

classroom—one teacher trying to keep track of 35 children and trying to provide some kind of individual educational opportunity. It is impossible with 35 children. We know it. You have to reduce class size to be more effective in educating children.

I have been in classrooms where the students' desks are an inch apart and where the building is 95 years old and was long ago condemned, where children can't have access to computers or the Internet because they do not have the capability of wiring those classrooms, and where you have 150 students and one water fountain and two bathrooms.

I have been in those schools. We know that is not an optimum way to teach children. So we ought to provide some assistance for the renovation of crumbling schools, for the renovation of those schools that are in disrepair.

Over half a century ago, those brave soldiers who fought and won the Second World War came back to this country and they fell in love. They got married and had children. They built schools all across this Nation. Those schools are now 50 and 60 years old. Those schools are in disrepair in many cases and need to be modernized. We need to do something to help make sure we remedy that.

Education is not some mysterious machine in which we pull some levers and turn some dials and we get it just right. Education has the element of three things, in my judgment, to work well: One, you have to have a teacher who knows how to teach; two, you have to have a student who really wants to learn; and, three, you have to have a parent involved in that student's education. If you do not have all three, it just does not work in almost all cases.

We need to do things to try to encourage the retention of good teachers and the development of new teachers. Some States are woefully inadequate when it comes to compensating teachers, and it is a shame. Teachers spend all day with our children. I have children in sixth grade and eighth grade classes today. My children go to public schools, but I want them to go to good schools. Their public schools are good schools. They have wonderful, committed teachers. I want that to be the case in every part of our country.

One of the specific interests I have in the bill that we are going to be debating is the issuance of school report cards. I am joining a number of my colleagues—Republicans and Democrats—to work on a school report card that will go to parents, so that parents know which schools are failing and which are succeeding.

The fact is, we all get report cards on our kids. We know how our kids are doing in math, in science, civics. We know that because they go to school, they come back home, and then they get a report card every 6 weeks to 9

weeks. And that report card says: Here is how your son or daughter did in mathematics. And it is an A, B, C, D or, God forbid, an F, but it is an assessment of how that child is doing.

There is no similar uniform requirement for American parents or taxpayers to get a grade on how well their school is doing.

How is my school doing versus a school in the next county or another school in the same city, or how are the schools doing in my State versus school systems in another State. Don't we deserve the opportunity to see how well we are doing? Shouldn't we have an assessment of how well the schools are doing? How about a report card for schools? Some States have report cards, but their contents are wildly diverse. There is no consistency at all, and there is no capability for parents to get a good measurement.

School report cards ought to include graduation and retention rates. That has something to do with evaluating whether schools are serving our kids well. Qualifications of teachers, average class size, school safety, parental involvement, those are some of the pieces of information we can give parents and taxpayers to provide them an understanding of what we are getting from this school system of ours. Are we getting what we want from the school system? Are children getting what they need from the school system?

Our rural schools face some unique challenges that we need to help them address. Many of my colleagues come from areas where the need to reduce class size is crucial because there are so many children coming into the school system they can't handle them, but many rural schools have the opposite problem. Last week, I mentioned that my hometown is closing its high school. My hometown high school is closing. They had the last high school prom on April 7.

When I graduated many years ago, I was in a high school class of nine. Now, of course, there are not enough students in those four grades in that high school to continue the school. Those kids will be going to neighboring towns to high school. They held their last prom and will hold those memories for many years, but the Regent High School will no longer exist.

In rural counties, the issue is: how do you pay for a school in which you have nine students in a grade or in some cases two or three students in a grade. That is a separate issue, one we should be concerned about as well.

There are many challenges. But in this debate, unlike some others, everyone will come to the floor wanting the same thing. We share exactly the same goal. We want to do well by our children and to have the finest school system in the world. Some will say: You can't throw money at it. I agree with that. But we can't expect to do what

we want for our children without being willing to fund some of the needs as well. That is the other side of the coin.

Some will say: The way to solve this issue is just to provide vouchers and let parents take their children to private schools if they want to do that. Of course, those who say that went to a school that taught arithmetic that was different than my arithmetic. The numbers just don't add up. If you give someone a \$1,500 voucher and that is all, can a student show up at a private school and be welcomed with open arms. Does the private school say: Welcome, we can provide a really good education for \$1,500. That just does not happen. Private schools are much more expensive than that. If we are truly going to decide to leave no child behind, how can we possibly suggest that the solution to a bad school is to take the few kids out of that school who are given a voucher and leave all the rest of the kids behind. That is not "leave no child behind." That is just leaving whole schools behind.

We can do a lot better than that. The country expects us to do better than that.

Some will search for simple answers when, in fact, the answers are not always very simple. This requires our attention.

It is time to address this issue. It is time for us to debate, offer amendments, and reach a consensus in the Senate about what direction we want the country to go with respect to the education of our children.

I yield the floor.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FITZGERALD). Without objection, it is so ordered.

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#### MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I now ask unanimous consent there be a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

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#### RETIREMENT OF CHIEF ROBERT LANGSTON

Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the dedicated service of my good friend and committed public servant, Chief Robert E. Langston, upon his retirement from the U.S. Park Police Force. After 35 years on the force, including the last 10 years as chief, Robert Langston