

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to proceed for 30 minutes as in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SCHEDULE

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, on behalf of Majority Leader LOTT, I have the following announcement.

Today the Senate will be in a period for morning business until 3 p.m. Following morning business, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume consideration of the majority leader's motion to proceed to S. 1, the education reform bill.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, again on behalf of Majority Leader LOTT, Senators are reminded that cloture was filed on the motion to proceed to the education bill last week. That vote will occur at 9:30 a.m. tomorrow. Following the vote, the Senate is expected to begin the 30 hours of postcloture debate. It is hoped that the debate time will not be necessary and that the Senate can begin action on that bill during Tuesday's session. Senators are further advised that they should be prepared for votes throughout the week.

Mr. REID. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. DEWINE. I certainly will yield.

Mr. REID. I stated before the distinguished Senator from Ohio arrived, I think there should be some consideration given to vitiating the cloture vote. I hope the Senator will transfer that information to the majority leader.

Mr. DEWINE. I will, indeed.

Mr. REID. We believe, on this side on the substantive issues, everybody is almost there. It appears the only difference we have is with the dollar numbers. The motion to proceed will be agreed to overwhelmingly anyway. It seems to me it will set the wrong tone for this important legislation if we have to go to it by a cloture motion having been filed.

Mr. DEWINE. I thank my colleague.

SAVING OUR SCHOOLS: EDUCATION REFORM IN AMERICA

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, the issue before us now, education reform in our elementary and secondary public schools, is certainly one of the most important issues facing our Nation. Education is something about which

we all care passionately. I have a deep personal interest in education as a Ohioan and especially as a parent of eight children and also now the grandparent of six. I believe that a quality education for a child today is the key to that child's quality of life in the future. As parents and grandparents and citizens of our States and communities, we have an obligation to ensure that all children receive a solid education.

Failing to properly educate our children puts them at risk. As President John Kennedy once said: "A child miseducated is a child lost." That is a child lost to ignorance. A child lost to drugs, alcohol, or violence. A child lost to poverty and apathy.

As we debate reform of our schools, I believe it is vital that we look at exactly where we are as a society and how this is affecting our public education system. Our society, as I see it, is divided along economic and educational lines. This division is nothing new. Scholars and sociologists have been warning us for years that this is where our Nation was heading, particularly if we did not properly educate our children.

Unfortunately, we did not heed the warnings, and as a result, our Nation today is a nation split into two Americas: One where children get educated, and one where they do not. This gap in educational knowledge and the gap in economic standing is entrenching thousands upon thousands of children into an underclass and into futures filled with poverty and little hope and little opportunity.

That is exactly what is happening in my home State of Ohio and, tragically, what is happening across our country. Ohio generally is a microcosm of what we see in the country. When we look at this growing gap, the development of the two Americas, what we see in Ohio is also what we see in our Nation.

In Ohio, growing income and educational disparities are creating our very own permanent underclass, especially in Ohio inner cities and in Appalachia.

What we see in Ohio, if I can take the Presiding Officer and Members of the Senate to Ohio, is something we see in many States. Most of Ohio is doing very well economically and doing well educationally. The children have a great future.

When we look across Ohio, we see two areas where that is not taking place, where the children are not being educated as well as we would like and where the income level shows that disparity. One place is in Appalachia. There are 20 or 25 counties in Ohio that are Appalachian counties. The other area is in our core cities. Call them the inner cities. Call them the core cities. Either way, this is where we face most of our challenges.

We cannot underestimate or understate this problem. It is a problem that

is not unique to Ohio. Rather, it is a huge societal problem, which is pushing society farther and farther apart, not closer and closer together. It is a problem we must address.

How do we do that? How do we enable children in the underclass to rise above their circumstances, those circumstances which are beyond their control? How do we bring about equality and opportunity so each child has a chance to lead a full, meaningful, productive life as an adult?

