

that they have said they would not so market. It is very similar to the charges we have heard about tobacco companies, that are not supposed to sell to minors, marketing to minors. Here we have the identical situation.

The other side has not been reticent about bringing tobacco legislation to the floor to stop the marketing to minors at the drop of a hat. Yet when it comes to protecting Hollywood, we have a roadblock. We have an opportunity here to reform the system, to do something substantive about an issue that is undercutting the moral fabric of our country, that is poisoning the minds of our children, and we have a roadblock because we have more important issues to discuss. According to the other side, there are other issues more important than these issues. I don't think there are very many issues that are more important than a deliberate attempt to market inappropriate material to young minds. That, to me, is about as high a priority as we can get.

There may be some other things the other side believes are more important than that, but bringing this bill to the floor and having this debated is a very important issue. As the Senator from Nevada mentioned, their own Vice Presidential candidate believes this is a very high profile issue.

Let's deal with it. Let's not talk about it; let's not politic about it; let's not pander about it; let's do something about it. Here we have, again, an opportunity for us to do something substantive, to create reform, to move the agenda forward, and we have a roadblock; we have an objection: It is just not the right time; it is just not the right way; it is just not the exact thing we would like to do.

Let's move forward. Let's start moving on reform. We hear complaints that nothing gets done around here. Every time we start to put something forward to try to move a reform, the answer is no. We are going to continue to try. This is not the last time we are going to try to get unanimous consent on this matter. This is an important matter that we need to bring up and we need to deal with before this session ends.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we do not apologize for the work we have done on tobacco. We, of course, have led the Nation into focusing on the evils of tobacco and what it has done to hurt not only the youth but the adult communities throughout America. We do not apologize for that. This has been led by the minority, and we are proud of that.

THE SENATE AGENDA

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we also recognize that there are issues that need

to be discussed as to what is going on with the media. That is why this legislation is important. The problem is there are other matters dealing with children we have totally ignored this year. For example, we have spent, this year, 6 days of debate on the ESEA.

As I have said, we do not apologize for the work we have done on tobacco. What has happened has been revolutionary as a result of the minority speaking out against the problems of tobacco. We do not apologize for that. Of course, we have called attention to it.

We have also called attention to the fact that we believe our children need more attention. On February 3 of this year, the majority said education will be a "high priority" in this Congress.

I regret to say instead of making education a central issue, and even a high priority, we have had only 6 days of debate on education this entire year on the Senate floor. There is not a more important issue that we can talk about on the Senate floor, bar none, than educating our children. Having 6 days of debate on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in this Congress over a 2-year period does not indicate to me this is a "high priority."

We have about 15 days left in this Congress. We still have 11 appropriations bills to do. We have a minimum wage bill to complete. We have the Patients' Bill of Rights bill to complete. We have prescription drug benefits to address. We have issues dealing with gun safety, bankruptcy reform—the list of things we have not done is unending.

I believe to bring up, as was done by the majority today, this issue dealing with media, when right now Senator MCCAIN and others are listening to testimony of Senator JOE LIEBERMAN as to what he believes should be done in this regard. We know this is an artificial effort by the majority to focus on this issue. There is no intention to bring this up for debate. That is why the unanimous consent request given was so restricted that they would allow one amendment for 30 minutes. I think it is obvious this was only an effort to bring up an issue and talk about what they cannot get done.

Remember, the majority controls what goes on here on the floor. It is very obvious to me one thing the majority does not want to go on is a debate about education.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act is an act that was part of President Johnson's war on poverty. It has been a successful program. Title I, the largest program in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, was intended to help educational challenges facing high-poverty communities by targeting extra resources to school districts and schools with the highest concentrations of poverty. What it has done for children who could not read is

remarkable. We have a lot more to do because Title I, which relates to teaching kids who have fallen behind how to read, has been so underfunded. Where it has been funded, it has done remarkably well.

We want this program to continue. In 1994, the Democratic-led Congress and the Clinton-Gore administration worked together to enact far-reaching reauthorization of Title I. We want to continue this, set high standards, and close the achievement gap. We want to do something about class size reduction. We want to hire more teachers. There are all kinds of studies that show if teachers have fewer children to teach, the kids do better, but we do not need studies to prove that.

Common sense dictates if a teacher has fewer children to teach, she is going to do a better job of teaching those children. That is what this legislation is about: Simple common sense; that is, if you have fewer children to teach, the kids are going to do better. We want to do that. We want to have class size reduction.

It is very clear one of the reasons we have such a high dropout rate is because of the fact children are in classes that are so big and schools that are so big.

I did an open school forum in Las Vegas during the August recess. Las Vegas is the sixth largest school district in America with 230,000 children. It was interesting. The new superintendent of schools, Carlos Garcia, who came from Fresno, said that if a child is not reading up to standard in the third grade, that kid is a good candidate for being a high school dropout. We need to make sure the children in third grade can read. That is what this is all about. That is why we need to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. That is why we need to have fewer kids for each teacher to teach. That is what we are trying to do. That is why Senator MURRAY has worked so hard on her Class Size Reduction Act.

Unfortunately, our friends on the other side of the aisle reject our class size reduction program by failing to provide a separate dedicated funding stream. What we have done as a result of the intervention of the Clinton-Gore administration is force at year end in the omnibus bill more money for teachers. As a result of that, we have hired almost 30,000 new teachers so far under this program, directly benefiting over 1.5 million children. It has been proven, if you have smaller class sizes, these kids outperform students in larger classes. It helps teachers, and it helps the students. I repeat, our friends on the other side of the aisle reject this.

I want to talk about something very important to me, and that is high school dropouts. I mentioned briefly that if a kid cannot read in third grade,

he or she is a good candidate to be a high school dropout.

