''(c) STUDENT IMPROVEMENT INCENTIVE AWARDS.—

''(1) AWARDS.—A State educational agency may use funds made available for State use under this title to make awards to public schools in the State that are determined to be outstanding schools pursuant to a statewide assessment described in paragraph (2).

''(2) STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT.—The statewide assessment referred to in paragraph (1)—

''(A) shall—

''(i) determine the educational progress of students attending public schools within the State; and

''(ii) allow for an objective analysis of the assessment on a school-by-school basis; and

''(B) may involve exit exams.''.

AMENDMENT NO. 2301

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 2 minutes of debate prior to a vote on or in relation to the Landrieu amendment No. 2301. Who yields time?

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, could I have some order, please?

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, may we have order? The Senator is entitled to be heard.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will be in order. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, as this body knows, many on both sides of this aisle support blue ribbon schools because we believe that we should begin rewarding excellence, funding results, and we should stop funding failures. Blue ribbon schools are chosen by their States every year. Some of them are public—many of them. Some of them are private. Some of them are parochial. When they achieve against the odds and when their students succeed, we call them to Washington and they come, 250 of them every year. We give them a beautiful, shiny plaque and a big blue ribbon and we send them home with nothing else but the plaque and the blue ribbon. They are happy to get it, but what they really want and need are some resources to continue doing their good work.

So I think this is a better way to spend the $1.5 billion. Instead of helping just a few people in America, we can help all of our schools and begin rewarding results. That is what this amendment does, the blue ribbon school amendment. I ask my colleagues to support it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator has expired. Who yields time? The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, there is certainly nothing wrong with an amendment that tries to improve blue ribbon schools. But the amendment by the Senator from Louisiana guts the underlying premise of the bill. What is substituted here is pretty simple. You have 250 schools that would receive a grant of $100,000, or you have 20 million children and 14 million families that will benefit all across the Nation. In balance, there is just no comparison at all. So I would simply say again her amendment guts the underlying premise we have been debating for 6 months and exchanges assistance to 200-some-odd schools for 14 million families.

I urge the defeat of the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The yeas and nays have not yet been ordered.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment. The yeas and nays have been ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 34, nays 66, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 97 Leg.]

YEAS—34

Akaka	Harkin	Mikulski
Bingaman	Hollings	Moseley-Braun
Boxer	Inouye	Moynihan
Bumpers	Johnson	Murray
Conrad	Kennedy	Reed
Daschle	Kerrey	Robb
Dodd	Kerry	Rockefeller
Dorgan	Kohl	Sarbanes
Durbin	Landrieu	Wellstone
Feingold	Lautenberg	Wyden
Ford	Leahy	
Glenn	Levin	

NAYS—66

Abraham	Domenici	Lugar
Allard	Enzi	Mack
Ashcroft	Faircloth	McCain
Baucus	Feinstein	McConnell
Bennett	Frist	Murkowski
Biden	Gorton	Nickles
Bond	Graham	Reid
Breaux	Gramm	Roberts
Brownback	Grams	Roth
Bryan	Grassley	Santorum
Burns	Gregg	Sessions
Byrd	Hagel	Shelby
Campbell	Hatch	Smith (NH)
Chafee	Helms	Smith (OR)
Cleland	Hutchinson	Snowe
Coats	Hutchison	Specter
Cochran	Inhofe	Stevens
Collins	Jeffords	Thomas
Coverdell	Kempthorne	Thompson
Craig	Kyl	Thurmond
D'Amato	Lieberman	Torricelli
DeWine	Lott	Warner

The amendment (No. 2301) was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of Levin amendment No. 2303 on which there shall be 30 minutes of debate equally divided.

Mr. LEVIN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I yield 1 minute to my good friend from Louisiana on an unrelated matter.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Thank you, Mr. President. I thank my colleague from Michigan.

TAKE OUR DAUGHTERS TO WORK DAY

Ms. LANDRIEU. Today, Mr. President, and colleagues, is a very special day in America. We are celebrating here in the Senate, and millions of people around our Nation are celebrating this special day. It is ''Take Our Daughters to Work Day.'' And mothers and fathers and aunts and uncles and friends are taking their special charges to work with them to see perhaps a side of life that some young girls do not get to see.

It is the sixth year that our Nation has celebrated in this way. I wanted to just say for the record that we have made a lot of progress in our Nation in the past 30 years. In 1968, only 20 percent of 18- to 24-year-old women were enrolled in college. Today, thank goodness that number is climbing, and we are at 36 percent.

The median earnings for women in 1968 was only $18,500. Today, women earn an average of $23,000. We are making progress, but not enough.

I saw a statistic the other day that still 80 percent of all women who work out of the home earn less than $25,000, earning 74 cents on every dollar earned by their male counterparts.

In 1968, women owned fewer than 5 percent of the Nation's businesses. That number has doubled, and I am proud to say that there are more people employed by women-owned businesses than all the Fortune 500 companies in the country. So we are making progress.

Today is a day to honor the progress that is being made. But it is also a day to encourage our young girls, particularly in the ages of 9 to 15, to reach for their dreams, to expand their horizons, to consider all the great options that are available for them as they think about beginning to make choices about their careers. They can balance home life and work life and they can chose careers that were unheard of just a few years ago.

I hope some of these young girls who are here today with us will think about the Senate, I say to our colleague from Michigan, to think about encouraging more young women to run here for the Senate.

So I thank my colleagues for giving me this time to recognize this day. I want to welcome my niece with me today, Gracie Landrieu, who came up—my daughter is only 10 months old, so she is a little too young to appreciate today. But she is going to be with me for a few minutes later today. But my niece, who is 10, can most certainly appreciate the great challenges before her. And I wish her all the best, as we do all of our daughters across America.

Thank you.

EDUCATION SAVINGS ACT FOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

AMENDMENT NO. 2303

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, first I ask unanimous consent that Senators BINGAMAN and MURRAY be added as cosponsors to my amendment.

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

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, this amendment provides a tax credit to

teachers who return to school to learn education technology. The credit would be 50 percent of the cost of that training. The current situation across our country is that educators are trying to find ways to use technologies to enrich the learning experience and to prepare students for a world in which information technologies are increasingly woven into the fabric of our life and our work.

School districts all over this land are making investments in hardware and in software and in connecting computers and in accessing Internet and in distance learning. I traveled around my State, and I have spent a lot of time doing this, focusing on education technologies in the last 6 months. And I find, of course, as you would expect, there is a great variety in terms of how advanced school districts are when it comes to installing good computers, putting in the necessary software, how many computers they have for their student body, how much so-called local area networks, how many of those they have in the school connecting the computers to each other, how much access to the Internet in their school, to what extent are they connected to nearby colleges or distant colleges and universities, and those kinds of efforts. A huge effort is being made with different degrees of success.

But what these school districts tell me universally is that where they are falling short is in the development of their teaching staff in the use of the technologies they are able to acquire. That is the common story I get from every school district—that we need to train our teachers in the use of these technologies. Typically, we find that only about 5 cents of the technology dollar is going into professional development and 95 cents of the education technology dollar is going into the hardware and software and connecters and the access.

This Government is spending a fortune, for instance, in the so-called universal service fund to provide every school that applies with a discount on their communication bills to access the Internet, for instance, and on some of their internal linkages. But where we are falling way below where we must be is when it comes to the training of our teachers, of our professional staff in the use of these technologies.

This first chart shows, as of the time that the statistics were taken in 1994—and we do not think too much has changed since then; but this is the last available year—how the States are doing when it comes to the training of teachers.

How much education technology training do our teachers have? The U.S. average, this red line on this chart, is 15 percent of our teachers; 15 percent of our teachers have at least 9 hours of training in education technology. That is it. In my State, only 10 percent of the teachers—1 out of 10—had at least 9 hours of training in their lifetime in the use of education technology. That is a woeful story.

What it means is that with all of the dollars that are going into hardware and software and these other technologies that we are spending pennies on, what is critically important is the skills to use the technologies which are provided. The most difficult skill of all is the one that has been least acquired. That is the ability to integrate the material which is now available through these technologies into the curriculum. Very few teachers are accessing the information, the thousands of libraries now available to them through their computers, the hundreds of field trips which they now can take in their classrooms if they know how to use these technologies. Until our teachers have those skills and are given those opportunities, we are not using these technologies to their fullest or anywhere close to their fullest.

What this amendment does is, it says to those teachers who are willing to go back for training, we will give you a tax credit of 50 percent of the cost of that training. Now, we already have a lifetime learning credit of 20 percent that is a credit against the cost of higher education. That has been a great advance. It is effective this year. This amendment builds on that lifetime learning credit. It says for those teachers who go back to gain the skills in the use of education technology, they will get a 50 percent credit. It is a significantly increased incentive to obtain those skills which are so critically necessary if we are going to make use of these technologies and if our children are going to have the kind of training and access to material which can only be given by their teachers, if they have these skills.

The person who is the technology director for the Michigan Education Department is a man named Jamey Fitzpatrick. He was quoted as saying:

> For every dollar we spend on computer hardware and software in kindergarten through 12th grades, I think we would be lucky if we saw five cents on the dollar spent on training and support.
>
> If we continue with those kinds of ratios we will never realize the gain in student achievement that we think technology has the potential to elicit. We obviously need to put money into training.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator MOSELEY-BRAUN be added as a cosponsor to the amendment.

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

Mr. LEVIN. What we do is leave most of the beneficial aspects of the underlying education IRA bill in place—first of all, that is what we don't do; what we do do, however, is we do not permit withdrawals from that IRA for K through 12. That is the most controversial part of this bill, for reasons I will get to in a moment.

The rest of the provisions of this bill we do not touch. We don't touch the expanded IRA relative to the cost of higher education. We don't touch the extension of the tax exclusion for employer-provided education assistance in this bill. We don't touch the tax exclusion for withdrawals from State tuition programs or the limited school construction provisions in this bill.

What we do, however, is not permit withdrawal from the IRA for the K through 12 expenses. We don't do that because this most controversial provision of this bill, it seems to me, is severely tilted against public schools. I want to show a chart that gives a picture of how serious this tilt is against public education in this IRA as it exists in the underlying bill.

According to the Joint Tax Committee—and we have here a letter from the Joint Tax Committee which lays out these numbers—according to the Joint Tax Committee, the majority of the tax benefit will go to the 2.9 million taxpayers with dependents in private school. The minority of the tax benefit will go to the 35 million taxpayers who have dependents in public school. So, 35 million taxpayers, those with dependents in public schools, get less than half the bill. The 2.9 million taxpayers with children in private schools get 52 percent of the benefit. Translated into dollars, in another way, the average taxpayer with a child in private school gets a $37 tax deduction in the year 2002; the public school taxpayer gets a $7 dollar deduction in the year 2002.