I believe the best way we can get to these children before we lose them is through education. Horace Mann, a former president of Antioch College in Yellow Springs, OH—a community where my wife and I grew up—who is known as the father of public education, once said:

Education, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer, the great equalizer of the conditions of man—the balance-wheel of the social machinery.

This is exactly what education can and should do. It should provide all children, regardless of their economic circumstances or family backgrounds, with the tools they need to make it as adults in our society, with the tools necessary to rise above individual situations of poverty and instability, individual situations of hopelessness and despair.

As my colleagues in the Senate know, today's educational system is not always meeting this goal. Do not get me wrong. I am not blaming the schools for all of society's ills. Rather, I am suggesting that we as a society are failing to use the power and the potential of our schools to the maximum extent to help give our children the futures they really deserve. No matter where a child lives, whether in Portsmouth, OH, or New York City, every one of the 1.8 million children in the Ohio public school system and every one of the nearly 47 million children in public schools nationwide, deserves the opportunity to learn and to become educated.

Let's face it; our schools have our children in their custody 7 or 8 hours a day, 5 days a week. That is not a lot of time, but it is time our schools and our country simply cannot afford to waste. A line from a 1970 song says "your dreams were your ticket out." For all too many children, children living in poverty and in broken homes, dreams alone are not enough. For those children, a dream and a solid education is their ticket out.

This is not a new concept. Historically, our schools have been the best opportunity for children to move out, to move up, to advance, to change their lives. Education has built our Nation. We are truly a nation of immigrants, immigrants who, because of public schools, escaped ignorance, illiteracy, and lives of poverty. A strong public education tradition in this country

kept entire generations from being marginalized and left behind. For them, education was their ticket out—their ticket out of despair and toward opportunity.

When education is not working to give our kids the tools they need to move ahead in life, those children suffer. Many of them, for example, don't get their high school diplomas. Look at some of the class of 2000 graduation rates for my home State of Ohio; look at urban centers. In Akron, OH, 72 percent of the city's high school children graduated last year. That is actually a high rate for an urban area. In Toledo, only 67 percent graduated. In Columbus, it was only 62 percent; Youngstown, 59 percent; Dayton, 57 percent; Canton, 53 percent; Cincinnati, 51 percent; and in Cleveland, only 34 percent of the students who started high school actually finished.

Yes, that is right. Only one-third of the students in Cleveland, OH, graduated. Two-thirds did not.

Before anyone becomes too complacent or thinks maybe they don't have this problem in their States, let me remind the Members of the Senate that these statistics are not unusual nor only for the State of Ohio. They are typical of urban centers and urban areas. My guess is that if we look at the other major cities in this country we will find similar, disturbing statistics.

There is something wrong when we see statistics such as this. There is something wrong in Ohio and this country when that many children are not graduating. There is also something wrong in this country when nearly one-third of college freshman must take remedial courses before they can begin regular college level course work.

There is something wrong in this country when one-third of fourth graders cannot read. The National Assessment of Educational Progress tested 8,000, fourth graders across the country for reading skills and ranks them according to four levels of achievement: advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic. Tragically, 37 percent of those tested scored below basic. In other words, 37 percent of those children basically could not read. It gets even worse when you break the "below basic" group into categories. Sixty-three percent of African American fourth graders came into the category, 58 percent Hispanic, 47 percent of urban students, and 60 percent of poor children. All of them scored below basic, meaning they simply cannot read in the fourth grade.

I also wonder about another statistic. Nearly three out of four teenagers today attend a high school with an enrollment of more than 1,000 students. I repeat, three-fourths of teenagers today attend high schools with enrollments topping 1,000 students. I worry

about that. I worry about students in such big schools where it is too easy, many times, to get lost. I think we need to look at that.

Where do we go from here? How do we go about changing our societal mindset and our perceptions and our negligence in this country? The first thing we need to do is recognize that the answers lie mainly in the hands of parents, in our local communities, among our local school boards, and among our State and local governments—not in Washington.

Nevertheless, Congress has a role to play, although a small one, in prioritizing or directing our limited Federal dollars where they can best help disadvantaged students in disadvantaged districts.