Three thousand children drop out of school every day, 500,000 a year. We would be so much better off if we could do something to keep 500 of those children in school every day, or 200 of those children. We would only have 2,800 dropping out of school every day.

We have worked on this. Senator BINGAMAN and I have a dropout prevention bill which supports local school development and programs for the prevention of dropouts. We successfully included \$10 million in funding for dropout prevention in the Labor-HHS appropriations bill. We hope that stays in conference. The conference has not been held, of course, as has conferences for most appropriations bills not been held. I hope money will stay in there. It is a few dollars. We need a lot more money. If we are going to have an attack on keeping kids in school, if we are going to have lower dropouts, we need to have in the Department of Education a dropout czar, somebody in charge of making sure there are programs throughout America to keep kids in school.

We need to focus on education. We are not going to in this Congress. That is gone. We need to work on school modernization, support for disadvantaged children, afterschool opportunities. It is clear—and Senator BOXER has worked very hard on afterschool programs—that if we can keep kids occupied after school, they are simply not going to get involved in things they should not do. This has been proven and shown to be accurate. We need more money in afterschool programs. Senator BINGAMAN has worked hard on school accountability. We support funding accountability provisions for failing schools; for example, putting a qualified teacher in every classroom within 4 years of this legislation.

The record should be replete with the fact that this year this Congress has spent 6 days of debate on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. That is pathetic. We are concerned about children. We should be able to debate the issue. We offered that this bill be handled in the regular course of business. Request after request has been rejected. That is too bad.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired. The Senator from Oregon is recognized for 9 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. President, I was not intending to speak on education, but I want to respond to my friend from Nevada. I am a junior Member of this body, but the perception of what has gone on here with respect to education is utterly different than my observation.

My observation is that this side of the aisle is anxious to talk about education, not just to throw more resources at the status quo, not to put up

roadblocks to real reform but to truly find out ways to make Washington less of a burden upon local education.

I have yet to go into a school district in Oregon and ask, "Where are your problems?" and they don't tell me it usually has to do with some Federal mandate. The truth is, what we are trying to do is empower local folks who understand about educating children and to lower the burden of Washington.

This idea of 100,000 teachers is great, but everyone should understand that is about sloganeering; that is about TV ads. That has nothing to do with educating kids. The truth is, we need an awful lot more than 100,000 teachers; We need 1 million teachers; but we ought to trust people locally to be able to make that judgment whether to build a school or to hire a teacher. We should not tie their hands. That is what has gone on, and the record should reflect that as well. This Republican is prepared to vote for a lot more resources, but he thinks we owe it to the parents of this country to give them reform as well.

Mr. President, I came here in morning business to try to interject myself into the debate on PNTR.

Mr. REID. Would my friend yield for a simple question?

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. I yield to my friend from Nevada.

Mr. REID. I have the greatest respect for the Senator from Oregon, but I would just a question. I think what the Senator says is right. I think we need reform. But doesn't he think we should have the ability to debate it on the Senate floor? How are we going to get it otherwise?

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. I say to the Senator, I do think we should debate it longer than we have. I grant you that. What I have observed, as a junior Member, however, is that every time we go to focus on amendments, we can't get time agreements. We can't get agreements on some reasonable amount of time. Look, I have already taken all the gun votes. I will take them. I am for background checks. I am for things that will protect kids in the classroom. But I do not know why I should be asked to vote on them two and three and four times.

How many times do you need a vote to run a political ad against me? The truth is, I have taken the votes. Let's get on to debating education. We have done the gun debate.

Mr. REID. I just briefly say to my friend, we have stated publicly on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act we would have as few as eight amendments, with an hour time limit on each one of them, equally divided. And we haven't been able to get that agreement. That seems fair to me.

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. It seems fair to me, I say to the Senator. I will certainly encourage my leadership to accede to that. What I am afraid of is the

comment I read in USA Today, where Senator DASCHLE said: We are not interested in getting anything done. We are interested in obstructing this place and creating a train wreck because we think that is good politics. That really concerns me.

I have to tell you, I am always optimistic, but I am discouraged by the windup scene I am seeing develop here. We owe the American people something better than this. I think we need to get on to some reforms. I, for one, am committed to a generous and bipartisan effort in that regard.

CHINA NORMAL TRADE RELATIONS

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. President, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 4444, a bill establishing permanent normal trade relations with the People's Republic of China.

I strongly believe that permanent normal trade relations will have a substantial and long-term political, economic, and national security benefit for our country. I have long maintained that as China becomes a member of the global community, its government and its people will benefit from these changes and the United States will benefit from better relations and, eventually, I believe, from a more liberal and less oppressive government.

Much of China's recent past has been marked by progression and regression, starts and fits toward economic liberalization that impact all levels of society, only to be matched by periods of oppression, when the government feels that things are getting out from underneath its thumb. This one-step-forward, two-steps-back pace shows how truly feared the market place is in a Communist country. And I believe that if you are a true Communist, you do fear the marketplace. For it is that marketplace—the private sector—that will eventually prove to be the downfall of the Communist system in any country.

Like many of my colleagues, I am genuinely and deeply concerned about human rights abroad. For that reason, I traveled to China last year to investigate the human rights situation and to determine the state of religious freedom in that country. WTO membership and normal trade relations with China will eventually improve the human rights situation and, I believe, religious freedom in that country. The past few decades' gradual opening of trade, investment, and cultural exchanges with China have led to positive steps in the area of human rights and religious tolerance. That is not to say that all is well. There is much work to be done in the area of human rights, but on balance a "carrot and a stick" approach is better than the stick alone.