I want to read the provisions from the letter because that is reflected in this chart. The Joint Tax Committee says, ''We estimate that of those eligible to contribute, approximately 2.9 million returns would have children in private schools. We estimate that the proposed expansion of education IRAs to withdrawals to cover primary and secondary education would extend approximately 52 percent of the tax benefit to taxpayers with children in private schools. We estimate that the average per return tax benefit for taxpayers with children attending private schools would be approximately $37 in tax year 2002. Conversely, we estimate that of the 38.3 million returns eligible, approximately 35.4 million returns would have dependents in public schools and that approximately 10.8 million of these returns would utilize education IRAs. We estimate that the proposed expansion of the education IRAs would extend approximately 48 percent of the tax benefit to taxpayers with children in public schools with an average per return tax benefit of approximately $7 in the year 2002.''

I gather I have used my time, so I will not reserve the balance of it. I yield the floor, and I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. ROTH. Mr. President, I yield myself 7 minutes.

I rise in opposition to this amendment. As I stated yesterday, it strikes at the heart of the Coverdell bill. It takes away the ability of parents to use educational IRAs to pay for expenses related to the schooling of their children between kindergarten and 12th grade.

Allowing parents greater resources to meet the educational needs of their young children is what the Coverdell bill is all about. Senator LEVIN proposes to take those resources away. Instead, he wants to expand the lifetime learning credit for those who participate in technology training. No one can argue against the proposition that helping teachers become more capable in technology is a good thing. We want our students to understand the technology of the 21st century. We certainly need to ensure that our teachers are proficient as well. But this amendment is not the way to reach that goal. First, expanding the lifetime learning credit for teachers at the expense of expanding the IRAs for our children runs contrary to the needs and objectives of American families. Mothers and fathers need increased wherewithal to support their children's educational goals. Mothers and fathers need stronger, more useful IRAs. They need the ability to use more of their own hard-earned money to take care of family priorities.

The Senate recognized this fact last year when we gave parents with children in grades K through 12 the ability to use educational IRAs. Our objective was to strengthen moms' and dads' ability to get the best education possible for their children. Our objective made sense then, and it certainly makes sense today.

The Coverdell bill empowers families to make decisions that are in their best interests. It allows them to use their own resources for their own benefit. Remember, the money in question here belongs to the taxpayers. They earned it, it's theirs, they will save it, and they should be able to choose how it will be spent. Let them use it where it serves them best—on their children.

Mr. President, despite what some in this Chamber continue to argue, the education IRA is not a boondoggle for the rich. The education IRA phases out for high-income taxpayers. Because of these phaseouts, the vast majority of the benefits will go to middle-income taxpayers. According to the National Catholic Education Association, almost 70 percent of the families with children in Catholic schools have income below $35,000, and almost 90 percent of those families have incomes below $50,000. These families, along with virtually all of the 38 million American families with children in public or private elementary and secondary schools, are the families that the Coverdell bill is designed to help.

At the same time, we should all take note that two-thirds of the individual income taxes in the United States are shouldered by taxpayers earning over $75,000 per year. So one can see that the Coverdell bill is focused on those families most in need of help.

As my colleagues know, the lifetime learning credit is a provision that was included in the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997. It allows anyone pursuing post-secondary education to take a tax credit each year equal to 20 percent of their qualified expenses. The lifetime learning credit is available to anyone who meets the income requirement. Full-time students can take the credit, as can any professional who wants to continue his or her education. And this includes teachers, engineers, or research scientists.

What Senator LEVIN proposes is to single out teachers and increase their lifetime learning credit to 50 percent for technology training. Not only would this come at the expense of students and their families, but it would be inequitable among the professions. Why should a teacher receive an increased credit for his or her additional education when an engineer is limited to the current 20 percent? More important, it emphasizes one type of teacher continuing education over another. And what is the basis of claim, for instance, that we should give a 50 percent credit for teachers to become more proficient in using and teaching technology, but only give 20 percent to those who take courses to become better reading or math instructors? Those skills are also vital to function in a society.

It is important to note that the Coverdell bill already includes a provision that allows an employee, such as a teacher, to receive, tax-free, employer-provided education assistance. In other words, the bill already encourages a school to pay for its teachers to receive training such as contemplated by the Senator from Michigan. I believe we should leave this type of policy decision to the local schools. If a school attaches a high priority to the use of technology in the classroom—and we hope they do—the school can send its teacher to a training class. The best part of all is that the teacher would not have to pay anything at all—no expenses, no taxes. Under the Levin proposal, a teacher would still end up paying half the cost of this additional education.

In summary, the Levin amendment takes the means to use expanded IRAs to educate children and it creates a more distorted and, I must say, much more complex learning credit. This is not what we want to do, Mr. President. If you ask the families of America how they would choose to use the financial resources in question, I believe the vast majority would make it clear that they want the opportunity to use their money to give them greater flexibility and power to meet the educational objectives of their family.

Mr. President, I oppose the Levin amendment. The educational IRA is the foundation of the Coverdell bill. This modification guts the bill at the expense of the children. For this reason, I oppose this amendment and urge my colleagues to do the same.

I yield the floor and reserve any time that I may have left.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, how much time remains on this amendment on both sides?

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SMITH of Oregon). Seven minutes on the Senator's side, and 5 seconds on the Democrat side.

Mr. COVERDELL. I will be very brief. I yield a minute of my time to be added to the 5 seconds of the Senator from Michigan so that the Senator from Connecticut can have a word.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. DODD. I thank my colleague.

Mr. President, I had not intended to speak on this amendment. I have an amendment coming up that I will be addressing. But I think it is such an important amendment that our colleague from Michigan has raised here. I think all of us have become much more highly sensitized to the critical importance of the generation of students in our country who are computer literate. It is no longer a question of whether or not that technology and the awareness of it is going to be important. It is critical. I have made the assertion that what keyboards and computers bring to this generation is tantamount to what a ballpoint pen brought to my generation. Any child today not completing elementary and secondary school without being computer literate is going to be totally unprepared for the 21st century economy.

Our colleague from Michigan has made it possible for the teachers of our Nation, who truly would like to become better prepared to instruct young people in the importance of this technology, to have the wherewithal to do so. This ought not to be a partisan debate in any way. It is a very thoughtful amendment, one that we all can be deeply proud of.

We are only some 500 days away from a new millennium, and Senator LEVIN has offered us a chance to make a difference for young people so that they might be able to acquire these skills. I commend him for the amendment and hope our colleagues will support it.

Mr. COVERDELL addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, certainly the amendment of the Senator from Michigan is a thoughtful one. But as has been noted by the Finance chairman, it completely makes moot a core principle of the underlying bill, and for that reason I oppose it.

I don't dispute the numbers that are demonstrated in his chart, but I would like to elaborate on them.

The education savings account essentially takes the education savings account that was celebrated and signed by the President last year, $500 per year to be saved, and it could only be used for higher education. The proposal before us takes that idea in its identical form and expands the $500 to $2,000 and says you can use it in kindergarten through college. So it broadens the capacity of it.

These numbers refer to kindergarten through high school only and do not

look at the cap in these accounts—that is very difficult to project—saved for college. That is No. 1.

No. 2, what that really means is that the tax relief, which is very modest for those that are in public school, is about $250 million over 5 years, and for those in private school it is about $250 million. There are more families using it in public schools, as is noted on the chart. About 70 percent of what we estimate to be 14 million families will use the savings account, and 70 percent of them will have children in public schools and 30 percent in private.

The reason it starts to equal itself in the distribution is that people who have children in private schools recognize that they are paying for the public schools with their property tax base and they have to pay for the private school education on top of that. So they have to save more. They have a higher bar to reach. I agree. They will therefore, likely save more, which means there will be more interest that is earned, which means they would have a higher proportion of this very small account.

In closing, I simply say that by offering a tax incentive over 5 years of $500 million-odd, which is modest in this big picture, it causes Americans to do a very big thing. They go out and save $5 billion, all of which will be used for 20 million children no matter where they are in school—public, private, or home—to help get them ready for the new century.

Mr. President, I will conclude my remarks and yield back the remainder of my time.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I don't think I have any time remaining. If I do, I will yield it. I thank my good friend for yielding that additional minute to Senator DODD, by the way. It was a generous gesture.

Mr. COVERDELL. I was very glad to do so.

If I might, Mr. President, for administrative clarification, I believe the sequence of events will be something like this. We are going to now take up the amendment being offered by the Senator from Connecticut, Senator DODD, and there will be a vote. I think the Senator would prefer that a vote occur after his debate. The Levin, Boxer, and Bingaman amendments will be stacked for early this afternoon just before the final vote. There are two more Senators who will debate following the vote of Senator DODD. I believe that is the description of the situation we have right now during the day.

Mr. DODD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

AMENDMENT NO. 2305

(Purpose: To strike section 101, and to provide funding for part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Connecticut (Mr. DODD), for himself, and Mr. LEAHY, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. WELLSTONE, and Mrs. BOXER, proposes an amendment numbered 2305.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

Strike section 101, and insert the following:

SEC. 101. FUNDING FOR PART B OF IDEA.

Any net revenue increases resulting from the enactment of title II that remain available, taking into account the provisions of this title, shall be used to carry out part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1411 et seq.).

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that our colleagues, Senators LEAHY, HARKIN, KENNEDY, WELLSTONE, and BOXER, be included as cosponsors of this amendment.

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

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I have in front of me a chart which demonstrates what I think most Members of this body are familiar with; that is, the rising cost of special education in our country and the rising population of students who are requiring special education services.

Presently, for the special education needs of America, 55 percent of the cost is being borne by our States, and 35 percent is being borne by local governments and local property taxes, and roughly 10 percent by the Federal Government. It is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), endorsed and supported by those of us here in Congress, which rightly encourages and provides for the inclusion of all children who require special education services in the educational process of this Nation.

It is worthy of note that at the time the U.S. Congress passed the IDEA legislation, it was recommended that the Federal Government would provide 40 percent of the costs of special education services. Several decades later, the Federal Government is presently only contributing 10 percent of the costs of special education. Mr. President, special education costs are rising. We are told nationally that these numbers are moving up. In 1991, special education costs were 17 percent of the overall education budget; they are now 19 percent of the overall education budget.

I might also point out that the amount being spent on regular education has dropped to 56 percent, down from 58 percent. Also, the population of special needs children is on the increase. The overall population of children in elementary and secondary schools has gone up about 7.3 percent in the last few years, whereas the number of children requiring special education services has jumped over 12 percent in the same period of time. We have rising costs, rising population, and the Federal commitment to special education has remained static.