I believe the best place to begin on the Federal level is by restoring accountability and achievement with the single most important resource in the classroom—the teacher. When I think about teachers, I think about something else that Horace Mann once said: "Teaching is the most difficult of all arts and the most profound of all sciences."

I can certainly attest to that. As a college senior at Miami University in Oxford, OH, I spent 4½ months student teaching at Princeton High School, a high school north of the city of Cincinnati. That was tough work. Teaching is tough. Teaching was one of the hardest things I have ever done in my life. It was then I learned, firsthand for the first time, that Ohio and America's teachers don't get the respect, the admiration, nor the salaries they deserve. There is something wrong with that. There is something wrong with a system and a society that doesn't value the teaching profession as highly as other professions. Teachers, after all, shape lives. A good teacher has the power to fundamentally change the course of a child's life.

I am sure each one of us in the Senate can recall at least one great teacher who inspired us, who motivated us, who, yes, changed our lives. These teachers guided us then, and they continue to influence us today. I can recall some of my teachers. I can still hear my senior high school teacher, Mrs. Kappell. Whenever I write a letter or whenever I try to compose a speech, I can hear her talking to me, telling me what to do, and many times, what not to do.

I can hear my junior high school teacher in American history, Mr. Wingard, now Dr. Wingard, as he talked about that great American story of American history.

Teachers do change our lives, Mr. President. They do make a difference. As a parent, I also know how important it is for children to have good teachers, for our children to enjoy being in the classroom and to look forward to going to school each day. When they don't

have quality teachers, our children suffer for a whole year.

I am sure other parents have this experience: There is nothing better than to find out that your child has a great teacher; to listen to that child, when that child comes home from school, talk about what the teacher said; to hear the excitement a teacher can inspire about a particular subject, whether it is science or American government or American history or literature. There is nothing more important for a child, other than parents, than to have a good teacher.

I have also had the experience, not often but it is an experience most of us have had as parents, of our child having a teacher who wasn't that good. We all know how long 9 months can seem for the whole family.

It is so important for our kids that we attract the smartest and most dedicated in our society to the profession of teaching. We had better move fast. The National Center for Educational Statistics predicts that in the next decade we will have to hire 1.7 million to 2.7 million new teachers just to replace those who retire or leave the profession. While this exodus of teachers is certainly a daunting challenge and a very real pending problem, it is also an enormous opportunity. It is the single greatest opportunity for us, as parents and as community members, to reshape the next decade of education in America.

When I think about this opportunity and I think about how we can shape education to the greatest benefit of our children, I am reminded of something my own high school principal, Mr. Malone, once told me. We were getting ready to go into a new high school building. We were part of the baby-boom generation, so they were always building new buildings for us. Mr. Malone came into our class and he said, "We are going to go into this new high school next week. We are so proud of it and so happy about it. But I want you to remember one thing. I want you always to remember this: In education, there are only two things that really matter. One is the student who wants to learn and the other is a good teacher. Everything else is sort of icing on the cake." What Mr. Malone said 35 years ago is still true today.

Recently I had the privilege of meeting with several teachers and administrators and students from two of Ohio's schools of education—Marietta College and Ohio University. During those meetings, we discussed many of the issues today's teachers are facing and the challenges that await the future generation of teachers. Those meetings reaffirmed my belief that, when you get right down to it, good teachers are second only to good parents in helping children learn. So any effort to restore

confidence and improve quality in education must begin with a national recommitment to teaching as a profession.

We are doing just that with the education reform bill before us. Through the language I have written into this bill, we can expand, enhance, and encourage support for teachers all across America.

First, I have written a provision that will provide support for people in other professions seeking a second career as a teacher. We need to make it easier to recruit future teachers from the military, from industry, and from research institutions. These are people with established careers and real-world life experiences. They have a great deal to give our students in the classroom.

