

in terms of our economy and in terms of all the many things that affect us. This has been one of his highest priorities.

I have to say, despite some of the conversation that goes on, the President's priorities have done rather well in terms of taxes, in terms of energy, and I think this is another one that must necessarily be handled and put into place.

Trade promotion is critical to our economic future. The President needs the authority to extend and expand our international trade capacities. Trade negotiators need legislation to ensure they are afforded a seat at the negotiating table.

I have already mentioned that many of these negotiations have gone on without us. This bill provides a reasonable and effective procedure for congressional consultation and involvement. It avoids establishing unwarranted mandates that would adversely affect the negotiating authority of the President. It ensures that the laws of the United States are maintained and protected.

I suspect this will be somewhat controversial. Each of us will have some of our parochial feelings about it. Wyoming is very involved in agriculture. Trade is important to Wyoming agriculture. It is important to beef, wool, wheat, and lamb. We have been through this. But TPA will provide the negotiators a chance to reduce those barriers and get us a better seat at the table.

Despite our relationship with Japan, I think there is still about a 40-percent tariff on beef. That is a high tariff in Japan. We need to work at reducing those tariffs because, for agriculture, one of the best futures we have is the opportunity to expand markets beyond our domestic market.

I look forward to this debate and discussion, and, frankly, I look forward to finishing the discussion this week so we can get on with protecting our markets and making our economy even stronger.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MESSAGE ON EDUCATION

Mr. REID. Madam President, we speak frequently of Nevada's security needs. We speak frequently of the security needs of every State in the Union, especially after September 11. We speak frequently of American security needs, and understandably so. But we should also realize that the strength and security of our Nation require

more than bombs and bullets and our brave men and women in uniform.

The future of our country will also be determined by our children and our grandchildren and how they are going to be educated. I believe we have a high priority for America to educate our children, making sure that all children have the tools and opportunity to succeed.

Nevada is similar to almost every State in the Union with regard to educational needs today. However, we also have unique problems. In the Las Vegas area, the Clark County School District is the sixth largest school district in America with 240,000 kids. We have built 18 new schools in 1 year to keep up with the growth.

In other parts of the State, teachers have been laid off because the population growth was not as rapid and there are fewer people living there. Jobs have been cut back, especially in places where mining is so important. Mines have been cut back.

The things I hear about education in Nevada I think can be applied all over the country. For example, a couple of weeks ago two women came to visit with me. They are schoolteachers in Nevada, one representing Las Vegas and one representing Reno. They specialize in educating kids who are really smart. They were here to tell me of the cutbacks in programs in both the Reno and Las Vegas areas. These children have IQs of more than 130. Those programs for smart kids in Clark County are basically gone. In Reno we still have some, but not as many as they should have.

In Nevada, the high school dropout rate is very high—one of the highest in the country. Twenty-seven percent of the children who drop out of high school in Clark County have IQs of more than 130. Think about that. The smart kids have no programs for their interests. They are geniuses. Anyone with an IQ that high is really smart. With all the cutbacks in funding for IDEA—a program for kids with special needs—we do not have the ability in Nevada and other parts of the country to educate those children.

Think about that—27 percent of the kids dropping out of high school in the sixth largest school district in America. That school district is one of leaders in high school dropouts. They are geniuses.

Often, education—especially elementary and secondary education—is viewed as a local issue because most decisions are made by local leaders, school boards, principals, teachers, and parents, as it should be. But the Federal Government should and does play an important role in helping to educate America's children.

One of the high points of my congressional service was when we joined together on a bipartisan basis to pass an education bill. We agreed to work to improve the quality of education in America's public schools. We worked in a bipartisan manner to reauthorize the

ESEA. We passed a strong educational reform program that requires States to set high standards for every student, to strengthen Federal incentives to boost low-performing schools, and to significantly improve educational achievement. We even gave the legislation a catchy name—the No Child Left Behind Act.

Unfortunately, though, the President has not lived up to what I thought was the bipartisan spirit of the legislation we passed. We need to not only authorize legislation but we need to appropriate money for it.

Less than a month after signing this bill, the President proposed a budget which cuts almost \$100 million in funding for the No Child Left Behind Act. In addition to that—in effect, rubbing salt into the wound—we learned that the President wants to squeeze \$1.3 billion from the Federal student loan program that helps millions of college students, recent graduates, and their families. Actions speak louder than words. This administration should want to do more than just talk about education.

This administration can't claim to be committed to education while simultaneously making it more difficult and more expensive for students to pay for their college education.

What am I talking about? I am talking about the administration's recent pronouncement regarding Federal loan programs. Millions and millions of poor and middle-income students rely on student loans to pay for their education. Without these loans, these children and young adults would be left behind.

Currently, students and recent graduates can consolidate their loans and repay their debts with a fixed interest rate. The President's plan, however, would force students and graduates to pay thousands of dollars more by subjecting them to a variable interest rate.

What does this mean? It means you would borrow money and never know what the interest rate was going to be. You wouldn't be able to consolidate the loans. When students go to college and to graduate school, or a professional school, when they graduate and want to consolidate their loans, they should be able to do that and have one interest rate. The President is suggesting they can't do that anymore.

To be competitive in the future and remain in our leadership position with schools and colleges, America needs to encourage and support students seeking higher education.