I mention this because I am offering an amendment that, with all due respect to my colleague from Georgia, would take the $1.6 billion from tax proposal that would provide $37 or $7 in tax relief for private and public school families, respectively, and use that money to lower the cost at the local and State level for special education services. If the Federal Government is to meet its full commitment of 40 percent to special education, it would need to provide $16 billion to state and local school districts, more than four times the current funding.

Let me quickly add that I commend the Budget Committee and others in recent weeks and months who have actually increased spending on special education. The total commitment to States is slightly lower than $4 billion but is still substantially less than the $16 billion needed to meet the 40-percent commitment.

I believe, given the scarce funding available to us, is that we would be far wiser, with all due respect to the authors of this underlying proposal, to take that $1.6 billion and give it back to the States and local governments to reduce the rising cost of special education in this country.

We are told that the underlying bill is about choice. I argue there should be no choice when the needs of children with disabilities are involved. Private schools can simply accept or reject students that they want or don't want. If your child is a special needs child, you don't have a choice whether you would like to go to a private school. The only school system that has to take you is a public school system. Parents with children with special needs don't have those choices. Property taxpayers, sales taxpayers, and State income taxpayers don't have any choice; they have to pay their tax bills.

The only people I know of at this very moment who have a choice about education are the 100 of us in this body. We have a choice to take $1.6 billion and provide a $37 tax break for private school students and their families, a $7 tax break for the public school students and their families, or we can help state and local school districts by providing them with $320 per special needs child so that they can provide valuable special education services. That is what my amendment does. It is saying, let's make a choice with rare funding dollars and apply them to help special needs children.

Let me share how big a cost this is and point out the situation in a number of States. In Colorado, the State must pay a 60-percent share for special education services. In Connecticut, the State provides 59 percent of special education funding. In Maine, 33 percent; Michigan, 60 percent; Missouri, 60 percent; Rhode Island, 59 percent; Virginia, 68 percent. These are huge costs at the State and local level. I have one community in my State, Torrington, CT, where 2 years ago the bill was $635,000 for special education services.

Two years later, it has risen to $1.3 million. Mr. President, the costs associated with special education can often be staggering.

What I am saying is, if we think this is a national goal, to do something about special education, then we ought to be willing to help our local towns and our States to reduce their share of special education costs. The $1.6 billion that my amendment would provide is not going to pay the entire bill. It is, however, a move in the right direction. But when you have very scarce funding, wouldn't it be wiser for us to make the choice here today to reduce property and State taxes, by saying here is $1.6 billion, which we know is not going to solve the whole problem, but I want to give that money back to the States, back to the local governments, to bring down the cost of special education services.

We made that promise, Mr. President. We said decades ago we would provide 40 percent of the cost of special education, and we have never provided more than 10 percent. There is a chance for us today to provide, not $37, not $7 after taxes, but a $320 per child tax break in terms of reducing the cost of providing special education services.

It seems to me this would be a far wiser way for us to spend our money. I say after-tax dollars because I think there is some confusion. Again, I say this with all due respect to the authors of the underlying bill. But the $2,000 IRA contained in Senator COVERDELL's legislation is an after-tax proposal. It provides as much as if you put $2,000 in a savings account and the interest that it earns, that is the money you get the tax break on, not the $2,000 principle. So when I say it provides a $37 and $7 tax break, those are real numbers.

Recently, I looked at what the cost of private schools is in the greater Washington, DC, area. They run anywhere from $10,000 to $17,000 annually. Why are we providing a $37 tax break for families who are already sending their children to schools that expensive when the $1.6 billion specified in this legislation could help lower property taxes and assist with special education?

Recently, when speaking with mayors in Connecticut, they often mentioned the high cost of special education services. By not contributing 40 percent of special education costs, we are pitting families against each other in these communities. I think every one of us probably knows someone, maybe in our own families, that has a special needs child. We know the concern, the fear, that a family goes through in discovering that a child requires special education services. It is a critically important issue. But I am also aware of what happens in a community where you only have a handful of special needs students and all of a sudden their services cost a bit more and people get upset because it is their tax dollars that are paying for that education. The school systems in our states need our assistance.

What we are offering here is some relief to State and local school systems. It is not total relief. We have $1.6 billion over 10 years, what are we going to do with the taxpayers' money of this country? Do we give it back to the communities in Connecticut and elsewhere that are struggling to meet the cost of special education? Or do I write a $37 check to someone who is sending their child to a school that is costing $10,000 or $13,000 or $14,000 a year? I don't know how you justify it. I don't know how I can explain to my constituents not providing some relief to their school systems for an area of great concern and importance—special education.

That is the choice I get to make here in the next few minutes. Do we take these dollars and return them to our States, return them to our towns, trying to make a real difference for special education, or do we take them to provide minor tax relief.

Now, again, let me mention briefly the role of public and private education. At this very hour, all across our country, even on the west coast where the Presiding Officer is from, children have started school. There are 53 million children in elementary and secondary schools at this very hour all across our country; 48 million of them are in public schools and 5 million are in private schools. So we are talking about $1.6 billion, $37 of which goes to students in those private schools, $7 of which goes for those in public schools.

I am a product in many ways of private education. My parents made that choice. I respect them for having made it. However, my parents never thought they should get a tax break for doing so. They understood that this Nation had a special obligation to public education and particularly the families with special needs children. I had to be accepted to the private schools I attended. They didn't have to take me. Private schools can reject anyone they want. Public schools cannot. Public schools must accept these children. And you have that family that has done everything right and, unfortunately, has a situation with a child who requires special education services, and they, of course, want that child to succeed. They don't have the choice of going to a private school. Private school is not going to take that cost on. They have to attend a public school. Let us try to provide the valuable resources specified by this legislation to our local communities to help that family receive special education services for their child, to say to the other property taxpayers in that town that we are going to provide the 40 percent of special education costs we promised we would and never have.

One hundred of us here in the next 20 minutes or 15 minutes will be given the choice of deciding which is a higher priority. It is not a question of we would like to do everything. We can't do everything. But, we have $1.6 billion and we are going to decide in the next 15 minutes where it is going to go.

Does it go toward a $37 tax break for someone who has their child enrolled in a private school, or does it come back to that community in my State and other States all across this country to provide some needed tax relief—at $320 per child—to begin the process of lowering the cost of special education services and making a difference in our towns and for these families. That is really the choice. That's the real choice we have before us today.

Mr. President, let me ask how much time I have remaining.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 1 minute and——

Mr. DODD. I withhold the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia has 15 minutes in opposition if he chooses to use it.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, there are so many numbers tossed around. Anybody listening to this debate must be somewhat befuddled. You try to step back from it and look at the bigger picture.

First of all, the concern of the Senator from Connecticut about the funding of special education is a real one, but he has already alluded to one of the major problems, and that is this mandate, which is one of the largest mandates in American history, ordered by the Congress on local communities in 1975, and in 1975 the promise was 40 percent of the funding would be Federal, 40 State and 20 local. Now, the other side, until 1994, was in control of the Congress and never sent the check.

Since we have been in the majority, last year we put in another $700 million. The Senate budget resolution placed special education as the top priority. Republicans are seeking an additional $2.5 billion over the next 5 years for educating children with disabilities. In fiscal year 1997, the President requested $3.6 billion for this IDEA. Our Congress provided $4 billion for it. In fiscal year 1998, the President requested $4.2 billion for this. We came up with $4.8. The President's proposal for 1999 proposes $4.8 billion a year for IDEA. Our resolution calls for $5.3 billion, a $0.5 billion increase.

So, while the other side controlled the Congress, this promise was left unfulfilled. Since we have controlled the Congress, we have begun paying down that obligation. In the Republican BOOKS proposal, we proposed fully funding it. The Budget Committee is moving rapidly in that direction. We are not there yet. And we did it, and have been doing it, without gutting other ideas.

So the additional money my friend from Connecticut talks about that ought to be fulfilling this promise—it is being done. We are doing exactly what he has asked that we do, and—comma ''and''—we are trying to help 14 million American families individually take charge and help to connect them to the education of their children. We do not think it is mutually exclusive, you have to do this or you have to do

that. We are doing both. So, since we have been in the majority, and the Senator acknowledged it, we have been moving to try to fund IDEA.

This $1.6 billion that's referred to, that is tax relief over 10 years, and the $37, of course, is a statistical average, as is the $7. But it does not take into account the principal. The tax relief was only accrued because of the principal. For $37, you have to have $1,000 in the account; for $7, you have to have $250. But what it means is we will have taken this $1.6 billion in relief to the same middle-class families that the President designated last year, the same criteria, same concept, and the Joint Tax Committee tells us that because of that modest tax incentive, these 14 million families over 10 years—that is the 10-year number you are using—will save, in principal and accumulated interest, over $10 billion; 10 billion new dollars coming behind education.

These $10 billion are not public dollars. They are private. They are willfully volunteered by these families. So it means that public education will get, over the next 10 years, in support of it, $5 billion. And private will get $5 billion. And, yes, the private represents fewer families, but it still means, at the bottom line at the end of the day, that there is $5 billion flowing behind public schools all across the country and there is $5 billion flowing behind private and home schools across the country.

Those are very smart dollars, too, because they are in individual family checking accounts where people know exactly what the frailty or problem is of a given child. If it is a math deficiency, it is going to go to hire a math tutor. If it is an inner city student who does not have a home computer, it is going to purchase a home computer. If it is transportation that is needed for an afterschool program that we all want to encourage —it is smart dollars. Public dollars have a hard time doing that, going right to the problem. If it is dyslexia or special education, it will flow right to it. And no school board is going to have to raise the property tax to get ahold of this $10 billion, no State is going to have to raise income tax, and we are not having to raise taxes. This is volunteered money, and I think the value of the money is geometrically increased, it is probably worth three times other dollars because it is being driven right into the child's need.

The point we do not talk a lot about here—and they are not in these figures, either—is that the one distinction this savings account has is that it can accept contributions from sponsors—an employer, a church, a grandparent, a sister or brother, a neighbor, a benevolent association. And as people understand this and they begin to connect to these ideas, there is going to be a lot more money in those accounts than we have even envisioned.

Another point I would make about the savings account to my colleague from Connecticut, is that every time a family makes a conscious decision to open a savings account—every time they do it—there is a mental connection to that child's education. And every month, for 20-some-odd years, they will get a notice from some financial institution that tells them the condition of that child's account. It will remind them every month of the requirements and needs and will make them think about what those children need.

