

after-school programs, modernizing and building safe school facilities, and increasing accountability for results. But some in Congress advocate diverting scarce resources to subsidize private schools through vouchers, when it is public schools that need the help and support.

An article in today's Wall Street Journal by North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt eloquently explains why we should do more to support public schools, and why we should oppose private school vouchers.

Governor Hunt is a respected leader and renowned champion on education issues. He has been a strong advocate for many years for improving public schools, particularly by upgrading curricula, supporting better teacher training, and increasing early childhood education opportunities. As Governor Hunt states, it would be a step in the wrong direction to undermine these important priorities by relying on voucher schemes, just as we are starting to see solid results in improved student achievement.

I believe that Governor Hunt's article will be of interest to all of us who care about these issues, and I ask unanimous consent that it may be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From The Wall Street Journal, Wed., Sept. 20, 2000]

THE VOUCHER CHORUS IS OFF-KEY
(By Gov. James B. Hunt Jr.)

We are hearing a chorus of voices arguing that school vouchers are the key to improving American education, especially for minority groups and other low-income students in urban areas. We are accustomed to hearing such arguments from the political right, but now the voices are sounding in stereo.

My friend Robert Reich has taken to the pages of The Wall Street Journal to propose a far-reaching voucher plan ("The Case for 'Progressive' Vouchers," editorial page, Sept. 6). With all due respect to Mr. Reich and his allies on both the right and the left, let me suggest that vouchers are the wrong solution to the wrong problem at the wrong time. Instead of focusing on how to improve schools, they assume that pulling money out of failing schools provides an appropriate incentive to turn such schools around.

But school improvement is hard work. In 1983, Americans received a wake-up call about public schools. In a stinging report "A Nation at Risk," a blue-ribbon national commission warned that the level of teaching and learning in primary and secondary schools was so low that it threatened our economic competitiveness. As a result, a national movement was launched to improve academic performance. Virtually every state has now spelled out high standards for student achievement, many of them enforced by tests for promotion and graduation from high school. Rigorous accountability systems have been introduced for teachers and school administrators accompanied by monetary incentives for success and sanctions for failure. Many states are focusing on reducing class sizes.

It has taken us nearly two decades to put together these and other strategies relating

to curricula, teacher training, early childhood education and other elements that contribute to a successful school, and they are now paying off. It is wishful thinking to assert, as voucher proponents do, that struggling schools will somehow magically transform themselves because of a threat that some of their students will take a voucher, pack up their book bags and go elsewhere.

Vouchers address the wrong problem by narrowing the issue. Few would dispute that private schools can provide a good academic education. But there is a group of students whose needs must also be considered: the 90% of our kids who will remain in public schools. Mr. Reich acknowledges that the "closest thing we've seen to a national school-voucher experiment" occurred in New Zealand and that the result of that decade-long experiment was that "the worst schools grew worse." The New Zealand study proves the point of voucher opponents. We cannot support a policy of educational triage that allows a few students to get help while neglecting the needs of the many more students left behind.

Finally, the current push for vouchers is ill-timed. As already noted, we now have evidence that the concerted efforts in recent years to improve the teaching and learning that occurs in public schools is paying off. In North Carolina we have the ABCs of Public Education, a reform effort that emphasizes accountability at the school level. During the 1999-2000 school year 69.6% of our 2,100 public schools met or exceeded their growth standards on achievement tests. For schools that are falling behind, our state dispatches special teams to fix the lowest performing schools—not withdraw funds, as voucher proponents would have us do.

While we are raising the standards, we are also raising the pay of those in the classroom to the national average. In addition, teachers, guidance counselors and administrators can receive as much as \$1,500 each and teaching assistants as much as \$500 if their schools reach a certain level of proficiency. The RAND Corp. report found that between 1990 and 1996 students in our state showed the highest average annual gain on the National Assessment of Education Progress reading and math tests. Our state's average total SAT score moved up two points in 1999-2000, continuing the upward trend the state has experienced since 1989. We also have the highest number of teachers who've proven their expertise by earning certification through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Voucher proponents do make one point that needs to be taken seriously—vouchers can contribute to diversity and innovation in the system. It is true that we have moved well beyond the point where one-size-fits-all education is adequate. We need to encourage schools to offer a variety of approaches. But this can readily be achieved, as is already happening, within the public system through the design and promotion of magnet, subject-focused and other alternative schools that meet the specific interests of students and their parents while meeting high standards.

Let's also not assume, as has been implied by Mr. Reich, that where parents live determines their level of interest in schools. An expensive home in the suburbs doesn't guarantee a parent is passionate about where their children are learning. We need to make sure every parent is active and involved with his or her child's education.

AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILY SERVICES

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the 25th anniversary of the establishment of African American Family Services.

This inspirational organization has spent the past 25 years providing culturally specific services to the Minnesota African American community. Since 1975, it has expanded its services from solely dealing with chemical dependency to providing critical services in chemical health, family preservation, domestic violence, and adolescent violence prevention and anger management.

In addition to these programs, African American Family Services provides its clients with two other invaluable services—a resource center, which includes a resource library and a cross-peer education mentoring project, and a technical assistance center, which creates training programs to educate human and social service professionals on enhancing service delivery to African American clients.

Twenty-five years after its founding, this organization is still searching for new and innovative ways to serve Minnesotans. Currently, African American Family Services is attempting to work more directly with the children of its clients, hoping that this will help to break the cycle of self-destructive behavior that many families experience.

As the leading provider of human services to the Minnesota African American community, this organization has served countless individuals and families. By providing an effective network of dedicated staff and volunteers who have worked hard to serve every person who walks through its doors, African American Family Services truly has been able to make a difference in the lives of its clients.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work with this wonderful organization, and am proud to commend its outstanding record of success and service to the community on the floor of the United States Senate. Please join me in honoring all of the people who have made the success of the African American Family Services possible.

UNHCR DEATH IN GUINEA

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the tragic events that occurred over the weekend in the West African country of Guinea. West Africa is a very rough neighborhood, and for years Guinea has borne a heavy refugee burden, as Liberian and Sierra Leonean people have fled into its borders to escape violence in their home countries. In fact, Guinea hosts more refugees than any other country in Africa—nearly half a million of them.

The region's tensions have, unfortunately, spilled over to affect the welfare of refugees. Recently, a crisis