But, getting this kind of talent into the classroom is easier said than done. For example, if Albert Einstein were alive today and wanted to teach a high school physics class, requirements in some States would keep him from even setting foot in a classroom. That, I think, is just absurd. My provision would allow the use of Federal funds for alternative teacher certification programs. This would allow States to create and expand different types of alternative certification efforts.

Second, I have written a provision to provide support for teachers seeking to improve subject knowledge or classroom skills. This language that we have written helps ensure that our teachers have access to training academies, where they can sharpen and improve their skills as teachers. There is just such a facility in Cincinnati called the Mayerson Academy. Teachers can go there to learn from experienced educators, seasoned educators who can help them and guide them to become stronger teachers in the classroom. Plans are already underway for a similar training academy in Dayton, OH.

No doubt, some of this support should be available to teachers in every community in our country. It is not enough to train our teachers and then just send them out to the classrooms. We have to provide them with the opportunity to constantly improve their skills. It is a science. It is an art. It is both. It is a tough business, and we need to give them the help, the mentoring, and the expertise they need to continue advancing throughout their careers.

The Mayerson Academy was put together by the business community in Cincinnati in cooperation with the teachers unions and in cooperation with the public schools. It is the right way to go. It is the right thing to do.

Third, I have written a provision to provide support for teachers seeking new ways to teach math and science, history, or English. My language expands the mission of the Eisenhower National Clearinghouse, which is a national center located at Ohio State

University that provides teachers with the best teacher training and curriculum materials in the subjects of math and science. This clearinghouse screens, evaluates, and distributes the multiple training and course materials currently available and makes it easier for teachers to quickly and efficiently access materials for the classrooms. My provision expands the clearinghouse's mission beyond just math and science to now include, under this language, subjects such as history and English.

Finally, I have written a provision to provide support for new teachers from experienced teachers who will serve as mentors. Many of our most experienced, most senior, most knowledgeable teachers are, unfortunately, about to retire. It is vital that we do not lose their expertise before it is too late. We can utilize their skills through mentoring programs. My provision allows the use of Federal funds for new and existing teacher mentoring programs.

I also believe we need to prioritize Federal funding to recruit and retain good teachers in our high-need urban and rural school districts. One way to do this is by recruiting teachers from the military through the Troops to Teachers Program. Last year we worked to save this program, and thank Heaven we saved it. We fully intend to do the same this year.

Troops to Teachers assists retiring military personnel in gaining the State certification necessary to teach. Furthermore, Troops to Teachers helps broaden the makeup and skills of our current teacher pool. Finally, it brings the best teachers to the schools and the children who need them the most.

The fact is, the Troops to Teachers Program has been an unbelievable success. We need to recruit more minorities to go into education. We need to have more teachers who have a background in math and science. And, we need to recruit more men into teaching in our primary schools. Troops to Teachers brings minorities and men and those with a background in math and science into the classroom. This is a program that works. It is a program that makes a difference.

Let me say how delighted I was to see that the First Lady of our country endorsed this program. She has said that we should be putting more money in the program and has been a very strong advocate for that.

We can also do much more to encourage good teachers to go into the classrooms that need them most. Specifically, we can pursue efforts involving National Board certified teachers.

You may ask: "What exactly is a National Board Certified teacher?" Well, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is an extremely rigorous certification program that identifies exceptional classroom educators. This certification is a difficult,

challenging, year-long process that measures a teacher's knowledge of subject matter and, more importantly, his or her ability to teach that material to students. Last year, 331 teachers were certified in my home State of Ohio by the National Board, increasing the State's total to 924 educators. I am happy to say it is the third highest of any State in the Union. These teachers are some of our best educators, and we need to encourage them to teach in our most needy schools. That is why I have been working with the Board to urge them to prioritize their federal funding for teachers who teach in, or are willing to teach in low-income school districts. I am pleased to report that the Board has agreed to make this a policy. I congratulate them for it.

In the future, Mr. President, we also need to increase the federal government's funding for an important program for disabled students—the Individuals with Disabilities Act. This worthwhile federal program is one of the largest underfunded mandates on our local schools.