I can certify that to be absolutely true because my dad and I did the same thing for my sister's two sets of twins. We knew we were going to have some problems with the financial burden. So we started putting a little away. It was not a huge amount of money when they had to go to school—but it was a lot. And if this had been in place, it would have been twice what we had in that account. I think we got it up to $6,000 or $7,000. It would have been doubled. It could have been tripled if we kept it 30 years and used it for college. There is a special ed feature of this, too. Because if the child has a special educational need, it will stay with the child until he or she is 30 years old.

So, my point is this. We agree that special ed needs attention and the Congress has been a party in seeing to this, and it has created enormous problems and we are responding to it. I am just citing the numbers here. But we are doing it, along with other reforms. We are doing it with an education savings account. We are doing it with a school construction proposal. We are doing it, helping employers fund continuing education for their employees. We are doing it and we are helping support 21 States that have prepaid tuition programs for families to help get ready for the cost of higher education. Mr. President, 17 more States are coming into the picture.

We are accomplishing the funding of IDEA—which we agree is important. But we are not stopping the other changes and other ideas to help families. My colleague mentioned somewhere, I believe, around 50 million are in our elementary and secondary schools. Mr. President, 20 million of them will be beneficiaries of these accounts, half of the entire population. Some will be more; some will be less. Some will save the full amount; some will only save part of it. Some will accumulate $1,000; some will accumulate the entire amount. But they will all be helped and they will all be reminded about the needs of those children

Like I said, we are funding IDEA. We are giving parents new tools. We are giving employers new tools. We are supporting the States with prepaid tuition programs. And we are building new schools. That is the underlying motion here.

Mr. President, how much time remains on both sides?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 4 minutes 12 seconds. The Democratic side has 1 minute 18 seconds.

Mr. DODD. I yield a minute to my good friend from Rhode Island, and I ask unanimous consent that he be added as a cosponsor.

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

Mr. REED. Thank you very much. Mr. President, I rise in very strong support of the amendment of the Senator from Connecticut. I think it illustrates two important points.

First, the huge gap between what the Federal Government promised in terms of special education support to the States and what was delivered. Even though, as the Senator from Georgia pointed out, we are trying to do better, we can do much better. And using these resources rather than engaging in the private savings plan as the Senator from Georgia proposes, but using these resources to assist special education, I think, will be the best way to use these dollars.

The second point I think the amendment of the Senator from Connecticut illustrates is the critical role that public education plays in our country, because these students—typically these disabled students—are all public education students. Private facilities don't take these individuals typically because they can't afford them and they think they are disruptive. That is the essence of private education. They can pick and choose.

A public school cannot. We have committed ourselves in this Congress to ensure that every child in this country, regardless of ability or disability, has a free, excellent public education. But what that means in practice is that our public schools have to respond to large numbers of special education students, something to which private education does not respond. That is, I think, at the heart of this debate.

If we are going to have a public school system that we expect to give education to all of our citizens, then we cannot siphon off resources to private education in the way that is proposed by these savings accounts. We have to match our orders and commands to the schools of America and to educate all of our citizens with resources.

This amendment does that. It preserves a program that we have all stood up and said is vitally important to this country, both educationally and socially—and that is special education —and it does so by reinforcing public education. That is the way we should proceed.

I commend the Senator from Connecticut for his efforts in regard to this amendment today.

Mr. DODD. I thank my good friend from Rhode Island. Mr. President, I understand there will be a point of order raised against this amendment. I regret that, because I am not asking to spend any more money than the underlying amendment does, but I realize this is a point of order that will be sustained. I will make an appropriate motion to vote on that.

I am sorry that is going to be the case, because I really do believe that this is the one opportunity, a chance, after we all talked about trying to do something, about reducing the cost to communities, to make the choice to do so. But I need 60 votes, I am afraid, to prevail on all of that. When the appropriate motion is made, I will respond to it. I hope that will not be the case. I hope we can have an up-or-down vote as we have had on every other amendment.

I believe my time has expired, and if it has, I believe my colleague wants to make an appropriate motion.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, has the proponents' time expired?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. It has expired.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I do not believe we need to be in a dilemma where it is either/or—do this and not the education savings account, or do the other.

The Senator from Connecticut is correct that I will raise a point of order. The Congressional Budget Office has told us this amendment creates a new entitlement for special education, a program which has always been discretionary since its creation in 1985. This spending would be charged to the Finance Committee, which has already exceeded its allocation.

Therefore, we conclude that amendment No. 2305, offered by my colleague from Connecticut, Senator DODD, violates section 302(f) of the Congressional Budget Act because it provides for an increase to direct spending beyond the allocation of the committee of jurisdiction. I, therefore, raise a point of order under section 302(f) of the Budget Act against this amendment. I assume my colleague will move to waive.

MOTION TO WAIVE THE BUDGET ACT

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I move to waive the Budget Act so that the amendment may be considered. I ask for the yeas and nays.

Mr. COVERDELL. I yield back my time in order to facilitate the two motions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DEWINE). The question is on agreeing to the motion to waive the Budget Act with respect to amendment No. 2305, offered by the Senator from Connecticut. The yeas and nays have been ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. NICKLES. I announce that the Senator from Colorado (Mr. CAMPBELL) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 46, nays 53, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 98 Leg.]

YEAS—46

Akaka	Feinstein	Levin
Baucus	Ford	Lieberman
Bingaman	Glenn	Mikulski
Boxer	Graham	Moseley-Braun
Breaux	Harkin	Moynihan
Bryan	Hollings	Murray
Bumpers	Inouye	Reed
Chafee	Jeffords	Reid
Collins	Johnson	Robb
Conrad	Kennedy	Rockefeller
D'Amato	Kerrey	Sarbanes
Daschle	Kerry	Torricelli
Dodd	Kohl	Wellstone
Dorgan	Landrieu	Wyden
Durbin	Lautenberg	
Feingold	Leahy	

NAYS—53

Abraham	Frist	McConnell
Allard	Gorton	Murkowski
Ashcroft	Gramm	Nickles
Bennett	Grams	Roberts
Biden	Grassley	Roth
Bond	Gregg	Santorum
Brownback	Hagel	Sessions
Burns	Hatch	Shelby
Byrd	Helms	Smith (NH)
Cleland	Hutchinson	Smith (OR)
Coats	Hutchison	Snowe
Cochran	Inhofe	Specter
Coverdell	Kempthorne	Stevens
Craig	Kyl	Thomas
DeWine	Lott	Thompson
Domenici	Lugar	Thurmond
Enzi	Mack	Warner
Faircloth	McCain	

NOT VOTING—1

Campbell

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 46, the nays are 53. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected. The point of order is sustained and the amendment falls.

Mr. COVERDELL addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, it is my understanding that in the regular order we will now go to the amendment to be offered by the Senator from California.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California is recognized for 15 minutes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2306

(Purpose: To improve academic and social outcomes for students by providing productive activities during after school hours)

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from California [Mrs. BOXER], for herself, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. BINGAMAN, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. KERRY, Mr. DODD, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. AKAKA, Mr. KOHL, Mr. WELLSTONE, Mr. BRYAN, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. INOUYE, Mr. DASCHLE, and Ms. MOSELEY-BRAUN, proposes an amendment numbered 2306.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

At the end, add the following:

TITLE ____—AFTER SCHOOL EDUCATION AND SAFETY

SECTION ___01. SHORT TITLE.

This title may be cited as the ''After School Education and Safety Act of 1998''.

SEC. ___02. PURPOSE.

The purpose of this title is to improve academic and social outcomes for students by providing productive activities during after school hours.

SEC. ___03. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Today's youth face far greater social risks than did their parents and grandparents.

(2) Students spend more of their waking hours alone, without supervision, companionship, or activity than the students spend in school.

(3) Law enforcement statistics show that youth who are ages 12 through 17 are most at risk of committing violent acts and being victims of violent acts between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.

SEC. ___04. GOALS.

The goals of this title are as follows:

(1) To increase the academic success of students.

(2) To improve the intellectual, social, physical, and cultural skills of students.

(3) To promote safe and healthy environments for students.

(4) To prepare students for workforce participation.

(5) To provide alternatives to drug, alcohol, tobacco, and gang, activity.

SEC. ___05. DEFINITIONS.

In this title:

(1) SCHOOL.—The term ''school'' means a public kindergarten, or a public elementary school or secondary school, as defined in section 14101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 8801).

(2) SECRETARY.—The term ''Secretary'' means the Secretary of Education.

SEC. ___06. PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.

The Secretary is authorized to carry out a program under which the Secretary awards grants to schools to enable the schools to carry out the activities described in section ___07(a).

SEC. ___07. AUTHORIZED ACTIVITIES; REQUIREMENTS.

(a) AUTHORIZED ACTIVITIES.—

(1) REQUIRED.—Each school receiving a grant under this title shall carry out at least 2 of the following activities:

(A) Mentoring programs.

(B) Academic assistance.

(C) Recreational activities.

(D) Technology training.

(2) PERMISSIVE.—Each school receiving a grant under this title may carry out any of the following activities:

(A) Drug, alcohol, and gang, prevention activities.

(B) Health and nutrition counseling.

(C) Job skills preparation activities.

(b) TIME.—A school shall provide the activities described in subsection (a) only after regular school hours during the school year.

(c) SPECIAL RULE.—Each school receiving a grant under this title shall carry out activities described in subsection (a) in a manner that reflects the specific needs of the population, students, and community to be served.

(d) LOCATION.—A school shall carry out the activities described in subsection (a) in a school building or other public facility designated by the school.

(e) ADMINISTRATION.—In carrying out the activities described in subsection (a), a school is encouraged—

(1) to request volunteers from the business and academic communities to serve as mentors or to assist in other ways;

(2) to request donations of computer equipment; and

(3) to work with State and local park and recreation agencies so that activities which are described in subsection (a) and carried out prior to the date of enactment of this Act are not duplicated by activities assisted under this title.

SEC. ___08. APPLICATIONS.

Each school desiring a grant under this title shall submit an application to the Secretary at such time, in such manner, and accompanied by such information as the Secretary may require. Each such application shall—

(1) identify how the goals set forth in section ___04 shall be met by the activities assisted under this title;

(2) provide evidence of collaborative efforts by students, parents, teachers, site administrators, and community members in the planning and administration of the activities;

(3) contain a description of how the activities will be administered;

(4) demonstrate how the activities will utilize or cooperate with publicly or privately funded programs in order to avoid duplication of activities in the community to be served;

(5) contain a description of the funding sources and in-kind contributions that will support the activities; and

(6) contain a plan for obtaining non-Federal funding for the activities.

SEC. ___09. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this title $50,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 1998 through 2002.

SEC. ___10. SENSE OF THE SENATE.

It is the sense of the Senate that funding to carry out this title should be provided by a reduction in certain function 920 allowances, as such reduction was provided in the Senate-passed budget resolution for fiscal year 1999.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask that the Chair inform me when I have used 8 minutes.

