

means that I can more effectively work with students on a variety of problems they bring to my classroom every day.”

Mr. President, I am looking forward to working with Senators from both sides of the aisle to ensure that we meet our promise to these teachers and all the other parents and students across America to reduce class size and truly make a difference in the education of our children and our country's future.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I checked with the Republican cloakroom. I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended a half an hour.

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

EDUCATION IN AMERICA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, as the Senator from Nevada said earlier, many of us have theories on education as parents who watched our kids go through school and met with teachers and administrators. The Senator from Washington has spent enough time in classrooms to teach all of us, and I think her suggestions are very valuable suggestions.

What I have found as I have traveled around my state, and I think other Senators have as well, is that the basics of what they need in education and a helping hand can make such a difference.

When we talked about after school programs in school district after school district, they said, Senator, can you help us with transporting the kids safely from a school to an after school program and back home again?

A practical concern that stops them from doing things that are so important. And I think there are ways we can help here. Yesterday, we passed an important bill about military salaries. We decided to put \$11 billion more in the bill than the President's budget requested, and many of us raised questions about where that figure came from, why there had been no hearings on it. And they said, of course, we want to help the military. We all do. But it really raises the question, if we were to come up with \$11- or \$12-billion today for education for after-school programs, I am afraid there would be a firestorm of opposition. People would say, wait a minute, you didn't have a hearing; it's too much of an undertaking by the Federal Government. I really hope that we can get this priority right.

People across America identify education as the No. 1 concern. I think it's because of their personal experience

and also the realization that opportunity in this country comes with achievement, achievement in school is really I guess the best way to get started on a good life in America and many other places.

I am happy today to join with the Senator from Washington to discuss this. Isn't it interesting, President Clinton's suggested 100,000 more teachers to reduce classroom size. My Republican Governor in Illinois, in the State of the State message, George Ryan, suggested 10,000 new teachers for our State. The reaction from local school districts? "Where are we going to put them? We need classrooms. You can't just give us more teachers and expect smaller classroom sizes without new classrooms."

That is why the President's proposal to help school districts modernize their schools, expand their schools, build new schools is really a timely suggestion. The GAO report a few years ago said that we need 6,000 new schools in America by the year 2006. One-third of all schools in America, serving 14 million kids, need extensive repair and replacement. So I think we understand that the President's proposal for teachers and classrooms is the only sensible way to have class room size reduction in a way that will be handled effectively.

Mrs. MURRAY. Will the Senator from Illinois yield on that point.

Mr. DURBIN. I am happy to yield.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, the Senator from Illinois brought up an extremely important point, and that is that hiring new teachers is one part, hiring well trained teachers is the second part, and providing classrooms for them clearly is a critical part. That is one of the reasons why in my amendment we make sure that it is very flexible language, so that local school districts that do have a school construction, a very real school construction crunch can use those dollars in a very flexible way so the teachers can work jointly in classrooms, that it isn't just one teacher per classroom, that we can do some local ways of providing extra one-on-one help with youngsters who need it the most.

We also must address the school construction problem. It is a real challenge to crumbling schools that exist across our country where our kids are in unsafe classrooms, where they are crowded simply because there is no space to put them. It is an area we have to address, and I am delighted the Senator from Illinois recognizes that.

Mr. DURBIN. I thank the Senator from Washington. I have noted this on the Senate floor before, but it struck me that at the turn of the last century one of the most amazing things that happened in America was that between the years 1890 and 1920 we built in America on average one new high school every day. We started our new

century with a dedication to public education. We Democratized education unlike any country in the world. And we said, whether you are rich or poor, you are going to have a chance to go to high school.

That wasn't a Federal mandate. That sprang up from local communities that said, if we are going to build a community in Washington or Illinois, and it is going to be a real community, we are going to have a real high school, we are going to hire teachers, and we will have all the kids go to school.

Look at the benefits we have reaped as a nation because of that kind of forward thinking, that kind of vision that said in 20th century America will be different, our commitment to education will be different. And look what we have seen as a result of it. We have gone from the Wright Brothers at Kitty Hawk to a space program; we have gone from Henry Ford's tin lizys* moving across that assembly line to the point where we have the most modern computer chip factories in the world here in the United States.

I don't think it is a coincidence. I think what happened here is the fact that we dedicated ourselves to improving our work force and elevating the intelligence and training and skills of Americans. And look at the benefits we reaped. We had an American century in the 20th century. Will we have an American century in the 21st? If we take a view that it is a hands-off subject and we can't talk about that in Washington and the people at the local level can't raise the money we are missing another opportunity.

But to bring in talented teachers to have smaller classroom sizes, to have more modern classrooms, has to be an investment of the 21st century to continue what has become the American way of doing things. I want to salute not only Senator MURRAY and Senator REID by those who have joined us in supporting the President's program. I think it is a program that is balanced, a program that takes a portion of this surplus, a surplus we worked hard to put together, and says we are going to put that portion into education. It's an investment that will pay off in generations to come. At this point I don't know that any other Senators are seeking time on the issue of education, and, Mr. President, I would reserve the remainder of my time or yield perhaps to the Senator from Florida if he would like to speak on another subject.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida is recognized.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Mr. Colton Campbell, Mr. Bryan Giddings, Ms. Lisa Page, and Ms. Marilyn Lewis of my staff be afforded the privilege of the floor during the duration of my remarks.