

Is it surprising, then, when you compare the performance of 12th graders in this country in math and science to other countries around the world that we are not 1st, 5th, 10th, 15th, or 20th in math and science, but we are 21st? We are 21st among our competitor nations around the world. Is it surprising when 40 percent of all math teachers—the person actually teaching in that room with the 12th graders—did not major or minor in the field of mathematics? We hear about “100,000 new teachers.” That is a short sound bite, but I think the focus you will see from our side of the aisle is on the quality of teachers and not on numbers alone.

The Teacher Quality Act works aggressively on directing Federal resources to help attract the very best, to help train and retrain those very best teachers. Funds will be available in several areas, including establishing incentives to teachers with advanced degrees in core subjects, or implementing teacher testing with bonuses for those who score well, or expanding the pool of teachers by certifying qualified retired military personnel.

Another issue in our schools today, an issue we hear about all too often, is school violence. Again, the reasons are as many and numerous as the incidents themselves. Common sense says fix the obvious problem. One obvious problem is drugs. A long-term study showed most drug use starts at age 12 or 13. When the White House took a high-profile line on this, illicit drug use declined consistently from 1979 to 1992 and, over that period of about 13 years, fell from 16 percent to 5 percent. However, in the first 5 years of the current administration, over half of that progress has been lost. The latest National Center for Alcohol and Substance Abuse poll shows 35 percent of teens believe drugs are the most important problem they face.

We are responding again under an initiative being put forward through the Youth Drug and Mental Health Services Act. That act will add financial assistance for community programs for violent youth and will add technical assistance to create community partnerships to look at youth drug issues and youth mental health.

An area of discipline we will have to come back to is loopholes in the current law, including the act mentioned this morning, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, a bill in which I believe very strongly and which was strongly supported in the efforts of the past Congress. There is a problem in that particular bill regarding violence—violence and discipline in our schools. The fact is, one group of students is disciplined in a different manner from other students. That is unfair and has to be changed. It has not yet been changed.

In my own county, Davidson County in Middle Tennessee, there were eight

firearms infractions, meaning there were eight children who brought either guns or bombs to school; six of those were special ed students. Three of those special ed students were expelled, but three were not expelled and came back to the classroom. In Tennessee, the general law is, if a student brings a gun or a bomb into the classroom, they are expelled for that year. Because of the Federal law, we say all students are not treated equally. There is a special class of students who, even if they brought a gun or a bomb to the classroom, may return in 45 days. I see no reason why all children should not be subject to the very same disciplinary action.

Education is the most important gift we can give our children. The time to act is now. We are doing that with Ed-Flex as the first step, with reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and with the Teacher Quality Act.

I have an 11-year-old, 12-year-old, and a 14-year-old. I don't want to be too pessimistic. When we look at this generation that is coming through, the overwhelming majority of America's children are good, with good intentions, and are working hard. In fact, when comparing the so-called millennial generation with the preceding generation, statistics are improving:

Teen sexual activity is down; teen pregnancies are down, especially in the inner cities; teen drinking is down; teen drunk driving is down; TV time is down; high school dropout rates are down. More time is being spent on homework today. Academic standards are slowly rising; time spent on chores is up; church-going is up. High-tech skills are rising sharply. Most teens today trust institutions; they agree with their parents on core values.

As for violence, the high school murder rate has indeed fallen 50 percent since 1993, the steepest decline in any age bracket. School-related violent deaths are declining. There has been an overall improvement in teen crime. I say that because we have this interesting juxtaposition of great opportunity in our system, but when we compare ourselves internationally, we are failing if performance is the measure.

Again, looking back to the fourth, eighth, and twelfth grade, we are failing our children today, but we are doing it in an overall framework which says that it is possible to succeed. We need to be committed. We need to do it in the right way, using the three Republican principles I put forward. Our children are America's future, they are America's pride, and Republicans intend to do everything we possible can to help them stay that way.

I ask unanimous consent, following the remarks of Senator DORGAN today, at approximately 2:20 p.m., Senator HATCH be recognized for up to 25 minutes in morning business.

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

Mr. FRIST. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. How much time remains for morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Nineteen minutes.

TAX DECREASE VETO

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, the President of the United States vetoed the largest tax decrease bill to pass the Congress since 1981. By doing this, he wants to continue the tax overpayment that working Americans are paying into the Federal Treasury.