Mr. President, I am very pleased to offer my After School Education and Safety Act as an amendment to the Coverdell bill. I want to mention those who are original sponsors of this legislation. They are: Senators MURRAY, BINGAMAN, JOHNSON, LIEBERMAN, SARBANES, KERRY from Massachusetts, DODD, DURBIN, LEVIN, AKAKA, KOHL, WELLSTONE, BRYAN, KENNEDY, INOUYE, DASCHLE, and MOSELEY-BRAUN. I mention them because I am very proud of their support for this very important measure.

This is not a new issue. I presented this plan to the entire Senate during the budget markup, and I am very pleased to tell you that my amendment was adopted unanimously. I think most Senators understand the fact that after-school programs are very important for two reasons. First of all, our children need the mentoring help, our children need the attention, and our children need the community support after school because it really increases their academic achievement.

Secondly, the FBI has told us that from the hours of 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., juvenile crime goes way up because our children are joining gangs, and they are getting into trouble after school. We need to do something to keep them busy and to keep them out of trouble. That is why I believe I got such unanimous support for this legislation during the budget debate. We have set aside $50 million in the budget for this program. Now we have a chance to authorize it.

I am very hopeful that my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will now follow though on the commitment they made in the budget resolution.

Mr. President, in this picture you can see some of the faces of what we are talking about. These are children in a California after-school program in Sacramento. You can see from the looks on their faces how excited they are about the work they are doing after school.

We have some others pictures to show you. This picture shows some of the valuable mentoring that occurs in this after school program. These children are working in small groups with a teacher or volunteer. These children are learning a tremendous amount. In fact, the academic performance of these students has dramatically increased as a result of the attention that they are getting after school.

Here are some pictures of the children learning music. There was a new study that just came out yesterday that says that children who engage in musical activities achieve higher levels of academic success. I see that our majority leader is on the floor. He had a group of singing Senators and I think he realizes the value of music. Music promotes camaraderie and bring us together.

Here we see the children learning how to play the drums in an after-school setting.

Finally, I have a picture of children working with one of the law enforcement officers who come into these programs.

Whether it is L.A.'s Best or Sacramento Start, whether it is the Tenderloin Program in San Francisco, or our after school program in Oakland, all of these after school initiatives desperately need some attention from our National Government. There is not one program in the Department of Education that is exclusively for after school, not one.

Through my amendment we have an opportunity to improve the Coverdell bill, a bill that started off as a very simple bill. Unfortunately, I think that this bill is turning into an anti-education bill. I have to say that with a heavy heart because I really thought that we would have some bipartisanship.

But what has happened to this bill? I think what we have before us is a bill that has been amended in such a way that it does great damage to our children. Let me explain what I mean.

We had a number of amendments that were rejected out of hand —amendments to try to rebuild our schools. I understand why Senators who like the underlying bill voted against that, but they have not reached across the aisle to try to come up with any compromise on it at all.

Our kids are facing schools that are crumbling. We do nothing. We reject it out of hand. We don't work for compromise. We say no. We had an amendment simply expressing support for reducing class sizes that was only debated for 3 minutes. That amendment passed. But then someone changed the vote, and we rejected that. If you ask parents all over this country, they will tell you that they want smaller class sizes.

So what provisions do we accept? We also voted on an amendment that essentially will prohibit the implementation of a program to test our students so parents will know if their kids are doing well or doing poorly and schools can be held accountable. To this, we say yes. To me this is unbelievable. We have an education bill here is that is turning into an anti-education bill, an antiparent bill, an antistudent bill. We also have other amendments that did away with a whole series of programs and made them optional for schools.

When Neil Armstrong landed on the Moon he said it was ''one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.'' This bill was one, tiny step forward for education, and it has become a huge step backward for education.

Listen to the list of the nationally recognized programs that are done away with summarily in this bill.

Critical programs for disadvantaged kids including Title I; School to Work; Goals 2000; STAR schools; education technology; Eisenhower professional development, which is teacher training; safe and drug-free schools; magnet school assistance; telecommunications demonstration project for math skills, a fund for the improvement of education. The Javits gifted and talented education funding to support programs for special children is done away with. The Eisenhower regional math and science consortium is done away with. If you read President Eisenhower's comments on what we ought to do in education in the 1950's, he said, ''It takes more than guns to make us strong.'' We need strong kids and we need them to learn. Yet now we are doing away with the Eisenhower program.

We are eliminating the International Education Exchange, which supports educational exchange programs. That is what the Gorton amendment did away with, or made it optional. The Gorton amendment took the National Government completely out of education. Education is the most important thing in the world, and this bill is a giant step backward.

We can improve this bill a little bit if we support the Boxer amendment to support education and reduce juvenile crime.

I told you before that juvenile offenders commit crimes between the hours of 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. That is why the police in my home state are supporting

the Boxer amendment. This includes bipartisan support from the chiefs of police of many, many cities in my State. California law enforcement understands that when it comes to our children, we shouldn't seek party lines. That is why I hope people will vote for this.

Let's hear what the police chief from Los Angeles says about the need to invest in our children:

> Police leaders know that America's commitment to putting criminals in jail must be matched by its commitment to keeping kids from becoming criminals in the first place.

Here is another quote from our law enforcement officials.

''Crime Fighters Support After-School Programs'':

> We . . . call on all public officials to protect public safety by adopting commonsense policies to: Provide for all of America's school-age children and teens after-school programs, and access to weekend and summer . . .

This statement is very, very clear. The organization that made this statement—Fight Crime, Invest in Kids—has 170 of the Nation's leading police chiefs, sheriffs, and prosecutors. Across the country law enforcement officials support after school programs.

Mr. President, I am hopeful that we will see a little bipartisanship. You all voted for it in the budget. You know what we did. We cut Government travel to pay for this initiative to fund 500 after school programs. The local school districts will design them. They will pull in community groups like Big Brothers and Big Sisters. They will bring in the business community.

Mr. President, we can keep our kids learning and keep them out of trouble. There is no magic solution to solve all the problems that our Nation is facing in terms of crime. But if we had to choose one way to fight crime it should be to keep our kids engaged when they are in school.

I really look forward to this vote. I hope it will be bipartisan.

I yield 2 minutes to my friend, Senator JOHNSON.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California has 4 minutes 10 seconds remaining.

Mrs. BOXER. I retain the remainder.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from California and applaud her great leadership on what I think is one of the critical issues in our Nation today.

I think it needs to be emphasized that the after-school program amendment being offered by Senator BOXER is not an alternative to the underlying Coverdell bill. Unlike other amendments that we have considered today, this is an add-on that is independent of the funding that is committed to the Coverdell legislation.

I have been holding meetings all around my State of South Dakota, which is an overwhelmingly rural State. The Senator from California represents a State with large urban areas. One of the things that we share is a very strong sense from parents, from child care providers, teachers and school administrators, and from everyone who follows this issue that after-school programs are among the most important items on which we should focus our attention.

In fact, the Republican Governor of my State has played a leading role in our State in trying to better utilize our school resources, recognizing that working moms are a larger and larger percentage of the work force. Welfare is pushing more and more people, mostly working moms, into the workplace because we have provided bipartisan support for that goal. We have increasing numbers of latchkey kids in all of our communities, large and small. After-school programs for these children are either nonexistent or far too expensive. We have studies from our law enforcement officials indicating overwhelmingly that between the hours of 3 to 6 in the afternoon is the greatest amount of juvenile crime, alcohol and drug experimentation, and sexual experimentation. All this takes place because we have an entire generation of young people in unsupervised settings, and these problems are becoming more widespread.

I applaud Senator BOXER and her effort to come up with an amendment that not only addresses this key issue but does it in a way that does not create new Federal bureaucracy, does not federalize anything but instead utilizes local resources, leaves the options and the administration and the decisions at the local level. Because of all of these strong reasons, I think this is a very positive and constructive contribution to the underlying legislation, and I certainly again applaud the Senator's leadership, and yield back the time to her.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mrs. BOXER. I thank the Senator.

I reserve the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 2 minutes remaining.

The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, we have just been joined by the Senator from Arkansas, who I believe rises in opposition to this amendment. I yield up to 5 minutes to the Senator from Arkansas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. I thank the Senator from Georgia.

I rise to speak in opposition to the Boxer amendment. My concern is that while there is, without doubt, an acknowledged need for after-school care and an acknowledged need for mentoring and tutorial-type programs, this would be taking the wrong step in the wrong direction and would create another Federal program, which, in my estimation, would be highly duplicative of existing programs, a multiplicity of Federal programs that already have been created for this purpose.

School districts already have the authority to establish after-school learning centers, many already financed, and will benefit from additional provisions of this year's budget for after-school programs.

Let me give just a few examples. The 21st Century Community Learning Centers Act provides $40 million for rural and inner-city public schools to establish after-school programs. The Safe and Drug-Free Schools Act allows money to be spent on after-school programs with a drug and violence prevention component. The child care development block grant and the community development block grant also provide money for child care, including after-school care. The Juvenile Justice Act will also target millions of dollars on prevention programs, including mentoring programs and after-school programs. It has already passed the House. These are just to give a few examples.

So I, once again, must object to the philosophy underlying the Senator's amendment to create another Federal program. While I agree that one-on-one mentoring and tutoring is valuable, it will help improve educational achievement of students, such tutoring is already allowable under at least 19 other Federal programs.

So I have listed a number of programs in which we have after-school care provided. There are 19 programs that have tutoring and mentoring components: AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve, VISTA, JUMP, the Juvenile Justice Mentoring Program, CAMP, the Migrant Education Mentoring Program, TRIO, are all examples of existing mentoring and tutoring programs that are out there already.

The Senator's amendment, in my estimation, would simply duplicate these existing programs. In addition, we find there are a great many volunteer organizations that are providing and supplying after-school care currently. We are going to prohibit them, exclude them from the possibility of even applying for, competing for these grants. And so I think that is a serious, serious weakness in the amendment as well. Organizations like the YMCA would be ineligible to compete for the grants even though they currently are doing a tremendous job in providing after-school care in many cities and many school districts. So to say it has to be school-based, run through the school, I think would unfairly exclude those that are currently doing such a great job.

The application described in Senator BOXER's amendment is a laundry list of paperwork. Read the amendment: identify goals, provide evidence of a collaborative effort, describe how the program would be administered, demonstrate how the activities will utilize or cooperate with programs, describe sources of other funds, provide a fundraising plan. All of these will require more bureaucrats, more administration, more reports, additional costs, and it would in all of that duplicate what we already have out there.

I think it is the wrong thing for us to establish another Federal program when we have good programs there that need additional resources. We do not need to dilute that, diminish that by starting another Federal program for after-school care for tutoring and mentoring.

