beat that No. 1 team and go to the Final Four in San Antonio, TX.

Mr. President, I yield the floor. I see the distinguished Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished Senator. What is the business before the Senate, Mr. President?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is now in executive session. The pending business is the Resolution of Ratification to accompany the Protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 and the accession of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic.

Mr. BYRD. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I may speak out of order as in legislative session.

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

ON SPRING

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, a great poet of the last century, William Wordsworth, wrote a famous piece of poetry which schoolchildren ought to memorize. They used to memorize it. It begins:

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle in the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay;
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

* * * * *

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

Wordsworth surely wrote those lines thinking, of course, of spring and perhaps of March, for again this March, the crisp brown leaves of winter are scattering before the blustery winds, and the daffodils are dancing in the breeze. And like those bright heralds of spring, I come to the floor today to celebrate today's vernal equinox, that celestial marker of winter's end and the beginning of perhaps the most blessed season of the earth's awakening. The dark, cold days of winter may now be safely said to be behind us and we may all begin to think optimistically about shedding our somber coats of wool, our bulky cocoon of hats, gloves, and scarves.

This winter has had more than the usual share of dreary, wet days in the Washington area. Locales more accustomed to winter and to winter's sun-tans have borne the psychic weight of day after day after day of unrelenting rain, of 3 months of steady downpour, floods, and mudslides. The mountains of my own West Virginia shouldered aside cold winds that left her ancient hollows heaped with snow—white, cold snow—that otherwise might have fallen on Washington, sheltering us in warmer air that caused flooding rains instead. There is hardly a spot in the nation that has escaped some abnormal weather occurrence, be it flood, freeze, gale, or tornado. I am sure that everyone joins me in welcoming the fading of El Niño's influence over the global weather patterns, but it will be a while before things return to normal. In the Senate, we have begun the recovery from winter's chilly wrath with the consideration of an emergency supplemental appropriations bill that will help to repair the worst of the nation's weather-spawned disasters.

But just when we begin to doubt that the sun will ever replace automobile headlights as the main source of illumination on our commutes to and from work, the morning brightens to reveal long skeins of Canada geese again filling the sky with their sweet music as

they wing their way back northward. The robins, returned to our lawns again, search out worms in the warming earth, and the bluebirds busy themselves with nest building.

I asked the robin, as he sprang
From branch to branch and sweetly sang,
What made his breast so round and red;
Twas "looking at the sun," he said.

The forsythia joins the crocus and daffodils in painting watercolor washes of lavender and yellow across lawns and roadsides. Spring's pale buds are peeping out from under the somber skirts of winter, giving hope on every tree and bulb. The annual pageant of the cherry blossoms cannot be far behind.

Mr. President, I admit to being no great fan of winter. I had all of the snow—all of the snow that I ever cared for when I was a boy, walking through the hills and mountains and hollows of West Virginia. Neither I nor my little dog, Billy, truly enjoys making our round of the neighborhood in the cold and lonely evenings of winter. I do not like to travel on wet or icy roads, on days so gray that the dawn seems to fade seamlessly into dusk, when snow or sleet drives sideways into the windshield—no, I would rather be hibernating in a comfortable chair with a good book, thank you. Not the trash that one finds on the book stands at the airports, but a truly good book written by Emerson or Carlyle.

And the beauty of the winter landscape is for me too austere, all shades of gray, brown, white, and black, dull after the scarlet and bronze riot of the fall. Give me instead the cheerful chaos of spring, with its stained glass window of colors, its energy, and its great sense of purpose.

I asked the violets, sweet and blue,
Sparkling in the morning dew,
Whence came their colors, then so shy;
They answered, "looking to the sky";

* * * * *

I asked the thrush, whose silvery note
Came like a song from angel's throat,
Why he sang in the twilight dim;
He answered, "looking up at Him."

So give me dew, instead of frost, on the grass in the morning, and thunderstorms instead of blizzards in the afternoons. And fill my evening sky with fireflies, not icy, twinkling stars. Let me feel the cool breeze from the West Virginia hills on my face while the sun warms my back, and let me listen to the cheerful cacophony of frogs while I spade up sweet garden soil in which I shall soon plant my tomatoes—my tomatoes—Big Boy or Better Boy or Beefsteak—whatever. I see our Presiding Officer, who comes from the hills and lakes of Minnesota, smiling. He, too, is thinking of spring.

Spring is a season for all the senses, a season savored all the more fully because it follows the season of greatest limits. Oh, give me the season so loved by poets, by Wordsworth.

Having begun with one great poet, perhaps it is only fitting that I close with another, whose life overlapped the