The President is saying in his veto that we ought to continue to tax the taxpayers at the 21 percent of gross domestic product level, where taxes are now, the highest level in the history of our country, as opposed to the last 50 years when taxes fell in the range of 18 to 19 percent of gross domestic product.

The people of the United States have been willing and, through consensus, settled on the level of 18 to 19 percent of gross domestic product, both from the standpoint of what they are willing to pay into the Federal Government and also from the standpoint of how that is, at a lower level of taxation, better for the economy.

The President said in his veto message we would put in jeopardy several government programs if we did not continue to tax at this level. The President didn't say in so many words, but he has a plan for spending the \$792 billion that the Congress would let the American taxpayers keep. By spending it, he would do it in a fashion that would end up with a \$200 billion additional national debt than what we would have by giving the \$792 billion to the taxpayers. He would, in a sense, jack up the level of expenditure of the Federal Government to well over the present level of expenditure and put in jeopardy balancing the budget if we had a downturn in the economy and the taxes did not come into the Federal Treasury at the rate of 21 percent of gross domestic product.

Even though the bill passed in a bipartisan way when it first went through the Senate, on final passage it ended up being a Republican tax reduction that went to the President because there were not any people on the other side of the aisle who voted for it.

We were saying that this tax overpayment ought to be left with working Americans because only the people spending the money or investing it do it in a way that creates wealth in America and creates jobs as a result of the creation of wealth.

Anybody who thinks money is better left in the Federal Treasury—at the highest rate of taxation in the history of the country, at 21 percent of GDP—

ought to realize that there are not jobs created as a result of that money going into the Federal till because the Federal Government is not a creator of wealth. Our involvement with the creation of wealth is to leave as many resources as we can to the ingenuity of American working men and women to invest and to spend because it turns over so many more times in the economy than when it is spent by us in Washington.

So this tax decrease, the largest since 1981, was our effort to give a tax refund to working Americans by returning the tax overpayment. We do it in a responsible manner, by devoting 75 percent of the \$3 trillion surplus that is going to come into the Federal Treasury over the next 10 years to Social Security, Medicare, paying down the national debt, and other domestic priorities. We would leave three-fourths of that extra dollar that people pay in taxes that do not need to be paid, with the Federal Government for paying down the national debt, strengthening Social Security, \$505 billion that could be set aside for strengthening Medicare and other domestic programs, and we would leave 25 percent of that surplus with the taxpayers because we know that hard-working men and women in America can use that money better than it can be misspent here in Washington.

It seems to me the President was intellectually dishonest last week when, in his veto message—that was on television; everybody heard it—he said we were threatening Social Security, we were threatening Medicare, we were not paying down the national debt when we had this tax cut. I say that is intellectual dishonesty because the plan we sent to the President had in mind reserving all of the Social Security payroll tax money to Social Security, paying down the national debt, with \$505 billion for strengthening Medicare and other domestic priorities within our Government, and still leaving \$800 billion to the taxpayers.

It is only fair to give the taxpayers this money because it is their money that created the surplus in the first place. It is not the hard work of bureaucrats in Washington, it is not the hard work of Members of Congress that created this surplus, it is the ingenuity of the American people. For that ingenuity, they are being overtaxed at this particular time to the tune of 21 percent of gross domestic product compared to the 50-year history of somewhere between 18 percent and 19 percent. It is only fair to give them their money back.

Even Democrats agree that the surplus should be returned to the taxpayers. One Member of the other side of the aisle said this:

I strongly believe we should return part of that money [meaning the surplus] to hard-working Americans. To suggest we cannot

afford to cut income taxes when we are running a \$3 trillion surplus is ludicrous.

That is from a Member of the Senate from the other side of the aisle. That same Member said:

To say that tax cuts stand in the way of needed domestic spending, Medicare and debt relief, is also folly.

It is too bad the President of the United States does not listen to Members of his own party.

The President wants you to believe he vetoed just a \$792 billion tax bill—and that is a 10-year figure. But when you look at the bits and pieces of it, I think it will demonstrate the President did not veto just a \$792 billion tax bill, but he vetoed lower taxes for middle- and lower-income Americans, he made health insurance less affordable, and he took away incentives to save more. Let me go through what the President vetoed to be very specific, so people know exactly what we planned in this Congress when we passed this tax bill.