So I ask my colleagues to consider this, do not just vote for an amendment because it has a good purpose, because it has a good goal in mind. Consider seriously that this program will be competing with a whole host of Federal programs already designed to meet this need in our schools and among our young people. I think that need is being met, and it would be a mistake for us to create more bureaucracy and a new Federal program. I hope my colleagues will oppose the Boxer amendment.

I thank the Senator from Georgia for yielding this time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I wonder if the Senator will yield for a question. As I understand what the Senator is saying, we have sort of gotten ourselves into this difficulty over the years by creating another program and another program. How many programs did the Senator say we already have?

Mr. HUTCHINSON. There are 19 existing programs for mentoring and tutoring on the books as well as a whole host of programs dealing with after-school care.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair would advise the Senator from Georgia has 10 minutes.

Mr. COVERDELL. I appreciate that, Mr. President.

In reading the amendment, it appears to me this establishes a direct link between the Department of Education—Federal—and a school. I do not see from reading this that the grant process would run through the State's board of education or the district board of education. This would be school to the Secretary.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. That is my understanding as well, which is another step I believe in federalizing our local schools and removing the control ultimately from the local schools.

Mr. COVERDELL. I did think that was a philosophical problem, but I think the more important issue that the Senator raises is this layering and layering and layering. We are struggling with that in every component of the Government. I don't know how many programs we have for students. It just seems that we keep coming up with one after another after another.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. With another new program, there is another layer of bureaucracy, another level of bureaucracy created. It really dilutes the resources we have actually getting to those kids who are in need of after-school caring and one-on-one tutoring.

Mr. COVERDELL. I appreciate the remarks of the Senator from Arkansas. I do want to address several of the remarks that were made by the Senator from California with regard to the legislation in general.

How much time do I have remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 8 minutes 30 seconds.

Mr. COVERDELL. And the Senator from California?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California has 2 minutes.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, the Senator indicated that the underlying legislation could actually be harmful. I am puzzled by that statement, somewhat stunned. And that we have not reached out.

The first point I make is that the underlying legislation, in great part, has been designed by a colleague of the Senator from California, Mr. TORRICELLI, of New Jersey, who sits right next to her. The underlying proposal has a significant component for new school construction. The legislation was designed and offered in the Finance Committee by the Senator from Florida, Mr. GRAHAM, on the other side of the aisle. The underlying proposal has a very key provision to enforce or reinforce States that have prepaid tuition to help children meet college costs, and that was designed by Senator BREAUX, of Louisiana, on the other side of the aisle. The underlying provision has a key component to help employers help employees who need continuing education, and that was either designed by Senator MOYNIHAN from New York or Senator BREAUX from Louisiana.

So the underlying proposal, if you really want to add up just the financial impact, is 80 percent designed by the other side of the aisle and about 20 percent from our side. I guess in the general division of the issues, it is about 50/50. But the underlying proposal will make available to 14 million families and half the school population of the United States, or thereabouts, the benefits of education savings accounts that their parents or sponsors can open; will reinforce the prepaid tuition programs of 21 States in the Union, 17 of which are coming on board; will support continuing education for 1 million employees, 1 million students in these prepaid tuition programs, and 250,000 graduate students.

I know we can have our differences about how to confront the issue of education. It is good that we are having the debate. We all want to improve it. We all want to get ready for the new century. But I don't think it is accurate to suggest that the underlying proposition would be harmful, A, or, B, that it is a partisan instrument, because it just is not.

Mr. President, how much time remains on my side?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia has 5 minutes 15 seconds.

Mr. COVERDELL. I reserve the remainder of my time.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I rise today in support of Senator BOXER's amendment to the Education IRA bill because it will ensure schools across our nation have the additional resources they need to establish and expand after-school programs for school-aged children. With more and more parents of school-aged children working outside the home, we, as a nation, must make a commitment to our children to ensure they have safe and supervised places to be during the after-school hours. This amendment would provide much-needed funding to schools to set up such programs in their buildings or other public facilities, a cost-efficient way to provide children and teens with activities after the school bell rings.

With youth at most risk of getting into trouble between 3 and 8 p.m., this additional funding will help keep teens out of trouble during these critical hours. I know how effective and important after-school programs are, parents around the country know it and our law enforcement officers know it. In fact, a recent survey of nearly 800 police chiefs from across the nation found that 90 percent of the chiefs viewed prevention as a key factor in reducing our nation's juvenile crime rates. In my opinion, the best crime reduction strategy is one which prevents crime from happening. The $250 million authorized in this amendment is a good investment, not only because it will provide children with a safe haven, but also because it will likely lead to reduced crime rates in neighborhoods which choose to implement or expand their after-school programs.

I am particularly pleased with the flexibility provided in Senator BOXER's amendment. While no school is required to participate, those which do may use the funds for children of any age—from kindergarten through high school. Those schools which choose to participate would also have the flexibility to decide what sort of programs to offer. For example, schools receiving grants could engage in mentoring activities, tutoring or academic assistance programs, recreational activities or technology training. So long as a school offers at least two of these activities, it would meet the grant's eligibility requirements. Schools could also offer drug or alcohol prevention programs, gang prevention programs, health and nutrition counseling and job skills training. These broad categories of activities will allow the local schools to decide how their children spend their after-school hours while ensuring that the children and teens are engaged in productive activities.

Vermont is fortunate to have a wide variety of after-school programs available for children, both on and off school campuses. I have been working to ensure this diversity of programs continues. But, I hear again and again from parents in Vermont that we need more after-school programs for our state's children. Senator BOXER's amendment would ensure one piece of the puzzle is better funded—after-

school programs on school and public property. I plan to continue pushing for other resources for after-school, evening and weekend programs, including in S.10, the Violent and Repeat Juvenile Offender Act of 1997. As the Ranking Member of the Judiciary Committee, I have been fighting hard to ensure that S.10 has dedicated funding for a variety of crime prevention programs. Senator BOXER's amendment is a perfect complement to these ongoing efforts.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time? The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask for a minute of my time to say simply that Senator COVERDELL criticizes my proposal because it is a new program when he in fact is putting forward a new program. The issue is not about creating a new program. He doesn't like this program, he likes his.

Senator COVERDELL's proposal gives the average private school household a $37 a year benefit; if you are in public school, you fare worse, $7 a year. And he likes the program. That is fine. But he doesn't talk about these deleterious amendments that have made this a very dangerous bill by canceling 20 programs that help our children read and learn. Programs created by President Eisenhower, Senator Javits, tried and true programs, are canceled, put in a block grant to let the locals do what they want.

The fact is, the local districts like these programs yet this bill seeks to eliminate them. Other programs supported by local districts are rejected out of hand. The Senate rejects putting more teachers in the classroom; rejects any national testing. This is a bill that has now been amended in such a fashion it does harm to our children.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's 1 minute has expired.

Mrs. BOXER. I reserved that 1 minute, if the Senator will take his time now.

Mr. COVERDELL. Please proceed.

Mrs. BOXER. All right, we will do that. I just ask the Senator, since he has 5 minutes and I have a minute, if I feel compelled, will he give me an additional 60 seconds to respond to his concluding remarks?

Mr. COVERDELL. I will be glad to yield a minute of my time to the distinguished Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. The Senator is a good debater, so I want to have that opportunity.

But I also want to respond to the Senator from Arkansas. I am sorry he is no longer in the Senate chamber. He has criticized this after-school program because it is a new program. In actuality this is not a new program. The after school programs that would be funded by this amendment are going on. The local districts are doing a great job, but they need help, and more want to do this.

The Senator from Arkansas criticizes this program yet his side of the aisle agreed to it unanimously in the budget. We already debated this Boxer amendment, this exact same thing, in the budget resolution. The Senator from Arkansas didn't object to it then.

In addition the Senator from Arkansas cites a lot of programs that could fund after school initiatives, but those programs are not exclusively for after school; they also could fund senior citizens, parenting skills, or employment counseling. There is no direct program that responds to the fact that after school the crime rate soars and doesn't stop until mom and dad get home.

Do you know how we pay for this program? By cutting the travel budget for bureaucrats. This seems a reasonable price to pay to protect and educate our children after school.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair will advise the Senator she has 1 minute.

Mrs. BOXER. Do I have 1 minute remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has used her minute. She has a minute of the Senator from Georgia.

Mrs. BOXER. Thank you, Mr. President. I will withhold until my colleague completes his remarks.

Mr. COVERDELL. I assume I have somewhere in the range of 4 minutes?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 4 minutes left.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, the first point I want to reiterate is, we do have to acknowledge, apart from the amendments, that the points I made a moment ago are all in the underlying bill: Education savings accounts for 14 million families, 20 million children. And I might point out, those savings accounts will bring—when you use the figures $37 and $7, you are only talking about the interest that is saved because we didn't tax it in a given year.

When you talk about the savings accounts, you have to look at the principal, and what happens is, when we create them, Americans do very big things and they go out and save, over a 10-year period, $10 billion. That $10 billion—$5 billion will support students in public schools and $5 billion will support students in private schools, without us having to raise another dime. No taxes have to be raised, no property tax, no income tax. This is families stepping forward with a huge infusion of money. We are building new schools; we are helping employees with continuing education; we are helping millions of students with the costs of higher education.

To the amendment that the Senator has addressed, let me just say first, the amendment permitting block grants is totally voluntary; no one is required to do anything. It is a 3-year experiment that says if California wants to keep the system the way it is, fine. If they would like to experiment with the block grant, they might do that. If they want to experiment with the grant going directly to the school district, they might. But nothing is ordered.

Frankly, I am one of those who thinks the Federal system has become so ensnarled that it severely constrains and restricts local communities. We had a story here just the other day of a person—they couldn't build new classrooms. They needed new teachers, but they had to have the classrooms to reduce class size. Because of Federal constraints, they couldn't get it done. I think the idea of loosening the flexibility is good.

With regard to testing, it is very controversial. There are many of us who believe national tests will set national curricula and that national tests will be designed to enforce our current—could even be designed to ratify the current crisis we have.

My only question about national testing is this. Every week I read about the condition of our fourth graders, our eighth graders, how we compete with the international community. I do not find a shortage in this country of understanding the crisis we have in grades kindergarten through high school. We know a third of the students get there and can't read right. We know only four out of ten of the students in inner-city schools can't pass a basic exam. We know if we take all the schools and put them together, only 6 out of 10 can pass a basic exam. We don't need any more testing. We need some innovation. We need some change and reform like we are talking about. We know what is happening. We are losing, as we come to the new century.

I reserve the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 20 seconds remaining.

