

I also echo Senator LEAHY's remarks on our understanding of the Agriculture appropriations bill, which we have been assured will contain several additional critical provisions, particularly the assistance for our Nation's dairy farmers who have suffered terribly from low prices, and for apple farmers who have been hard hit by low yields and low quality after 2 years of unavoidable weather extremes, from hurricanes to drought.

I have visited regularly with dairy and apple farmers in my own State and can say they desperately need our help.

I thank, once again, the conferees for crafting a bill that for the first time truly takes into account the unique needs of Northeastern farmers. I voted for the package, and I am glad so many of my fellow Senators voted for it as well.

#### TRIBUTE TO PAT ROONEY

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, today, I rise to pay tribute to a businessman who has witnessed the transformation of a company from a single plant operation into a multinational corporation. The businessman I am referring to is Pat Rooney, who is retiring on June 3rd after almost 45 years of service to Cooper Tire and Rubber Company. Mr. Rooney began his career with Cooper Tire in 1956 as a sales trainee. In 1994, Pat Rooney was elected CEO and Chairman of the Board of Cooper Tire. That hierarchical progression is astounding. In this day and time with the ever changing economy, it is almost hard to fathom someone working for one employer for four and a half decades. Pat Rooney saw Cooper Tire and Rubber grow from 1,000 total employees to now 25,000 worldwide. During his tenure at Cooper Tire, Mr. Rooney spent time working in Clarksdale, Mississippi at the rubber products operation in the Mississippi Delta. Cooper has built a significant presence in my state, employing numerous Mississippians at locations in Clarksdale and Tupelo. Pat Rooney lives in Findlay, Ohio and has been very active in the community. He is a Rotarian, active in the Findlay/Hancock County Chamber of Commerce, and the County Community Development Foundation and served on the advisory council of the Arts Partnership of Hancock County. Again, I want to commend Pat Rooney today for his service to his company and his community. Cooper Tire has been fortunate to have such a dedicated employee, leader, and visionary. Mr. Rooney I hope you will enjoy your well deserved retirement.

#### SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, earlier this month, the Senate began consideration of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, a reauthorization bill that would determine our national education policy. We spent a few days on that bill, offering and debating amend-

ments, to reduce class size and reward teachers who improve student achievement, among other things.

On May 9, 2000, the Majority Leader withdrew the education bill from consideration, and the Senate moved on to other business. At the time, the Majority Leader indicated his intent to come back to the education bill, either later in that same week, or the week after.

It is now more than three weeks later and Congress is preparing to adjourn for the Memorial Day recess without addressing a critical component of our national education policy: school safety.

The education bill was likely withdrawn from the Senate because of the possibility of a school safety amendment aimed at curbing gun violence. Unfortunately, education and gun violence are now inseparable issues. The wave of school shootings—in Jonesboro, Arkansas, Littleton, Colorado, and recently, in Mt. Morris Township, Michigan—has changed America's perception of safety in school.

Over the last few years, we have made some gains. Over the four year period, from 1993 to 1997, the percentage of high school students who carried a weapon to school declined from 12% to 9%; the rate of crime against students ages 12 to 18 fell one-third; and 90 percent of schools reported no incidents of serious violent crime in 1996–1997.

Despite these gains, students feel less safe at school, and access to guns is a primary reason why. School violence, or even the threat of school violence, instills fear in our students, and limits their ability to learn. School violence also threatens and intimidates teachers—making instruction more difficult.

The learning environment is in jeopardy, and unless we address the vulnerabilities of our schools, many of our other efforts to improve the education system will be undermined.

I'm sure all of us agree that any act of violence—whether it's as common as a fist fight in the locker room or as extreme as a shoot out in the cafeteria—interferes with the educational process. Ron Astor, an assistant professor of social work and education at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, has said: "Violence in schools . . . interferes with children's physical well being, academic functioning, social relations, and emotional and cognitive development."

School violence has always posed a threat to students and teachers, but the advent of gun violence in schools has escalated the problem. Gun violence, not only affects students at a particular school, it has a rippling effect on students at schools in the same county, state, and in some cases, the entire country.

I have a letter from Professor Astor, who wrote to me earlier this month, when the Senate was debating education policy. Professor Astor has been researching the topic of school violence

for over 17 years, and has produced 23 publications on the topic. His research gives us a clear understanding of how gun violence, and the fear of gun violence, impacts schools in Michigan, and in the United States.

Professor Astor writes:

Dear Senator LEVIN,

I am pleased that the Senate is debating the topic of education in our nation. As a professor of education, I hope that you will include in your discussions the issue of school safety. As you know, the general public is seriously concerned with the safety of our schools. Polls taken over the past seven years indicated that the public considers school violence to be the top problem facing U.S. schools. Hopefully, the Senate's efforts will result in policy and legislation that make our schools safer for our children.

He continues:

Clearly, teachers, students, and school staff are most concerned about the presence of firearms and weapons in our schools. In the context of a discussion on guns and mass shootings, consider the fear described by this middle school teacher who participated in one of our studies: "A lot of us are afraid. You come in the morning and you're just afraid to even go to work. You're just so stressed out, because you're all tensed up, you can't feel happy and teach like you want to because you've got to spend all of your time trying to discipline. You're scared somebody's going to walk in. We keep our doors locked. We have to keep our doors locked." Middle school teacher. (Meyer, Astor & Behre, 2000).

Professor Astor goes on:

In our studies, students and school staff often mention fear from the threat of guns and other lethal weapons. Without a doubt, the knowledge or rumor of a gun in a school instills fear in the school community. Teachers and students are well aware that the shocking mass murders recently perpetrated in schools are exclusively associated with firearms. Our country has a long history of lethal acts in schools (see Kachur et al, 1996 in the Journal of the American Medical Association), however, the use of guns as a weapon of choice, has made multiple murders a more common occurrence. This, in turn, has promoted a high level of fear within schools. Obviously, the fear of death or potential catastrophe is not conducive with a positive learning environment. Consequently, I urge you and your colleagues to take a strong stance on the issue of firearms.

Professor Astor quotes a middle school teacher frightened by the thought of a school shooting, and she is not alone. Teachers and students across this nation fear what may happen to them in the classroom. Those of us who feel strongly about education and school safety must do something to ease their fears. Congress must curb young people's access to guns. We must pass legislation designed to reduce the level of gun violence, and the fear of such violence, in our communities.

Gun violence is certainly not the only cause of fear in school. Professor Astor explains, that in addition to concerns about firearms, teachers and students fear more common forms of violence, such as fist fights, sexual harassment, teasing and bullying. All violence in school is unacceptable and we should continue to work toward curbing any and all student harm. But gun