We planned to encourage savings, to encourage entrepreneurship, and to give hard-working families the money they need to support themselves. We reduced tax rates for middle- and lower-income Americans. The President vetoed that.

Our tax bill made health insurance more affordable by providing 100-percent tax deductibility for all premiums for the self-employed and, starting for the first time in the history of our tax laws, gave employees who work for corporations, who do not have a corporate health plan, the same tax deductibility for their own individual plans that employees of major corporations have had since World War II. The President vetoed both of those items.

Our bill made it easier for children to care for elderly parents by giving some tax incentives for family caregiving and also making tax deductibility possible for long-term care insurers. The President vetoed that.

One thing we hear about more than any other injustice in the Tax Code is the marriage tax penalty. That correction was in the bill. The President vetoed the provisions to do away with the marriage tax penalty.

We hear from farmers and small businessmen how wrong it is to break up a business to pay a death tax. This bill did away with the estate tax, so there was no tax on death, so you could pass on the family farm and the family business. The President vetoed that.

We had increased incentives for retirement savings because everybody knows Social Security has never been intended to be a sole retirement plan and is not adequate today. So we have to have more encouragement for families to save for retirement. The President vetoed that.

We hear from families, particularly from women who work outside the home, that child care ought to be more affordable. The President vetoed that.

We had full tax deductibility of interest on student loans in this bill. The President vetoed that.

We expanded the Individual Retirement Account opportunities. The President vetoed that.

In short, President Clinton vetoed tax relief measures that would benefit men and women nationwide.

The President has vetoed it, and I do not think there will be a compromise with the President on this because the \$800 billion is such an infinitesimal amount of money—only 3.5 percent of all the revenue coming into the Federal Treasury over the next 10 years—that how do you compromise between zero and 3.5 percent when the 3.5 percent is so puny that we in the Congress ought to be embarrassed we could not find ways of saving money and giving even a larger tax cut?

This means this issue will be taken to the country, and we will let the Democratic candidate, presumably Vice President GORE, campaign next year on a platform of spending this money, as President Clinton proposes to spend it, and we will let the Republican candidate for President run on a platform of, hopefully, backing at least this much of a tax cut and more of a tax cut. We will take this issue to the country. Let the people decide, and in letting the people decide, let's have a clear mandate for spending the \$792 billion or letting the taxpayers keep it.

The President, in his veto message and all during the month of August, has been trying to make a mountain out of a molehill, as far as this tax cut issue is concerned. He has suggested that \$800 billion is a mountain of money—and it is a lot of money—but as I said, it is 3.5 percent of all the money that is going to come into the Federal Treasury over the next 10 years that we could let the taxpayers keep in their pockets or spend it or invest it to create jobs and wealth in America to expand our economy. But, in fact, the mountain is the \$23 trillion that is coming into the Federal Treasury over the next 10 years, and the \$792 billion tax cut is the molehill.

On this chart, we have the mountain over here, the \$22.8 trillion that the working men and women of America are going to pay into the Federal Treasury over the next 10 years. Mr. President Clinton, that is the mountain, but right here is the \$792 billion tax cut that you vetoed last week, and that is truly the molehill. Mr. President, you can't make a mountain out of a molehill.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GORTON. 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. GORTON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 5 minutes as in morning business.

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

INNOVATION IN EDUCATION

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, the Washington Post printed an article last Sunday about a group of WWII veterans returning to the beaches of Normandy to share stories and remember fallen brothers. It was yet another reminder of the closing window of opportunity historians have to glean firsthand accounts from the generation of men and women who lived through the Great Depression, fought in WWII and came back to build America into the greatest power of health and wealth in the world.

The Washington Post wrote: "World War II veterans are dying at a rate of more than 1,000 a day. 'It's the equivalent to a library burning down every day,' said National Guard Maj. Gen. Gene Krase."

This week I'm presenting my Innovation in Education award to a group of students and educators in Wenatchee, Washington who are working to preserve the oral testimonies and firsthand accounts of the men and women who make up what some have called our greatest generation.

Allison Agnew's 11th grade Honors English class at Eastmont High School began the Honor By Listening program last year, which pairs each student with an elder in the Wenatchee valley to document his or her personal history. After the student recorded and transcribed oral testimonies, they wrote out each story in narrative form.

