

(1) warmly welcomes Taiwan's President Chen Shui-bian upon his visit to the United States;

(2) requests president Chen Shui-bian to communicate to the people of Taiwan the support of the United States Congress and of the American people; and

(3) recognizes that the visit of Taiwan's President Chen Shui-bian to the United States is a significant step towards broadening and deepening the friendship and cooperation between the United States and Taiwan.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, May 15, 2001, to conduct a hearing on the nomination of Mr. Alphonso R. Jackson, of Texas, to be Deputy Secretary of Housing and Urban Development; Mr. Richard A. Hauser, of Maryland, to be General Counsel of the Department of Housing and Urban Development; Mr. John Charles Weicher, of the District of Columbia, to be Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and serve as the Federal Housing Commissioner; and the Honorable Romolo A. Bernardi, of New York, to be Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development for Community Planning and Development.

The committee will also vote on the nomination of Mr. John E. Robson, of California, to be President of the Export-Import Bank; Mr. Peter R. Fisher, of New Jersey, to be Under Secretary of the Treasury for domestic finance; and Mr. James J. Jochum, of Virginia, to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Export Administration.

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

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, May 15, at 9:30 a.m., to conduct an oversight hearing. The committee will consider national energy policy with respect to Federal, State, and local impediments to the siting of energy infrastructure.

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

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Environment and Public Works be authorized to meet on Tuesday, May 15, 2001, at 2:30 p.m., to receive testimony on the FY02 budget and priorities of the Environmental Protection Agency.

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

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, April 15, 2001, to mark up the Taxpayer Relief Act.

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

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet during the sessions of the Senate on Tuesday, May 15, 2001, at 10 a.m., for a hearing regarding the Financial Outlook of the United States Postal Service.

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

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet to conduct a hearing on Tuesday, May 15, 2001, at 2 p.m., in Dirksen 226.

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

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on May 15, 2001, at 10 a.m., to hold a closed hearing on intelligence matters.

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY THREATS AND CAPABILITIES

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities of the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, May 15, 2001, at 2:30 p.m., in open and closed sessions to receive testimony on the Department of Energy's defense nuclear nonproliferation programs, in review of the defense authorization request for fiscal year 2002 and the future years defense program.

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

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Travis Sullivan, a fellow in Senator CANTWELL's office, be granted floor privileges during the consideration of S. 1, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

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

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Janet Whitehurst of my staff be granted the privilege of the floor during the remainder of the debate on S. 1.

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

EDUCATION

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, we have several important amendments pending, but I would like to spend a few minutes discussing the very heart of the bill: Accountability and assessments. I believe the bill before us is the most dramatic reform of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act since 1965. I would like everyone to understand what is in this bill so they can understand how dramatic an impact it will have upon every school in this Nation.

For the first time, we will require all children in grades 3-8 to be annually assessed, and that schools, districts, and States will face consequences if they fail to improve the performance of their students.

Each year—year in, year out—every level of education will be held accountable for showing measurable progress for each group of students they serve. This is the central feature of the legislation, and yet, to judge from press reports and editorials, it is very poorly understood.

I want to do what I can this evening to make sure it is widely understood in this Nation how dramatic the changes are for which we are about to vote.

I am not probably known for unwavering support for the President's agenda, nor, I hope, am I known for going out of my way to criticize the press. But I rise today both to defend the President and to suggest that the press has been sloppy in its reporting and editorial writing on what should be the central issue of the story, education reform.

For the past week or two, there have been a few press accounts and editorials implying that somehow the President or the Senate has caved to pressure, has watered down the standards in this bill, or has walked away from real reform.

In fairness to the press, I realize this is a difficult subject to cover. The topic can be a bit dense, and there is no real bright line as to the kind of progress we can expect from students and schools.

On Thursday, the lead editorial in USA Today read: "Congress Set to Dilute Education Reform," while the sub-head read: "Lawmakers gut school accountability, turn backs on minorities."

That editorial is but one example of what I think is the lack of understanding about this bill, especially, it seems, in the press. And while my opinion, of course, is just that, it is based on a wealth of data that can be verified independently. Not only do I think it can be verified, I think it is the obligation of the press to do so before it makes value-laden judgments.