Mr. COVERDELL. I yield back my 20 seconds and dedicate my final minute to the Senator from California.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. My colleague is very generous. I thank him. In rapid fire, I will try to respond.

The underlying bill really does no harm. As amended, this bill does a huge amount of harm, because it takes the National government out of the whole issue of education for our children. It takes us backward, away from visionaries like President Eisenhower, who said the strength of the Nation lies in its children. The National Government, if it truly cares about its children, should fill the gaps that are identified by local government. And that is what is done away with in the Gorton amendment.

Essentially, the Gorton amendment is saying to the people that education is not important on the national level. We know if we scratch the surface, many of our colleagues don't want a Department of Education. That is what this is about. This takes away 75 percent of the Department of Education's ability to at least in some way engage in the educational programs helping children in kindergarten through grade twelve. And to say that our children don't need any testing—you just ask the parents if they want testing. How

can we talk about accountability without voluntarily testing?

So, in closing, I thank my friend for his generosity. I hope we will support this modest bill, to bring down the crime rate and lift up our children. It is paid for in the budget, and I look forward to a bipartisan vote.

I yield the floor.

Mr. COVERDELL addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I move to table the amendment of the Senator from California.

I think we are going to set the amendment aside for a stacked vote. I withdraw my motion and will make the motion at the appropriate time. We will be moving to debate on the Bingaman amendment.

Mrs. BOXER. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. COVERDELL. Yes.

Mrs. BOXER. I just want to guarantee that we will have a vote on a tabling motion or an up-or-down vote.

Mr. COVERDELL. We will.

Mrs. BOXER. I have the Senator's word, and I am pleased with that. Thank you.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENTS

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following the debate on the Bingaman amendment, it be in order for Senator COVERDELL to offer a first-degree amendment regarding reading excellence. I further ask unanimous consent that no amendments be in order to either amendment and, finally, that the vote occur on, or in relation to, the Coverdell amendment prior to the vote on, or in relation to, the Bingaman amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following the vote on, or in relation to, the Levin second-degree amendment, if the Levin second-degree amendment is defeated, the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of the Levin first-degree amendment, as amended by the Ashcroft amendment, and the Levin first-degree amendment be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENTS NOS. 2298 AND 2307, EN BLOC

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order at this time to offer two amendments en bloc, an amendment on behalf of Senator MCCAIN on multilingualism and an amendment on behalf of Senator DORGAN regarding safer schools.

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

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following the reporting of the amendments, the amendments be agreed to and the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, en bloc, and that any statements relating to these amendments appear at the appropriate place in the RECORD.

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

The clerk will report the amendments.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Georgia [Mr. COVERDELL] proposes amendments numbered 2298 and 2307.

The amendments are as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 2298

(Purpose: To provide for a study of multilingualism in the United States)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ___. MULTILINGUALISM STUDY.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that even though all residents of the United States should be proficient in English, without regard to their country of birth, it is also of vital importance to the competitiveness of the United States that those residents be encouraged to learn other languages.

(b) RESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''resident of the United States'' means an individual who resides in the United States, other than an alien who is not lawfully present in the United States.

(c) STUDY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States (referred to in this section as the ''Comptroller General'') shall conduct a study of multilingualism in the United States in accordance with this section.

(2) REQUIREMENTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The study conducted under this section shall ascertain—

(i) the percentage of residents in the United States who are proficient in English and at least 1 other language;

(ii) the predominant language other than English in which residents referred to in clause (i) are proficient;

(iii) the percentage of the residents described in clause (i) who were born in a foreign country;

(iv) the percentage of the residents described in clause (i) who were born in the United States;

(v) the percentage of the residents described in clause (iv) who are second-generation residents of the United States; and

(vi) the percentage of the residents described in clause (iv) who are third-generation residents of the United States.

(B) AGE-SPECIFIC CATEGORIES.—The study under this section shall, with respect to the residents described in subparagraph (A)(i), determine the number of those residents in each of the following categories:

(i) Residents who have not attained the age of 12.

(ii) Residents have attained the age of 12, but have not attained the age of 18.

(iii) Residents who have attained the age of 18, but have not attained the age of 50.

(iv) Residents who have attained the age of 50.

(C) FEDERAL PROGRAMS.—In conducting the study under this section, the Comptroller General shall establish a list of each Federal program that encourages multilingualism with respect to any category of residents described in subparagraph (B).

(D) COMPARISONS.—In conducting the study under this section, the Comptroller General shall compare the multilingual population described in subparagraph (A) with the multilingual populations of foreign countries—

(i) in the Western hemisphere; and

(ii) in Asia.

(d) REPORT.—Upon completion of the study under this section, the Comptroller General shall prepare, and submit to Congress, a report that contains the results of the study conducted under this section, and such findings and recommendations as the Comptroller General determines to be appropriate.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I rise today to offer an amendment which would mandate a study of multilingualism in the United States. This amendment would direct the Comptroller General of the United States to identify, examine and analyze the number of individuals who are proficient in English, but are also proficient in one or more additional languages.

I believe that we can all agree that it is imperative for everyone in the United States to be fluent in English in order to succeed in today's society. This is why we need to continue encouraging all members of our society to be fluent in the English language. However, I believe it is equally important for us to encourage all members of our society to understand English—Plus one or more additional languages. Currently, I am working with members of the Hispanic task force in this effort to stress the importance of speaking English—Plus other languages. This study of multilingualism is a practical step in our efforts to encourage English—Plus the knowledge of many other languages.

As I have stated, English is clearly the common language in the United States and is an important aspect of our society and individual success. However, it is equally important that we encourage and support efforts by individuals to become proficient in additional languages and broaden their opportunities for success.

I wholeheartedly applaud people who have the capability to communicate in multiple languages. Not only do they posses valuable language skills, but their knowledge of various languages affords them a multitude of opportunities economically, socially, professionally and personally.

The ability to speak one or more languages, in addition to English, is a tremendous resource to the United States because it enhances our competitiveness in global markets by enabling improved communication and cross-cultural understanding while trading and conducting international business. In addition, multilingualism enhances our nation's diplomatic efforts and leadership role on the international front by fostering greater communication and understanding between nations and their people.

Foreign language skills also serve as a powerful tool for promoting greater cross-cultural understanding between the multitude of racial and ethnic groups in our country.

The data collected from the study required by this legislation would enable us to identify the linguistic strengths and weaknesses in our society. Based upon this study we would be able to develop innovate initiatives which would

promote the importance of foreign language skills, while providing a basis for expanding our nation's linguistic abilities.

The information we gather from this study will be invaluable in many aspects of our society. It is important that we encourage and support everybody, no matter what their age, in learning one or more languages in addition to English, since the opportunities which exist for individuals who can master additional languages are endless.

AMENDMENT NO. 2307

(Purpose: To promote school safety)

At the end, add the following:

SEC. . SAFER SCHOOLS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This section may be cited as the ''Safer Schools Act of 1998''.

(b) AMENDMENT.—Section 14601 of the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 (20 U.S.C. 8921) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

(g) ''For the purposes of this section, a weapon that has been determined to have been brought to a school by a student shall be admissible as evidence in any internal school disciplinary proceeding (related to an expulsion under this section.''.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The amendments are agreed to.

The amendments (Nos. 2298 and 2307) were agreed to.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I believe at this time the order of the day is to go to the Bingaman amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. BINGAMAN. I thank the Senator from Georgia.

Parliamentary inquiry. Is the amendment that I am proposing at the desk, or should I send it to the desk?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If the Senator can send the amendment to the desk.

AMENDMENT NO. 2308

(Purpose: To provide for dropout prevention)

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I send the amendment to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New Mexico [Mr. BINGAMAN], for himself, Mr. REID, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. CHAFEE, and Mr. BRYAN, proposes an amendment numbered 2308.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

(The text of the amendment is printed in today's RECORD under ''Amendments Submitted.'')

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, this amendment is being offered on behalf of myself, Senator REID, Senator FEINSTEIN and Senator CHAFEE. What I would like to do is very briefly describe what the amendment is and then yield to my colleague from Nevada for his comments. Then I will come back and make further statements in behalf of the amendment.

The first obvious point is that there is a serious, pervasive dropout problem in our Nation's schools. I see this in my State every day. I am sure each Senator who has visited schools in his or her State sees the same problem. Over half a million students drop out of school each year before they complete high school, and they are joining a group of almost 4 million young adults who have neither graduated nor are getting a GED in lieu of graduation.

The second point is that dropout rates are disproportionately high among low-income and minority students. That is just a fact, which we will get into more in the discussion in the minutes ahead.

The third point is that the cost of this dropout crisis far exceeds the cost of preventing it. There may be some who suggest that my amendment, by proposing to spend as much as $150 million a year, is going to bust the budget. I suggest that we are spending more on the problem of unemployment, on welfare, on juvenile crime, on the incarceration of the 4 million undereducated young people than we are proposing in this amendment as a solution to the problem.

The fourth point is that there is no Federal funding targeted to help middle and high schools deal with this problem today.

The amendment would allow over 2,000 of the schools with the highest dropout rates in each State to compete for $50,000 restructuring grants. That is what we are talking about, very small amounts of money that would help these schools to begin the restructuring process to deal with the dropout problem.

The fifth point is that the amendment does not add a new Federal education program. Instead, it replaces an unfunded dropout demonstration program from the 1994 Improving America's Schools Act.

Sixth, this amendment would provide funding to every State. It would allow local schools to determine what dropout prevention method works best for them. We are not dictating the course or the steps each school should take, but we are trying to assist them in beginning to take the steps to deal with the problem.

Finally, reducing dropout rates needs to be a bipartisan national education goal. It was identified as such in 1989. When President Bush met with all 50 Governors in Charlottesville, it was the second education goal we identified: At least 90 percent of our students would complete high school, would graduate. We have never had a serious effort to reach that goal. It is time we did. This amendment begins to move us in that direction.

Before I go on to any further discussion, I yield to my colleague, Senator REID, who has been a leader on this issue.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is my understanding, I say to my friend from New Mexico, that I have 5 minutes.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Yes, Mr. President, I yield 5 minutes to the Senator from Nevada.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. REID. Will the Chair inform me when I have 30 seconds left?

I ask unanimous consent that Senator BRYAN be added as a cosponsor.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I underline and underscore every word said by my colleague from New Mexico. This is a serious problem. The little amount of money that we want to spend on this will save inordinate amounts of money in welfare costs, costs to our criminal justice system and in our education system. This amendment, in my opinion, is the most important aspect of the legislation with which we have dealt. If we are going to do something about education, we have to slow down and, if possible, stop the dropout rate in our schools.

High school dropouts: Mr. President, unemployment rates of high school dropouts are more than twice those of high school graduates. The probability of falling into poverty is three times higher for high school dropouts than for students who have finished high school.