People can quibble about public education. I am a great proponent of public education. About 95 percent of all kids in America go to public schools. There is some criticism due about the public education system—no question about that. But college education in this country is second to none.

Of the 131 top schools and colleges in the world, the United States has 124 of them. Colleges in America are the best. We have to maintain that superiority.

The plan the President has put forth would close the gates of college campuses to many students. In a global economy, and increasingly tied to information technology, we will depend more and more on workers with advanced training and skills.

This is more than a student going to college to become a teacher or a doctor or a lawyer or an engineer; it is young men and women getting out of high school and becoming automobile mechanics or working in the health care profession.

When I graduated from high school, if you wanted to be an automobile mechanic, you went to work at the corner service station and became a mechanic. It is not that way anymore. To be hired to be an automobile mechanic at a car dealership, you have to have a certificate indicating you have been properly trained. That is what will happen at our local community colleges. That is something of which we have to be aware, that young men and women who want to do this need to be able to borrow money to get an education.

A college degree, long seen as a ticket to financial success, is becoming a prerequisite for achieving the American dream. At the same time, students face even higher tuition costs. Attending a 4-year private university can cost up to \$40,000 a year. And even public universities are becoming too expensive for many students. Some students face double-digit percentage increases for tuition at State schools next year.

So we cannot allow this administration's plan to proceed as it deals with college loans because it would prevent many capable students from attending college. The administration's plan would also have a negative impact on those who have already attended college.

This month, millions of students will graduate from our Nation's colleges and universities. They and their families will be rightfully proud that they have earned a diploma. Yet they do not know what the true cost of their education will be, which they have largely financed with student loans. The President's plan will cost them thousands of dollars in additional interest payments.

Already, graduates are heavily burdened with student loan debt. As a consequence, they are often unable to pursue a job in the field of their choice and, instead, are forced to work in a higher paying job but a less personally fulfilling job, if they can find it.

There are wonderful young men and women who work in the Senate offices. They each work for one of us because they want to contribute to what they believe is a better society. They could go other places to work. I could pick lots of people from my office and use them as examples.

I have two people with Ph.Ds who work for me: One has a doctoral degree in physics and the other has a doctorate in geology from fine universities around America. They could work

other places and make more money, but they love what they are doing here. I am so happy they work for me. They owe money on student loans. So we have to make sure the plan suggested by this administration will not go forward.

I could pick as examples lots of university graduates who have worked for me. I could pick, as I mentioned, Dr. Greg Jaczko. I could pick Dr. Kai Anderson. But as an example here today, I am going to pick Shannon Eagan.

Shannon is from Las Vegas. She works on my staff, and she is really good. She does legislative correspondence. She also does legislative assistance work. She is intelligent, talented, ambitious, and interested in a career in public service. But she has to repay tens of thousands of dollars in student loans because her parents are not wealthy.

The President's plan would require her to pay thousands and thousands of dollars in addition to what she already owes. Of course, she fears that a relatively low-paying Government job such as she has will not enable her to meet these needs. She is considering, sadly, seeking a higher paying, private sector job, even though she likes what she is doing in her job.

If she leaves my staff, I will lose a valuable employee, the State of Nevada will not be helped as much as it could be, and the Senate will lose a valuable employee. I think it will have a detrimental effect on our country, a very small, but significant detrimental effect.

So we have to watch this very closely. There are hundreds of thousands of young Americans who face the same dilemma as Shannon. They want to dedicate themselves to serving our country as teachers or social workers or working in the Congress of the United States. But when they do the math—calculating their salary and their expenses, including their student loan payments—they discover it simply is not possible.

Since we need more bright, motivated people to work in these occupations, including being a teacher, this is really a double whammy on us. If education is truly a priority for this administration, they will drop this plan to raise the cost of student loans. We all must be aware of this. It affects millions of people, and we should do everything we can so the students get the benefit, not the banks.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECESS

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess until 3:45 today and that the time be equally divided from that time until the vote at 6.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 1:58 p.m., recessed until 3:45 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. NELSON of Nebraska).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. In my capacity as a Senator from Nebraska, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. 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. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I wish to address my fellow Senators as in morning business for about 7 minutes.

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

MENTAL HEALTH PARITY MOVEMENT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise today to express my appreciation to President Bush for his commitment to bringing insurance parity to people with mental illness.

As a long time supporter of mental health parity legislation in the Senate, I found his statement today in New Mexico to be a breath of fresh air in a debate that has languished for too long here in Washington.

I will always believe that when it comes to health insurance coverage, mental illness should be treated like any physical ailment. Unfortunately, those suffering from mental health disorders have for years suffered undue discrimination at the hands of insurers who force them to pay higher costs than patients suffering from physical ailments.

I believe there simply is no scientific, clinical, fiscal or ethical reason for this discrimination.

I applaud President Bush for his commitment to ending it and leveling the health care playing field to require equal access to psychiatric treatment and care.

As President Bush pointed out today in New Mexico, people suffering from severe and persistent mental problems don't suffer alone. Their illness affects their families and loved ones, and even our country.

It is incredibly painful to watch someone you love struggle with an illness that affects their mind, their feelings and their relationships with others, and that difficulty is only exacerbated when care and treatment options are denied or placed out of reach due to high costs.

Remarkable treatments exist, yet many people—too many people in my