

Education is going to be a central issue this year. . . . For starters, we must reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

January 29, 1999:

But education is going to have a lot of attention, and it's not going to be just words. . . .

June 22, 1999:

Education is number one on the agenda for the Republicans in Congress this year. . . .

Chamber of Commerce, February 1, 2000:

We're going to work very hard on education. I have emphasized that every year I've been majority leader . . . and Republicans are committed to doing that.

February 3, 2000:

We must reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. . . . Education will be a high priority in this Congress.

May 1, 2000:

This is very important legislation. I hope we can debate it seriously and have amendments in the education area. Let's talk education.

May 2, 2000:

Question: . . . have you scheduled a cloture vote on that?

Senator LOTT: No, I haven't scheduled a cloture vote. . . . But education is number one in the minds of the American people all across this country and every State, including my own State.

July 10:

I, too, would very much like to see us complete the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

July 25, 2000:

We will keep trying to find a way to go back to this legislation this year and get it completed.

The fact is, for the first time in 35 years we do not have a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. That is against the background, Mr. President, of what is happening out there across this country and what young children are doing.

We have challenges in our education system. Here is a chart: "More Students are Taking the SAT." That test, by and large, is necessary to gain entrance into the colleges; not virtually unanimous, but by and large it is required. Look at what has happened since 1980, when 33 percent of the children took it: 36 percent in 1985; 40 percent in 1990; 42 percent in 1995; and now in 2000, it is 44 percent.

This is a reflection of the attitude of children in our high schools. The percentage of children taking the SATs is going up significantly. The children want to take those tests. They understand the significance of the SAT and the importance of a college education. The SAT test is demanding. It is hard. It is difficult. Children have to work extremely long hours to prepare for these SATs. The increasing numbers of students taking the SAT is a clear indication from the children of this country that they are serious about education and they want to be able to try

to improve their academic achievement.

Not only do we see their willingness to take the most strenuous of tests, which are the SATs, but they are also willing to take the advanced courses in math and science, probably the most difficult courses in our high school.

We see what has been happening in precalculus: In 1990, 31 percent of students enrolled in precalculus; in 2000, 44 percent did. In calculus, the rate increased from 19 percent to 24 percent. In physics, 44 percent to 49 percent. These are the percentage increases of students who are taking the advanced courses in these subject matters—all on the rise. The number of children who are taking the SAT tests is on the rise.

Let's take a look at the results. We have now more children taking the SAT tests. They are taking more demanding courses. What have been the results? We see across the board, going back from 1972 and 1975, 1980, the constant downward movement in terms of results. What we have been seeing since 1990 is the gradual, slow—and I admit it has been slow, but it is going in one direction, and that is up. There has been an improvement in SAT math scores and they are now the highest in 30 years. More kids are taking them, more kids are doing better. That is true across the board in terms of males as well as females.

We have challenges in our education system. This is a reflection on what is happening generally across the country. These are the matters the Vice President has talked about, how he wants to strengthen those.

Now we see what has been happening in the State of Texas. We saw what is happening generally across the country, that all the indicators are going up. Here we have Texas, falling far below the national average on the SAT scores from 1997 to the year 2000.

I brought this up to the Senate floor last week, and a lot of my colleagues were dismissive. But let's look at this. This is the national test, the SAT. These are not homegrown tests in Texas and homegrown tests in Massachusetts, homegrown in other States. The SAT is a national standardized test. I will come back to that in a minute.

These are the national averages for the SAT test. Notice the national average total scores since 1997 has gone up. That, I think, is a clear indication that the children, working harder, taking more challenging courses, have a greater desire, more of them, to go on to the schools and colleges. It is a very definite upward swing, although not great in terms of the total numbers. All of us want these higher. However, the fact remains that progress has been made and the national average is going up.

But not, Mr. President, in the State of Texas. From 1999 to the year 2000, we

have seen it flatten out. Going back to 1997, scores have declined; Texas scores have gone down. It is also interesting that Texas scores are well below the national average in the SATs.

I think this is a pretty fair indication about the facts in the State of Texas. With all respect, I am not getting into criticizing the Governor or commenting on his desire to try to do better. But I do think that when he talks about it and he claims how well Texas is doing, it is fair enough to look at the facts and examine whether this is so. We have this as a result of these Scholastic Aptitude Tests that show Texas is well below the national average, and under Governor Bush it hasn't improved on the national average in the last several years, at least while he has been Governor.

These are the earlier facts. Then we have the blockbuster report, the Rand Commission report, which basically sustains that argument that the schools may not have been making as large of improvements as claimed. It has been an important indictment of what has been happening on education in the State of Texas.

Mr. REID. Could I ask the Senator from Massachusetts to yield while we do a unanimous-consent request, and the Senator as part of the request would retain the floor?

Mr. KENNEDY. I am glad to.

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

The Senator from Alaska.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT  
AGREEMENT—H.R. 4811

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask consent that following statements by Senator KENNEDY and Senator BAUCUS ongoing now, the Senate proceed to the conference report to accompany the foreign operations appropriations bill, that it be considered as having been read, and time be limited to the following: 1 hour equally divided between Senators MCCONNELL and LEAHY or their designees, 10 minutes equally divided between myself and Senator BYRD or our designees, and 30 minutes under the control of Senator GRAHAM of Florida. I further ask unanimous consent that following the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote on the adoption of the conference report without any intervening action.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, it is my understanding there is already scheduled a 4:30 vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mr. REID. If this debate is not completed prior to that time, we will have to complete it after that vote is taken?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mr. STEVENS. That is my understanding, too.