

manage the new program of human exploration.

The substitute requires an independent report on the changes to NASA's safety, operations, engineering, and management cultures to ensure that these changes meet the requirements of the Columbia Accident Investigation Board and the Nation's expectations of the U.S. space program. It requires NASA and the Departments of Defense and Transportation, each of which plays a key role in managing U.S. space transportation, to report on the state of the U.S. launch industry and to propose how the United States can achieve reliable, affordable, and safe space transportation by 2015. I also call for NASA to report on how the NASA and the United States should be organized to best achieve our broad national goals for space, including the role of industry and international collaboration in the future.

In addition, consistent with the Columbia Accident Investigation Board report, we apply its primary recommendation, to establish independent technical and safety controls over human space flight, to all U.S. organizations conducting human flight in space.

Finally, we call for reports on the Hubble Space Telescope, peer-review assessment of NASA's science programs, and grants to institutions of higher education offering advanced programs in aeronautics and aeronautics-related disciplines. While our legislation attends to the primary matter at hand—the future of human space exploration—it does not ignore the importance of having a balanced program and view of the contributions of space and aeronautics to our economy and society.

Mr. President, our mission to demonstrate humanity's future role in space cannot be founded upon goals without solutions, means that are intangible and unknown, and resources tied to timelines that have no definite end-point or objective. Just this morning, the House VA-HUD Appropriations Subcommittee reduced NASA's FY 2005 appropriation by over \$1 billion, which makes it clear there are many doubts about this program and no consensus on how to move ahead.

The Congress must act now to ensure that our bold visions do not take the place of the hard work of planning, budgeting, and executing programs. Let us not pursue the folly of go-as-you-pay, but substitute a reasoned course of "pay and prove"—as-you-go, harnessing the proper capabilities and assigning the necessary resources to the journey of human exploration needed to make it successful, affordable, and safe.

IGNORING THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, while the Senate is using scarce floor time to debate probably the most anti-environmental judicial nominee this body has

seen, it has blocked any attempts to strengthen environmental and public health protections. Sitting on deck are critical bills to help cut harmful air pollutants, combat climate change, clean up toxic waste sites and protect our natural resources and improve our nuclear security.

In fact, the Republican leadership only begrudgingly conceded six hours of floor time for Senators MCCAIN and LIEBERMAN's Climate Stewardship Act after blocking its consideration during the energy debate. Although the scientific and economic evidence of the toll climate change is and will take on this country, the Senate leadership continues to bury its head in the sand.

That is 6 hours total this Congress for the environment.

No time to consider Senator JEFFORDS's Clean Power Act that would finally require power plants to reduce emissions of toxic air pollutants like mercury. No time to consider the Chemical Security Act that would help ensure chemical plants are prepared for terrorist attacks. No time for the Toxic Cleanup Polluter Pays Renewal Act to reinstate fees paid by oil and chemical companies to cleanup waste sites across the country. No time for the Nuclear Infrastructure Security Act to improve security at over 100 nuclear facilities around the country.

Despite bipartisan support, Republican leadership has also blocked consideration of several bills to improve coastal protections. Of course, they also have failed to bring up any of the appropriations bills to fund our national parks, wildlife refuges and national forests or environmental clean-up programs.

Hundreds of thousands of Americans suffer every year from illnesses linked to emissions from power plants. One-fourth of Americans live within four miles of a Superfund waste site. Shouldn't the Senate be spending time finding solutions to these issues instead of debating a judicial nominee who wants to dismantle many of environmental protections?

Senate Republicans dare to come to the Senate floor to complain that Democrats are obstructionists when we have already confirmed nearly 200 of President Bush's judicial nominees. The Republican leadership has scheduled hundreds of hours for debate on judicial nominations but has allowed only six hours for debate on the critical issues affecting the health of our environment.

Packing the bench is obviously a top priority for this administration. Protecting our natural resources, along with our health, is not. By picking the most extreme judicial nominees, on the environment and other issues, the Bush administration demonstrates that one of its real long-term goals is to roll back these important protections.

CARL D. PERKINS VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT ACT

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2004.

I am extremely pleased that this bill was written in a bipartisan fashion. I thank Senator ENZI, Senator GREGG, Senator KENNEDY and their staff members, Scott Fleming, Ilyse Schulman, Kelly Scott, and Jane Oates, for working so hard and so quickly to make this happen. I sincerely hope that we continue in this spirit of bipartisanship as we work together on future legislation coming out of the HELP Committee.

It is an often-overlooked fact that the Perkins program is the largest Federal investments in our Nation's high schools. Over 66 percent of all public high schools have at least one vocational and technical education program and 96 percent of high school students in this country will take at least one vocational or technical course while they are in high school. In New York, this means that over 275,000 high school students benefited from Perkins Act programs last year.

Perkins also plays a key role in postsecondary education. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, nearly 38 percent of all degree-seeking undergraduates are pursuing vocational careers. When I travel throughout New York, I hear about how important career and technical education is for tens of thousands of New Yorkers. Institutions such as the Adirondack Community College and the Culinary Institute of America in the Hudson River Valley and thousands of our Nation's community colleges, skill centers and other postsecondary sub-baccalaureate institutions rely on the Perkins program to help provide vocational and technical courses to students.

Last year, 65 New York community colleges received funding under the Perkins Act, directly benefiting over 200,000 community college students. These schools use the funds to provide career counselors and academic curricula that guide students toward high-wage and high-skill occupations.

The Perkins program is extremely important—not just for the numbers of students it serves but for the communities that benefit from a better prepared workforce as a result of these programs. This is why for the last 2 years I have spearheaded a letter to the Senate Appropriations Committee requesting additional funding for Perkins. I also offered an amendment to the budget resolution in 2003 to protect the Perkins programs from cuts because I was deeply concerned that President Bush's proposal to slash the Perkins program by 25 percent would be reflected in the Senate's budget.

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2004 will go a long way towards strengthening vocational and technical