

Mr. President, other colleagues have come to the floor and wish to speak, and we are operating under a unanimous consent agreement. So let me, with that, conclude my remarks and, in so doing, say I am excited that we have the opportunity to work together on this issue and to prove to Americans that education is the No. 1 priority of the Congress.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Chair recognizes the Senator from Texas.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I yield 5 minutes to the Senator from Arkansas, who has the great name Senator HUTCHINSON.

PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Arkansas for 5 minutes, under the previous order.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. I thank the Chair, and thank the Senator from Texas for her leadership on education, and for having a good name, and for me having a name similar to it.

I applaud President Bush for his commitment to education in unveiling a very serious and comprehensive education reform program today. It is an education package that, if enacted in its entirety, I believe, will ensure that no child in America will be left behind . . . That should be our goal.

One of the wonderful aspects of what President Bush is now doing is to help us redefine what success is in education. For too long, success has been defined by: How much do we spend? President Bush wants to redefine that as to how much children are learning. That should be the criteria for whether or not we are succeeding in education.

His proposals represent an excellent framework for moving forward, and moving forward quickly, on a bipartisan basis, with legislation in Congress. I call on my colleagues to have an open mind on this education package and allow us to work together to achieve these goals.

Among other things, he seeks to address the problem of failing schools. Federal support, under his plan, will be provided, augmenting State funds, to help schools that need improvement. States and districts will be expected to implement serious reforms in schools that continue to fail.

All children in America deserve to have the chance for a quality education. In order to achieve that, there must be real consequences for schools that are persistently dangerous or are not improving after serious reform efforts for 3 years.

Under the Bush plan, if a school cannot achieve success in 3 years, with additional help from the Federal Government, then we ought to give those parents the chance to get those children out of the failing school. No child should be left behind because of where he or she lives or because of the financial standing of his or her parents. So I think this is a wonderful hallmark of the Bush plan.

Under the Bush plan, success is rewarded; failure is sanctioned. States, districts, and schools that narrow the achievement gap and improve overall student achievement will be rewarded, and States that fail to make progress may lose a portion of their administrative funds.

If we are to change education in this country, there must be consequences to failure. We must close that gap between the high achieving and the low achieving. That was the goal of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The Bush plan provides a whole new area of flexibility, much less of the prescriptive, top-down categorical grant programs—over 60 of them—that tie the hands of local educators. The Bush plan would reduce that to a few streams of funds and provide new flexibility for local educators.

As you can tell, Mr. President, I am quite enthused about what we have the opportunity to do for the education of American children. As a member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, I look forward to working with President Bush and with my colleagues in the Senate to pass meaningful education legislation.

This issue is a priority. It is President Bush who deserves the credit for making it a priority. It is time to put partisan politics aside and to work to ensure that every child in America receives a quality education, and that no child is left behind.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mrs. HUTCHISON addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized for up to 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair has been and will be very protective of the time on Tuesdays, but since the Senator has been here the entire morning, I will not object.

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, I know this is a difficult time to be presiding, but I did want to finish the discussion of the education proposal that is being put forth by President Bush.

We have had several speakers this morning talk about the importance of addressing education as the first priority of our new President, George W. Bush. I think you can tell from the debate that Congress is ready to go on this issue.

We have been looking for accountability and flexibility in the Federal role in education since I came to Congress, and probably since STROM THURMOND came to Congress, because we know the difference between America and most other countries in the world is that we value every child getting a quality education. So we know that public education is the route that

every child must take to succeed in life.

If we fall down in public education, we will see the crumbling of the foundation of democracy in America. That is why President Bush is putting this as a first priority, and why Congress is going to work with him to do it.

I think what President Bush is talking about is exactly the right approach—that we are going to give incentives for creativity, for flexibility, that we are going to go for every child to have the best education that we can potentially give that child.

But we are not going to sit back and say that year after year after year, if a public school fails, we are going to keep pouring money into that failing school and leave those children at risk. That is what we are saying. We are saying if a school fails for 3 straight years, we are going to empower parents and school districts and States to say there is an alternative and we are going to let you look at the options and select another alternative for your child.

That is the bottom line of what we are talking about today. So we are going to put a lot more money from the Federal level into public education. We are going to give our schools every chance to succeed, and we are going to help them succeed. But, Mr. President, this is accountability that we are going to put into the system because we are not going to let a child be left behind because all the bureaucrats and the politicians in Washington are talking about accountability but not deciding what it is. We are going to decide in the next few months what it is and we are going to set a standard and we are going to require that standard be kept.

That is what President Bush is doing. Congress is going to work with him to do it. I applaud the President, and I am anxious to work with him to make sure that every child has the ability to reach his or her full potential with a public education in our country.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the hour of 12:30 a.m. having arrived, the Senate stands in recess until the hour of 2:18 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:39 p.m. recessed until 2:18; whereupon, the Senate reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. ROBERTS).

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.