Businesses and leaders in the community support the process. Representatives from the North Central Washington Museum gave the students lessons on interviewing techniques and how to transcribe oral histories. Local librarians, attorneys, and business leaders joined educators to help the students edit their narratives. Materials and funds for publishing the final product came through donations from local businesses. It was a marvelous community effort.

Incidentally, one of my own staff members, Don Moos, has volunteered countless hours of his time to help connect students with potential interviewees. Don himself is a veteran who fought in the European theater during World War II. In fact, he won a Purple Heart in the Battle of the Bulge, but I have yet to hear his whole story though we have been friends for years. I look forward to reading about his experiences.

This year the junior class at Eastmont will continue the program. It already has obtained a list of 200 possible candidates to interview this fall.

I am proud of the efforts these students are putting forth to not only learn about, but to preserve, the rich heritage of Washington State. It is efforts like these that convince me I am heading in the right direction with my Straight A's bill. If we give educators the freedom and flexibility to meet the unique needs of their students, while providing them with a system of accountability for the results, we will see more innovative programs like this one.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative assistant proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

THE VA-HUD APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, last Friday, the Senate passed the VA-HUD appropriations bill. I first want to commend the chairman and ranking member of that subcommittee for the superb job they did in managing that legislation as it went through the Senate.

I do want to indicate a concern about what was missing in that bill because there is one program that was not funded which I believe is very important to the country, certainly to my State, which is the Community Builders Program. It is my hope that this problem can be corrected in the conference committee. I asked the chairman and the ranking member of the VA-HUD appropriations subcommittee to pay special attention to attempting to provide the resources necessary to keep the Community Builders Program going.

Despite HUD's successful efforts to reduce staff and provide better service, the committee bill will result in the termination of more than 400 community builders across the country. That is a program that is working. This program is designed to bring new blood into that agency. It has been called a prototype for the new type of public servant in the 21st century. HUD, in recruiting for those 400 positions, had over 9,000 applications, including lawyers, academics, and economic and community development experts. These are people who were asked to come and give 2 years to helping revitalize HUD. We signed them up. We recruited them. We signed contracts with them, and now we tell them, sorry, we have changed our minds—even though the program is working. I don't think so.

The individuals who were selected to participate in community builders are experts in community outreach and de-

velopment, who agreed to a 2-year term of service with HUD. They don't sit at a desk in Washington. They work in the 81 field offices doing face to face contact with people in the communities in which they serve. This is a program that has received accolades from every independent source that has looked at the program, including evaluations conducted by Booz, Allen & Hamilton, the respected private firm, PricewaterhouseCoopers, one of the major accounting firms in the country, and the public strategies group—all who made independent reviews of the Community Builders Program and all of whom said it was a significant improvement for HUD.

If the community builders are now eliminated, some HUD field offices will drop below the minimum staffing level and will have to close. That includes the only office in my State. We have only one and it is going to close. Some people say: North Dakota is a small State, a rural State, you don't have many housing problems. Well, I can tell you that is not the case. We do have serious housing problems. Go to the Indian reservations in my State and you will see housing problems that are enormously serious.

But more than that, when disaster strikes, HUD is absolutely critical. We saw that in 1997 when the flooding disasters hit eastern North Dakota. Let me say that HUD's presence in the State was critically important to the recovery in North Dakota. Secretary Cuomo, in particular, was absolutely superb in his response to the crisis. He understood the very human impact this devastating flood was having on the people of Grand Forks and the people of eastern North Dakota, and he responded. He went out of his way to make certain that HUD's response took into account the unique circumstances of this event.

Rarely have I seen public servants respond in the way we saw in the 1997 flood disaster in North Dakota. I have heard lots of criticisms of HUD over the years, but I can tell you firsthand that their response was extraordinary, and I will never forget it.

Let me give one example. After the disaster bill passed Congress, top HUD staff, including the Secretary, stayed and worked all weekend at HUD headquarters in order to get the money out to North Dakota. That is a level of commitment we rarely see. They were there Saturday, Sunday, from morning until night, to get the money flowing. Indeed, we were able to get \$50 million into the hands of the Grand Forks community within 48 hours after the legislation passed. That is the kind of performance one would like to see from public servants on a routine basis. That is what we saw from HUD. They delivered, and they delivered in a way I think makes us all proud.

Because of HUD's quick work, Secretary Cuomo was able to provide that