Many of my colleagues have taken time to come to the floor in the last few weeks to talk about this. I congratulate them for drawing attention to this problem.

We need to fully fund the federal government's commitment to this program, as it helps give teachers the ability to teach disabled students without detracting from the education of other students.

Finally, we can encourage teachers to teach in low-income districts—the very districts where children need them most—by re-examining the current student loan forgiveness programs. This is an issue that I intend to pursue in future legislative initiatives.

I think there is more we can do. We need to look at this program and figure out what we have to do in loan forgiveness to attract students to become teachers and to go to our Appalachian counties and our inner cities, or wherever good teachers are needed.

Now, while I strongly believe that the teacher is the most important resource in the classroom, there are other issues in education that we need to address, like the program of drugs and violence in our schools. I have fought for—and will continue fighting—to improve the \$925 million Safe and Drug Free Schools Program. This vital program, which I have incorporated into the ESEA bill, provides funds to over 97 percent of school districts nationwide to keep our schools safe and drug-free.

The reality is that for many schools this is the only money they get, or the only money that they set aside, to deal with our drug problem. It is vital that we continue to fund this program.

We need this program because a child threatened by drugs and violence is not able to learn, and a teacher afraid to

stand in front of the classroom is unable to teach. And that—that is a situation we should never, ever have in our schools. I hope to say more about this very important program as the Floor debate unfolds.

So I believe it is clear that the government can make a difference in restoring quality and equality to education. On a federal level and on a state level, the government can help target programs to those children in those districts most in need. However, the whole realm of education is so big and so vital and so all-encompassing that it is something we cannot leave to the government, alone, to fix.

Parents and families and communities must take an active role in reforming our schools and in helping our best teachers stay in our children's classrooms.

I think it is important that every capable American become involved. Each one of us needs to volunteer directly in the classroom and to participate in some way in school activities. Parents need to go into their children's schools and help the teachers, or volunteer to read to the classes, or help teach math or science, or history, or literature.

As I said, I talked to several teachers in Ohio recently. They told me about how exciting it was to have senior citizens come into their classrooms and read to students on a one-on-one basis; or to help a student read; or to take a turn with the senior reading one page and the child reading another page. These teachers told me that it was not just the senior citizen teaching and a student learning, although that certainly occurred. But, it was the bonding and the relationship that developed. It was that that student knew someone cared about him or her. That was just as important, or in many respects, it was more important.

I think each one of us can do something in our schools. Whether we have schoolchildren in schools or not, each one of us, in some way, can make a difference.

It is up to us to change our culture of complacency. It is up to us to help close the economic and educational gaps in our society.

Ultimately, education reform and the paradigm shifts that go along with it are a journey toward the horizon—not a destination, but a never-ending, forward-leading journey toward the future. So, as we move toward that horizon—as we move ahead for the sake of our children—we need to get back to basics—good teachers, safe and drug-free schools, and parental and community involvement in the schools.

I am confident that we will go forth in the days ahead to give children the tools they need for a bright and promising future.

I am confident that we will go forth to restore quality and community in our system of education.

We will go forth and establish a new way of thinking—a way of thinking that challenges and changes the current culture of education in America.

We will go forth and restore education's ability to "equalize," as Horace Mann suggested.

And, as we do go forth toward that horizon—toward our future—we should remember something Abraham Lincoln once said:

A child is a person who is going to carry on what you have started. He is going to sit where you are sitting and when you are gone attend to those things which you think are important. He will assume control over your cities, states, and nations. He is going to move in and take over your churches, schools, universities, and corporations. The fate of humanity is in his hands.

That sentiment is as true today as it was when Abraham Lincoln said it.

We cannot rest—we must not rest—until every child has teachers who are qualified to teach and schools that are safe, drug-free learning environments.

Our children's future and the future America—hang in the balance.

