

**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

Nation at Risk" was a wake-up call. Educators, parents, businesses, community leaders, and officials at all levels of government responded. Yes, serious problems still exist, but so do success stories. America's dropout rate is down—from 14 percent in 1982 to single digits today, including in many of our toughest neighborhoods. In my own State of Georgia, over 70 percent of high school students now graduate, a marked improvement over the 52 percent graduation rate in 1980. In 1950, only 5 percent of Georgians held college degrees. Now over one in five—22 percent—do.

And there's more good news. Nationally SAT and Advanced Placement test scores are up. Performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, NAEP, has increased, particularly in the key subjects of reading, mathematics, and science—with African American and Hispanic students making significant gains in both math and science.

Just consider: From 1994 to 1998, average reading scores increased at all three grades tested (4, 8, and 12). The average math score is at its highest level in 26 years. And let us not forget that this progress is happening during a time when many states and school districts are raising standards and putting in place tough graduation requirements. This progress is happening during a time when U.S. students are taking more rigorous courses than ever. By 1994, 52 percent of high school graduates had taken the core subjects recommended by "A Nation at Risk," almost quadruple the 1982 number.

To those who over the last 20 years have uttered doomsday predictions about our failing schools, let me say that parents in this country, in overwhelming numbers, continue to send their children to public schools. In fact, ninety percent of children in the K-12 age group attend public schools. That's nine out of every ten children in this country. When America's school bell rang this September, over 53 million students returned to class, a record school enrollment. What's more, surveys show that most parents think their own child's public school is doing a pretty good job. It's other people's schools they fear are failing.

Mark Twain once said, "Get your facts first, and then you can distort them as much as you please." The facts, I believe, bear out that we have made progress since the publication of "A Nation at Risk." The facts also bear out that many of our education challenges continue to go unmet. In a survey on education issues conducted this past March, Americans were asked to list the major problems facing our public schools today. "Lack of parental involvement" topped the list, followed closely by "undisciplined students." The majority of respondents also cited "lack of retention of good teachers,"

"overcrowded classrooms," "lack of academic standards for promotion/graduation," "lack of teachers qualified to teach in their subject area," and "outdated schools" as issues meriting our nation's attention.

It all boils down to this central issue: Do we stay the course or do we reshape, dramatically, the federal government's role in education? I believe strongly that we should increase our federal investment in public schools, for surely the education of America's children is a vital national interest. I also believe that we should continue to work with the states and local school districts—who are now and who should and will remain the major education decision-makers in this country—to ensure that those federal dollars are spent on initiatives that aim to fix the specific problems in our schools which are causing the American people so much concern.

We need to be willing to invest the nation's dollars into improving the recruitment, retention, and professional development of our nation's teachers. What teachers know and can do is the single most important influence on what students learn, according to the National Commission for Teaching and America's Future Teachers.

In the American educational system, it falls to our States and local communities to set high educational standards and provide quality education so that all children can achieve to standards of excellence. While the federal government's precise role in education is open to debate, I believe it is unquestionably in our national interest for federal officials to work in cooperation with States and localities to promote educational excellence and to encourage standards-based reform.

We should work to ensure that parents have information on teacher qualifications and achievement levels at their child's school. One important way to improve our schools is to enable parents to hold schools accountable for progress and to give them choices they can exercise if progress does not occur.

Research has shown that class size directly relates to the quality of education. Students in smaller classes consistently outperform students in larger classes on tests, are more likely to graduate on time, stay in school, enroll in honors classes, and graduate in the top ten percent of their class. We need to help local school districts recruit, hire and train 100,000 qualified teachers to reduce class sizes in the early grades. It is an investment in reducing teacher turnover and in improving student performance.

Research also links student achievement and conduct to the condition of their schools. Yet fourteen million children in the U.S. attend schools in need of extensive repair or replacement. In my own State of Georgia, nearly two-thirds of our schools—62

percent—report a need to upgrade or repair their buildings. We need to help local communities from Savannah to San Antonio to Seattle rebuild, modernize and reduce overcrowding in more than 6,000 of America's public schools.

There is consensus in every borough, town and city throughout this country that bloodshed in our schools cannot and will not be tolerated. Yet every day five million children are left to care for themselves in the hours before and after school. We know that these are the very hours that children are most likely to participate in risky behavior. In fact, almost half of all violent juvenile crime takes place between the hours of 3 and 8 p.m. We need to help our communities reduce juvenile crime by investing more dollars in after-school care. We need to expand the popular 21st Century Learning Centers Program to ensure that 1 million children each year—up from the current 190,000—will have access to safe and constructive after-school tutoring, recreation, and academic enrichment.

Mr. President, I maintain that there is no more powerful—and empowering—force in the universe than education. "On education all our lives depend," said Benjamin Franklin. And Christa McAuliffe, selected to be the first schoolteacher to travel in space, described simply but poetically the awesome potential of her vocation: "I touch the future," she said. "I teach." While we may bring to the debate on education differing views, it is my hope that we ultimately remember this is a profoundly important issue which should be above politics and ideology. It is all about the future of this country—and the future, after all, is in very small hands.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota is recognized.

#### VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I come to the Senate floor to speak about the importance of reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act before September 30. Since enactment of the Violence Against Women Act in 1994, the number of forcible rapes of women have declined, and the number of sexual assaults nationwide have gone down as well.

Despite the success of the Violence Against Women Act, domestic abuse and violence against women continue to plague our communities. Consider the fact that a woman is raped every five minutes in this country, and that nearly one in every three adult women experiences at least one physical assault by a partner during adulthood. In fact, more women are injured by domestic violence each year than by automobile accidents and cancer deaths combined.