

SENATE—Friday, September 22, 2000

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Gracious Father, thank You for Your blessing. It gives us approbation, affirmation, a feeling of value, a sense of destiny, and an assurance of Your power. You have chosen, cherished, and called us to be Your sons and daughters. In Your providential planning You have placed each of us where we are and given us special assignments. Each of us has unique orders of the work we are to do. You provide power to help us, for You have ordained that if we do not do the work You have given us to do, it will not be done. So we report for duty with the delight that we have been blessed to be a blessing.

Help us to bless the people of our lives with a reminder of how much they mean to us. Heal our lock-jaw so we can articulate our appreciation of the gift each person is to us. May we be used by You to fill the blessing-shaped void inside of everyone needing to be filled by words of encouragement.

We will live this day only once. Before it is gone, may we bless all the people we can, in every way we can, with all the love we can. Help us not to waste today in selfish neglect of the people You have given us. Today is a day to receive and give Your blessing. In Your generous, giving, and forgiving name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable CHUCK HAGEL, a Senator from the State of Nebraska, led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HAGEL). The acting majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, today the Senate will be in a period of morning business throughout most of the day. The Senate may also resume debate on the motion to proceed to the H-1B visa bill. As a reminder, the first vote of next week is scheduled to occur

at 4:50 p.m. on Monday, September 25. The vote is on final passage of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000. Also next week, the Senate will continue consideration of the H-1B visa bill.

I thank my colleagues for their attention.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Nebraska, Mr. HAGEL, be recognized for the purposes of morning business for up to 30 minutes at 11 a.m. today.

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 5 minutes each.

The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to proceed for up to 12 minutes to introduce legislation.

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

(The remarks of Ms. COLLINS and Mr. CLELAND pertaining to the introduction of S. 3096 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION

Mr. CLELAND. Mr. President, one thing behind the growth of the American economy is our educational system. There is good news and bad news about our educational system today.

In a climate that currently seems filled with more dissent than accord, I think we can at least agree that elected officials on both sides of the aisle are in lockstep with the American people on the importance of education: It is a priority so critical that it should be at the top of our national agenda. This is a view very similar to the opinion held by President Lincoln almost 150 years ago. "Upon the subject of education," Lincoln said, "not pre-

suming to dictate any plan or system respecting it, I can only say that I view it as the most important subject which we, as a people, can be engaged in."

Education's priority having been espoused by both sides during this Congress, it is profoundly disappointing that S. 2, the critically important legislation to reauthorize the landmark Elementary and Education Act, appears to be dead for this year. What a shame. It is apparent from the earlier floor debate on S. 2 that agreement breaks down on the condition of America's educational system today and on the course we should pursue to improve our schools.

Seventeen years ago our country was rocked by the publication of "A Nation at Risk." The findings were devastating: Our educational system was being "eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our future as a nation and a people."

That landmark report went on to say that if "an unfriendly foreign power" had tried to impose on America our "mediocre educational performance," we might well have viewed it "as an act of war."

I have listened to some of my colleagues maintain that nothing has changed in the last 17 years—that American education continues on a downward spiral. They claim that the federal government's role in education is a source of national shame. Barring a radical change in course, they say, America's report card will continue to be a document of failure.

Mr. President, I agree that there is compelling need for improvement. In fact, if you ask the companies in the high-tech world in my State and around America, they know that some 300,000 to 400,000 high-tech jobs out there in this economy today are going begging for want of educated and talented people.

Every day in America almost 2,800 high school students drop out. This is not acceptable. Each school year, more than 45,000 under-prepared teachers, teachers who have not even been trained in the subjects they are teaching, enter the classroom. Who here among us believes this to be acceptable? Here in America fourteen million children attend schools in need of extensive repair or replacement. Who in this body would argue that we have to do better? As a nation we have witnessed school shootings—classroom tragedies which were unheard of 20 years ago. Who here would not do everything in their power to restore safety and sanity to America's schools?

But, Mr. President, I would argue that this is only part of the picture. "A