I thank the Chair and yield the Floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, we are now in morning business, I believe.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Until 3 o'clock.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 5 minutes, and then yield to my friend from Tennessee.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I thank my friend from Ohio for his very excellent comments about education. There is certainly nothing more important in this country than education. There is nothing more important to the President, and nothing more important to this Congress and to the people of the country than to do something to strengthen education. Hopefully, we are on the verge of moving into that area. We have talked about it now for a good long time. It has been on the agenda and we are ready to move on it. Hopefully, we can do that very quickly.

I think the conversation and the dispute has been somewhat about the notion of funding. I understand that. Obviously, funding is vital to education.

I just came from Casper, WY. One of the board members wrote in our local paper about funding and how important it is. But at the same time there are other issues. Funding alone does not make a successful education program. I feel very strongly about that.

We have to have accountability. We have to have choices. We have to have some measurement of productivity in order to have an education program and the kind that we want.

I am hopeful our friends on the other side of the aisle will not continue to

hold up this matter. I think we ought to get on with it.

Is there disagreement on some issues? Of course. There will always be. But there is agreement on our goal. And our goal is to strengthen education in this country. We are not going to do it if we continue to hold off and be unwilling to move forward. I hope we do that.

Republicans have a strong agenda: returning control to parents, giving them charter schools, giving them the opportunity, if the school is not performing, to move their child to another public school, sending dollars to the classroom, giving families greater education choice, supporting exceptional teachers, and focusing on basic education. I think these are the areas that are so important.

The delivery of these programs, of course, is quite different, whether you are in Chugwater, WY, or Cincinnati, OH. So there has to be flexibility that is left to the people in local leadership positions to decide how they can best use those dollars. I think the one-size-fits-all approach does not work.

Underlying this education debate is a basic philosophical difference. Some folks do not like the idea of letting local people make the decisions. We went through that for almost 8 years, where Washington had to decide what the Federal money was going to be used for. Now we are in a position where we do not need to do that. We do not need the education bureaucracy calling all the shots. It is local people—not the Federal bureaucrats—who know what needs to be done.

Then how do you have accountability? We do that by having some kind of testing, a measurement of progress, so kids in Wyoming who want to move to California when they are older have a basic education that will allow them to compete because they have had a productive education.

I think the important thing to remember, too, is that since Republicans took control of the Congress in 1995, Federal education spending has exploded. This President is asking for more money for education than the previous President.

So we need to do those things. This is a direction in which we need to head. We need to do it now. I am getting a little exasperated, as many Members are, that we cannot seem to move forward. We were prepared last week to talk about this. We did not even get a chance to get to it. So we need to produce a bipartisan education proposal which accomplishes the goals of increasing accountability for student performance, supporting programs that work, reducing bureaucracy, increasing flexibility, and empowering parents. By focusing on solutions rather than rhetoric, we will be able to accomplish those things.

Mr. President, I yield the floor to my friend from Tennessee.

Several Senators addressed the Chair.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Will my colleague from Tennessee yield for 10 seconds?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Does the Senator yield?

Mr. FRIST. The Senator yields.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I do not think there is any order. My colleague from Tennessee was here first. I ask unanimous consent that I follow the Senator from Tennessee in the order of debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, are we in morning business?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. We were until 3 o'clock. We are now past that time.

BETTER EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 1.

The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Wyoming and my colleague from Ohio for their superb statements on education. The first statement expressed the underlying principles of accountability and of local control, of flexibility, as we go forward. I would like to reiterate the plea of the Senator from Wyoming that we be allowed, by our vote tomorrow morning, to proceed to address the bill that is resting on each of our desks and is ready to go, the Better Education for Students and Teachers Act, which is S. 1, the bill on education and is really the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

I commend our colleague from Ohio for his superb statement over the last 30 minutes or so addressing some of the most important, fundamental aspects of education as we look at our young children and their health and their safety as part of the education process.

We do have a great opportunity before us. I have been in this body for the last 6 years, and we have discussed various aspects of education—higher education, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, IDEA. We attempted to reauthorize ESEA last year but unsuccessfully for a whole host of reasons.

