

SENATE—Wednesday, March 1, 2000

The Senate met at 9:30 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:

Loving Father, Your presence is with us even when we become busy and momentarily forget You. Thank You for continually breaking through the barriers of insensitivity with overtures of Your love. Sometimes we go for hours without thinking of You or asking for Your help. You are our closest friend as well as our God. Help us to keep that friendship in good working order.

Lord, you know us. We get so absorbed in our activities and begin to think we are capable of functioning without Your peace and power. Show us the mediocrity of our efforts without Your intervention and inspiration. We dedicate this day to live for Your glory and by Your grace, sustained by Your goodness. You are our Lord and Savior. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable WAYNE ALLARD, a Senator from the State of Colorado, 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. ALLARD). The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, today the Senate will immediately resume consideration of the Robb school construction amendment. By previous consent, the Senate will proceed to vote on or in relation to the amendment at approximately 10 a.m.

Following the disposition of the Robb amendment, Senator ABRAHAM will be recognized to offer his amendment regarding computers. Other amendments will be offered, and therefore votes will occur throughout the day in an effort to complete the education savings account bill as soon as possible. An agreement is being discussed to have all first-degree amendments offered by 5 p.m. today.

I thank my colleagues for their attention. I yield the floor.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent, because of confusion in

the vote being scheduled at 10 and also giving 30 minutes for debate, that there be 30 minutes for debate equally divided and, by necessity, of course, the vote would occur a little after 10.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Chair hears none, and it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

AFFORDABLE EDUCATION ACT OF 1999

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of S. 1134 which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1134) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow tax-free expenditures from education individual retirement accounts for elementary and secondary school expenses, to increase the maximum annual amount of contributions to such accounts, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Robb amendment No. 2861, to eliminate the use of education individual retirement accounts for elementary and secondary school expenses and to expand the incentives for the construction and renovation of public schools.

AMENDMENT NO. 2861

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 30 minutes for debate equally divided on amendment No. 2861.

The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Iowa be recognized to make a brief statement, and then I will continue.

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

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I am proud to be a cosponsor of the pending amendment with my colleague from Virginia, Senator ROBB. Senator ROBB has been a great advocate for improving education for many years.

The facts about the need for this amendment to help modernize and upgrade our nation's public school facilities are well known.

The average school building is 42 years old. Nearly three-quarters of all public schools were built before 1970.

Fourteen million American children attend classes in schools that are unsafe or inadequate and the General Accounting Office estimates it will cost \$112 billion to upgrade existing public schools to overall good condition.

Forty-six percent of schools lack adequate electrical wiring to support the full-scale use of technology.

Enrollment in elementary and secondary schools is at an all time high and will continue to grow over the next 10 years, making it necessary for the United States to build an additional 6,000 schools.

It is a national disgrace that the nicest places that our children see are shopping malls, sports arenas and movie theaters and the most run down place they see are their public schools. What signal are we sending them about the value we place on them, their education and future?

How can we prepare our kids for the 21st century in schools that did not make the grade in the 20th century?

Last year I visited Hiatt Middle School in Des Moines. This school opened its doors in 1925 and students spend all but a few hours a week in classrooms built during a time when Americans could not imagine the technological advances that would occur by the end of the century.

In 1925, Americans were flocking to movie theaters to see—and hear—the first talking motion picture—Al Jolson's "The Jazz Singer." The students who walked through the doors of the brand new Hiatt school that year could not imagine IMAX theaters with surround sound where a movie goer actually becomes a part of the film.

In 1925, consumers were lining up in department stores to buy novelties like electric phonographs, dial telephones, and self-winding watches. CD's, DVD players, cellular telephones, or palm pilots were unthinkable.

And, the introduction of state-of-the-art technologies like rural electrification and crop dusting were revolutionizing the lives of families and farmers alike.

There have been incredible technological and scientific advances in the past seven decades. Yet, our schools have not kept pace with the times. We continue to educate our children in schools built and equipped in bygone eras.

We must make sure that every child and every school can facilitate the technology of the 21st century. However, Iowa State University reports that we need at least \$4 billion over the next ten years to repair and upgrade school buildings in Iowa and make sure they can effectively utilize educational technology.

The amendment we are offering is a comprehensive, two-prong response to this critical national problem.

First, we would authorize \$1.3 billion to make grants and loans for emergency repairs to public schools.