

In Texas, we are affected by both national and international air traffic growth. Traffic to Latin America in the next few years is set to exceed capacity and place an even larger burden on neighboring air route systems. This will affect traffic in the Gulf of Mexico, in particular, where traffic is controlled in large part by the air traffic control center in Houston.

In fact, this is one important area where improvements are greatly needed. A large portion of the Gulf of Mexico remains without visual communication on radar, nor sufficient two-way communication, in general. Traffic in much of the gulf is controlled solely by one-way radio communications. The Gulf of Mexico airspace accommodates passenger airlines serving destinations worldwide, cargo and general aviation traffic engaging in air commerce, and heavy helicopter traffic serving the offshore petrochemical industry. It also serves important users such as our armed forces, Coast Guard, Customs Service, and the Drug Enforcement Agency. All aircraft, from large commercial planes, to military aircraft, to helicopters need to have direct two-way communication to protect the safety of all those who fly these skies.

Currently, if a craft hits turbulence due to poor weather and seeks to ascend or descend the pilot must radio in to a controller, who must check the frequency and the surrounding traffic and then dial and pilot back and advise him on altering his position. One-way communication alone simply to reach the controller can take as long as seven minutes, and as long as fifteen minutes total to relay back to the controller. This is unacceptable for a pilot who needs to respond immediately to escape violent turbulence and blindly must change his altitude. This frightening scenario could be all too real and common as air traffic grows.

The FAA Gulf of Mexico Task Force was formed to highlight the problems in the gulf and recommend solutions. More than 100 individuals representing the Federal Aviation Administration, airlines, the military, and others in the industry have come together to address this problem and seek an expeditious and thorough remedy. We can wait no longer to let this safety hazard go unaddressed. This bill gives the FAA the tools to begin to remedy this situation.

This bill is a step in the right direction to provide for our aviation needs, both on the ground and in the sky. By putting our Aviation Trust Fund dollars to work we can help all airports large and small provide for their needs. We can ensure that our skies are safe, our airports are secure and that our controllers have modernized tools to accommodate the growing air traffic demand.

I am pleased that the Senate has decided to pass this important legislation.

#### EDUCATION BLOCK GRANTS

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, on Saturday, March 11, an editorial in the *New York Times* emphasized the significant concerns about the Republican education block grant proposal which was recently approved by the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. As this editorial points out, education block grants to states would not be the most effective use of public tax dollars. Block grants do nothing to ensure change and reform through proven effective methods such as a: well-qualified teacher in every classroom; reduced class sizes to give children the individual attention they need and allow teachers to maintain order and discipline; helping all children to meet high standards; and holding schools accountable for improving student achievement and giving the neediest children the extra help they need. Education is a high priority for states, communities, teachers, parents, and students throughout the country, and it is important that we listen to them as we consider the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in the full Senate in the weeks ahead.

I believe that the editorial will be of interest to all of us concerned about this issue, and I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the *RECORD*.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the *RECORD*, as follows:

[From the *New York Times*, Mar. 11, 2000]

#### MISDIRECTED EDUCATION MONEY

Congressional Republicans, who in 1995 wanted to abolish the federal Department of Education, now acknowledge that federal support for education is necessary. But their misguided insistence on sending federal education aid to the states in the form of large, unfocused block grants threatens to undermine services for disadvantaged students in the poorest districts.

The federal government currently contributes less than 10 cents of every dollar spent on public schools. That contribution, though small, is crucial because much of the money is directly aimed at especially needy schools in poor communities. The Senate is now in the process of reauthorizing the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the law that governs how more than \$15 billion in annual federal aid to public schools is spent. The House has been working through similar legislation in several smaller bills.

The Republicans in both the Senate and House want to roll a number of aid programs, including the Title I program that provides \$8 billion a year for instructional support for disadvantaged children, into a single general block grant that would allow states to spend the money with less accountability and less focus on the neediest students.

Last October the House passed the "Straight A's" block-grant bill that creates a 10-state pilot project. This week the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee approved a broad measure that would allow all states to receive most of their federal school aid in the form of a block grant. Although the measure would require that states allocate Title I money in the block grant to school districts on the basis of poverty, it would also make available more than \$3 billion of block grants without targeting

high-poverty areas. State governors could direct the money toward any "educational purposes," including private school vouchers.

The Senate committee also approved an amendment sponsored by Judd Gregg, Republican of New Hampshire, that would allow 15 states to join a separate pilot project that would make available a higher level of block grants with even less federal oversight.

The Republicans want to give states flexibility. But their proposals do not create adequate mechanism to ensure that funds are spent effectively or where they are most needed. Block grants could also become targets for cuts because they are unfocused and susceptible to misuse. The Democrats and the Clinton administration are right to oppose them. Congress should be guiding the states in education reform by asking them to focus on specific targets—better teachers, smaller classes and higher standards—for all students, but particularly for the most disadvantaged. The Republican approach runs counter to that purpose.

#### PRESIDENT'S TRIP TO INDIA

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I rise to speak in support of President Clinton's trip to India. For too long, the cold war, and India's leadership of the non-aligned movement, strained what should have been the natural bond between our two great democracies. The end of the cold war has now brought us together. India is a true friend to the United States in a region where respect for democracy is rare.

India has made great strides since achieving independence. Literacy has doubled, life expectancy has doubled, and infant mortality has been more than halved. However, India recognizes that commitment to democracy must be accompanied by free-market principles in order for prosperity to flourish. India's initial pursuit of socialist economic policies, including nationalizing production, subsidizing industries, and raising tariffs and other trade barriers, while imposing high taxes, caused its economy and its people to suffer.

With the end of the cold war, India's experiment with a centralized economic system is waning. India is starting to liberalize the economy, prompting foreign investment and reducing barriers to trade. The results are encouraging: India's growth rate, which had been stuck at 3 percent, is now exceeding 6 percent, and the outlook is promising for further improvement. While a commitment to socialism may still be enshrined in its Constitution, the economic reforms India is embracing are clearly leading the nation in a positive, new direction. For example, India's prowess in the high-technology sector makes it an able partner in that area. The recent decision to open its insurance and telecommunication sectors to foreign investors is emblematic of the kind of changes that will enable India to achieve its potential.

Mr. President, the only shadow over President Clinton's visit is the eruption of violence in Kashmir. Indian and Pakistani troops started exchanging