

The Senator from South Dakota spent considerable time talking about the school construction proposal. I want to point out that there is a school construction proposal offered by Senator GRAHAM of Florida that is in the proposal that is on the floor. It loosens, or makes more easy, the opportunity to finance school construction. It is not nearly as expensive as the proposal being talked about here.

Just to take a moment or two, the proposal that was just outlined by the minority leader does raise some questions. I know in my State—I don't know about the State of the chair—billions of dollars are already being spent to build schools, to modernize schools, and that is because it is a State responsibility.

As I was listening to the presentation, it was sort of running through my mind, well, are we headed toward a situation where those States that accepted their responsibility and built their schools and kept them modern are now going to have to subsidize States that have not? It is a curious question. As we have time to debate their proposal, I am sure it will clarify itself somewhat. But it certainly raises a question in my mind. I would not want a situation to occur where Georgia had fulfilled its responsibilities and some other State didn't, so now we are going to step in with a new proposal to make right something that perhaps is not.

I think you have to remember that construction has traditionally been a State responsibility. However, Senator GRAHAM's proposal does broaden the ability and make it more accessible for States to construct in this case immediately some 500 schools across the Nation.

Madam President, I want to clarify one statement just before we yield for the unanimous consent requests.

The minority leader said that our side of the aisle did nothing for public education. That is a pretty far-reaching statement considering that the proposal in front of us would help 14 million families finance education, 10 million of which are in public education, that would accumulate in the first 5 years \$5 billion of new resources, \$2.5 billion of which would go to support public schools. It would help 21 States plus 17 additional States that are considering prepaid tuition. It would help employers in the continuing education of 1 million employees. It would help 250,000 graduate students and would provide up to \$3 billion in school construction over the next 5 years—public school construction.

I not only consider that something; I consider that a lot, an enormous beginning in making the Federal Government a good partner in terms of improving education in our country—public, private, home, wherever it is occurring.

Tomorrow we will have an opportunity to debate an amendment offered by the Senator from Washington that

removes the Federal constriction, or constraints, or oversight on about \$15 billion, that would allow local school districts to hire teachers, build schools, provide buses, or whatever the Governors of those States and local communities thought necessary. It wouldn't have the Federal mantra over it that says you only get these benefits if you do these things the way we say. That will be an interesting debate that we will get into tomorrow.

AMENDMENT NO. 2290

Mr. COVERDELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the second-degree amendment No. 2290 be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

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

The Amendment (No. 2290) was agreed to.

Mr. COVERDELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that immediately following the 10 a.m. vote on Tuesday relating to the international shipping bill, there be 4 minutes equally divided in the usual form prior to a vote on the motion to table the Kennedy amendment No. 2289 to House Resolution 2646, the Coverdell A+ education bill.

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

Mr. COVERDELL. Madam President, I further ask unanimous consent that at 2:15 p.m. on Tuesday the Senate proceed to a vote on or in relation to the Glenn amendment No. 2017, to be followed by a vote on or in relation to the Mack-D'Amato amendment No. 2288, as amended.

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

Mr. COVERDELL. I further ask unanimous consent that no amendments be in order to the above amendments; and, finally, that prior to each of those scheduled at 2:15 there be 2 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

PROTECTING PUBLIC SAFETY BY PREVENTING EXCAVATION DAMAGE

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, recently, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) held a public meeting in Washington, D.C. to discuss the findings of a comprehensive study it conducted to assess the safety initiatives undertaken by industry and government and private organizations to prevent excavation damage to under-

ground pipelines. As a result of the study, the NTSB adopted twenty-seven safety recommendations to reduce the risks posed by excavation damage. I want to take this opportunity to commend the NTSB for its proactive stance on this important safety issue.

Excavation damage poses serious safety risks to our Nation's critical infrastructure. This infrastructure, among other things, transports natural gas, petroleum, and other chemical products through pipelines and enables telephone and Internet access through a vast network of fiber optic cables and communication lines. Damage to this infrastructure not only exposes people and the environment to safety risks, but impedes economic development.

The NTSB agrees. In a press release issued on the study, the NTSB states "a single pipeline accident has the potential to cause a catastrophic disaster that can injure hundreds of persons, affect thousands more, and cost millions of dollars in terms of property damage, loss of work opportunity, community disruption, ecological damage, and insurance liability. Excavation and construction activities are the largest single cause of accidents to pipelines." The Safety Board goes on to say that in "addition to being expensive and inconvenient, disruption of the telecommunications network can have significant safety implication, such as impact on traffic control systems, health services, and emergency response activities."

The NTSB further found that "damage from outside force is the leading cause of leaks and ruptures to pipeline systems, accounting for more than 40 percent of the reported failures." Excavation damage, the NTSB determined, "is also the single largest cause of interruptions to fiber cable service."

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Madam President, I would like to stand with the Majority Leader not only in affirming the importance of pipelines to our national transportation infrastructure, but also as a personal witness to the damage that a pipeline accident can have on victims of pipeline eruptions, and particularly to the community.

Four years ago, around midnight, on March 24, 1994, a major natural gas pipeline ruptured in Edison, New Jersey, a densely populated, urban environment. This rupture caused a deafening boom, awakening residents of the Durham Woods apartment complex. Seconds later, a plume of fire and gas shot hundreds of feet above the ground. Thankfully, the more than one thousand residents fled their homes, all leaving before the explosion leveled the Durham Woods apartment complex. I visited the site after the blast. I saw how the explosion incinerated cars, playground equipment and trees. Over one hundred people suffered injuries from the fire. One woman died from a heart attack. It was a miracle that nobody else died from that disaster. Four years later, the victims still suffer emotionally and physically. Some are