I am delighted by the leadership of the President of the United States, President Bush, who made it the No. 1 agenda item in his campaign. And again and again, as he has met with people—I think in as many as 26 States thus far over the last 100 days—no matter what issue he has been talking about, he comes back to education, the

importance of education, and specifically talking about public education for children in kindergarten through the 12th grade.

We do have a great opportunity if we are allowed to proceed. I plead with colleagues on both sides of the aisle that when we have this vote tomorrow morning we will be allowed to proceed to the bill so that over the next 2 weeks we can, in a mature, sophisticated, systematic way, address what I believe is important to every American. Clearly it is, if we look at the campaign for the Presidency, if we look at what has happened over the last 100 days.

It was 18 years ago the report came out that we all refer back to, when the United States was declared a nation at risk. All of that focused on education. That was identified 18 years ago. The unique thing that has occurred, whether you are Democrat or Republican on either side of the aisle, or Independent, is that all of us are slowly but really coming together for the first time, uniting and trying to solve the underlying problems, again, under the leadership of President Bush.

It is a unique time in that all the major programs are up for reauthorization: the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the other programs which are coming due over the next 18 months or so.

It is a unique time where the public has come together, and where both parties have come together under the leadership of the President. Also, the process allows us to address what we call a reauthorization.

Today there is general agreement in Washington that our historical approach to K-through-12 education policy is not working. It is broken. It needs repair. It deserves focus. It deserves reform if our goal is really to leave no child behind. It is time to do that.

That is why I believe we in this body have to focus on this, meaning starting today or tomorrow or this week, we have to consider serious change, substantial change, and not just have a perpetuation of what we have done over the last 35 years since 1965 when ESEA was first passed.

As we all go back to our districts and our States all across America, including communities all across Tennessee, the mandate is very clear: Fix the problem. The problem is clear. The achievement gap is getting worse. We are not appropriately educating our children today.

We need to fix the problem, do whatever it takes, spend money, and, yes, invest more but make sure we spend it wisely. We need to focus on the child. And most importantly—because you can say all of that—we must do it now. We need to take the next 2 weeks to consider this legislation. It is the most important item before the U.S. Govern-

ment, I would argue and most of the American people agree. So let's do it now. Let's stay on it. Let's go on it tomorrow morning and stay on it over the next several weeks until we finish.

There are lots of different principles that we can focus on as we address this issue. We will be debating everything from how much money to spend, to the individual programs, to how do we actually reform and conceptualize or reconceptualized education today.

I think most of us—not knowing what the specific amendments will be—will stress certain guiding principles as we go through the debate. I would like to mention several that are important to me.

The first principle will be this whole concept that we talked a little bit about last year in terms of flexibility and accountability. Those two words are key, and they mean lots of things to different people. But I think fundamentally when we say "flexibility," we mean freedom; and when we say "accountability," that is sort of the buzzword for results, achievement, learning. I think we have to tie that flexibility to accountability, or the results.

As we talk about Federal dollars—and the Federal dollars are not very much; they are only about 7 percent of the overall education dollar spent in our communities; but it is a clear-cut obligation—I believe that no longer should we attach strings to those Federal dollars unless the strings themselves are attached to demonstrable results. Those results are better education of our children in communities all across this country.

What is going to be different and is different in the underlying bill and in the negotiations over the last several weeks between both sides of the aisle is that, yes, we set the goal of accountability, of achieving those results, but how we get those results needs to be left to local communities. That means teachers and principals and parents and schools and communities. The how-to does not mean Washington, DC. It does not mean the Senate. It does not mean the Congress or even the President of the United States. The how-to of education rests with flexibility, local control, local identification of needs.

A second principle that will guide me, once we are allowed to bring the bill to the floor, is the focus on the child. We say "don't leave any child behind," but then when we consider legislation, too often we look at systems, inputs, institutions, dollars, at the same time losing the focus on the child. When I say "focus on the child," I also mean focus on the family, on the parents, the people who care most about that child, on the teacher, all at the local level. We need to come back again and again to protect the interests of the children and their parents,