The median personal income of high school graduates during prime earning years, 25 years to 54 years, is nearly twice that of high school dropouts. That figure is startling.

The future of high school dropouts: What is the future? They may have a job making a lot of money in lawn maintenance or working in a service station. The median personal income of college graduates is more than three times that of high school dropouts.

Among prisoners in the United States, 82 percent of the prisoners in the United States never finished high school. That should send a message to this body loud and clear.

The children of dropouts have a much greater chance of dropping out of school.

The demographics of the State of Nevada and many Western States are changing rapidly. In the State of Nevada, the Hispanic population is rising very rapidly, adding a great deal to the culture of the State of Nevada, which is named after Hispanics—Nevada, snow-cap; Las Vegas, the meadows.

The dropout rate among Hispanic students is 30 percent compared to an overall rate of 11 percent, about three times higher than any other group of people. The Hispanic unemployment rate is 11.3 percent compared to 7.3 percent for non-Hispanics.

In 1991, Mr. President, 49 percent of all persons living in Hispanic households received some type of assistance. This is much, much higher than any other group of people in the United States. This cries out for doing something about dropouts, when the dropout rate is 30 percent, three times higher than any other group.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Hispanic Americans will make up nearly 20 percent of the U.S. population by the year 2030. This bill is not directed toward Hispanics, but Hispanics will benefit significantly from this legislation.

Mr. President, we need to make these changes. I congratulate and applaud the leadership of the Senator from New Mexico.

Dropouts in high school are a problem we must address. We must do it soon. The aim of our legislation is to encourage the type of innovative thinking that is working other places, adopt and use those programs that work well. Each school would receive a little bit of money, because we found it only takes a little bit to make a great deal of difference. I ask all my colleagues to join in supporting this most important amendment.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, how much time remains on our side?

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HUTCHINSON). The Senator from New Mexico has 7 minutes 39 seconds remaining.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I yield myself 5 minutes of that time and reserve the rest so that I can use the remainder to summarize after the opponents have spoken.

But let me just go into this a little more in depth. I appreciate the strong support of the Senator from Nevada. What this amendment tries to do is to begin to focus our attention as a nation on what I see as a very, very serious problem in our educational system. And that is the problem that many, many of our students are not ever completing their high school education, in some cases are not completing their middle school education. These students are leaving the schools in large numbers, and we as a society are having to make accommodation to the fact that we have large numbers of young uneducated people coming into the work force.

So what we are trying to do is to begin the process of focusing attention on it, begin the process of reversing this trend. Let me show a few charts here, Mr. President, just to make the points.

This first chart is called ''Event Dropout Rates for Grades 10 through 12, Ages 15 through 24, By Race and Ethnicity.'' And this is the period 1972 through October of 1995.

You can see on this chart that for the white non-Hispanic students, although they have had the lowest annual dropout rate of any group, that dropout rate has been increasing, not decreasing, in recent years. So this is a problem that affects everybody.

The non-Hispanic black students—that is this green line—it has been coming down somewhat. The general trend is down. But it also is quite high and is not near where it should be.

Of course, the red line—which is the line that represents the Hispanic students in our school system—it is by far the highest of these lines and shows the seriousness of the problem. Dropout rates have not declined in recent years. This is not a problem that is fixing itself; this is a problem that needs additional attention. Dropout rates are particularly adverse among the Hispanic population.

Let me show another chart here, Mr. President. You can see this is called ''The Status Dropout Rate.'' That indicates, rather than an annual rate, this is how many of our students have left school essentially before they graduate. You can see that this red line—representing the Hispanic students in our school system—it is consistently over 30 percent. We essentially are losing a third of the Hispanic students in our school system before they complete high school under the present circumstance.

There was recently a report done called the ''Hispanic Dropout Project Report, No More Excuses.'' That report makes the case very convincingly that new strategies are needed, new efforts are needed, to deal with this problem.

Let me show one other chart here, just because I know every Senator here is concerned about his or her State in particular. This is a listing of the dropout counts and annual rates for States by State, starting with the State with the highest dropout rate. Unfortunately—and this, I am sure, is one of the reasons that the Senator from Nevada is so concerned about this issue—Nevada, according to this, had the highest dropout rate in 1993–94. Next was Georgia, the manager's State, that had an 8.7 percent dropout rate. And third was New Mexico, my own State, with an 8 percent dropout rate. That means, every year, 8 percent of the students in the school system drop out.

So over the period of 4 years of high school and even some part of middle school, we lose more than 30 percent in many of our schools.

These are crucial issues in my State. I run into this problem as I go around my State talking to parents, talking to school administrators, talking to teachers, talking to the students themselves.

It is time for the country to act. It is not enough to just say, ''This can get handled by the larger issues. We don't need to make special efforts with regard to this. It will take care of itself. As the general educational system improves, maybe this problem will go away too.'' That is not an adequate answer. We need to do better than that. The simple truth is that too many of our schools are not meeting the academic, the vocational, or the other needs of students. Students are leaving those schools. They are bored with the watered down, repetitive courses, and in many cases they are alienated by the very size of the schools.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has used 5 minutes.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, as I indicated, I will reserve the remainder of my time until after the opponents have spoken.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I yield as much of our time as is necessary to the distinguished Senator from Tennessee who rises in opposition to the Bingaman amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee is recognized.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, please notify me at 13 minutes.

Mr. President, I rise in opposition to the amendment by the Senator from New Mexico. Senator BINGAMAN has offered an amendment which would create a new program intended to lower dropout rates in our Nation's schools. It does replace a program that was in existence up until 1995. That program is no longer funded, nor was funding requested by the President of the United States back in 1995, 1996, 1997, nor was it requested by the Department of Education, as I understand. It is a new program, though, and I will come back to that.

Senator BINGAMAN's amendment would amend title V of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to authorize this new entity, and up to $125 million in that first year, with the objective which I obviously share; that is, reducing dropout rates.

Secondly, the amendment, as I mentioned, authorizes $125 million for grants in that first year and authorizes an additional $25 million for a national clearinghouse on dropout data.

In addition, it would create an office in the Department of Education, it would create a new office of dropout prevention, and would also allow for the creation of a dropout czar at the Department of Education to focus attention on this issue.

I say all of that because it is a new program not currently funded. It is a Federal program. And that is important, because so much of the discussion that we have undertaken over the last 3 to 4 days and that I, as chairman of the Senate Budget Committee Task Force on Education, have reviewed over the last 6 months is that if there is one thing we have too many Federal programs with too much overlap, and it is too confusing and too burdensome. I think we have made great progress in the last 2 days on this bill and in simplifying and streamlining with some of the amendments as well.

The second point I want to come back to is that we do have a problem today in dropout rates, but we have made huge progress, huge progress, over the last 30 years. I have had the opportunity to go back and look at the statistics and the data in our task force. We need to do a lot more. I encourage all of us, and maybe we can take it back to the Labor Committee where we can really analyze this data and see what the trends mean.

But basically there are two points I want to make. I think we need fewer programs, not just another program, to address problems; and, No. 2, real progress has been made in lowering the dropout rate among all subgroups in this country, some more than others.

The 1997 Digest of Education Statistics, produced by the National Center for Education Statistics on this very issue, has a chart. Contrary to what Senator BINGAMAN has said, let me go back and look at the entire 36-year period, because I think it puts it in a much better perspective for us.

From 1960 to 1996, the dropout rate has fallen dramatically, from 27.2 percent down to 11 percent. The dropout rate over this period of time has fallen by much more than a half—almost by two-thirds. The current dropout rate is 11.1 percent. In fact, if we look at the data from the last several years, we have not improved in science in the last 30 years and we have not improved in math and we have not improved in reading. The one area we have improved in education in this country is lowering that dropout rate. I don't want to minimize the problem because I agree it is a problem, but we cut it not just by a quarter, not just by a half, but almost two-thirds, down to 11.1 percent.

In the same 1997 Digest, we learn from 1972 to 1996, look at women of Hispanic origin, the rate has dropped from 34.9 to 28.3—still too high. The intent of the amendment is to address the 28.3 percent, but it is the wrong approach, another Federal program. If we look at black men, the rate has dropped from 30.6 percent in 1967 down to 13 percent in 1996. That is dramatic. Not by just half, but two-thirds. Currently, it is 13.6 percent. Women of all races, the rate has dropped from 26.7 percent in 1960 to 10.9 percent in 1996. I wish we could see that much progress made in improvement in terms of science, math, and reading where we haven't seen any progress whatever. For men of all races, the rate has dropped from 27.8 percent in 1960 down to 11.4 percent in 1996. So we have made huge progress over the last 30 years.

Senator BINGAMAN and I are both members of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, and much of the data I refer to was reviewed in the Senate Budget Committee task force. I do hope we have the opportunity, regardless of the outcome of this amendment, to go back and ask why the Hispanic dropout rate has gotten better but not as good as we would like and why for black men it has gotten remarkably better. I do not fully understand that and would like to find out in committee through hearings to see if we can address and if we can come up with an overall strategy.

I suggest we look at creative ways to assist all of our students. We approached that to some extent yesterday through the block grant, the Gorton-Frist amendent yesterday, which really allows States and localities to identify problems like this which may not be in every locality, which are not in every locality, every school district, but allow States and localities to identify for themselves what that problem would be, and give them, through this block grant approach, the flexibility to decide how, for themselves, based on their priorities, based on their needs, they can address that specific problem and spend those education dollars that we provide. Clearly, our current system of complicated overlapping programs is not the answer, and therefore I hesitate and therefore oppose having another new Federal program in this regard.

I have spoken a number of times about findings of the task force itself. It really comes down to having a fragmented Federal education effort; it ends up being uncoordinated. The General Accounting Office in our hearings presented testimony to the task force and noted how the Federal Government does target certain populations with a variety of Federal education programs. Again, the block grant approach through the Gorton-Frist amendment still allows the existence of programs but you give individual school districts or States the opportunity to use that money as they see fit or to keep those categorical programs.

The General Accounting Office, in this chart I will show briefly on the floor, illustrates the problem that we have today by just having another program. This chart shows target groups served by multiple programs and agencies. In the middle is the target group which is aimed by the Federal Government called ''at-risk and delinquent youth.'' This is the area that the dropout rate potential student exists. Look what we have today. Department of Agriculture has programs, Department of Education has programs, Department of Health and Human Services has programs, Department of the Interior has programs, and now we want to add yet another program.

In fact, for this ''at-risk youth'' target group, we have 59 programs at the Department of Health and Human Services, 7 administered by the Department of Defense, 8 by the Department of Education, 4 by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, 9 by the Department of Labor, 22 by the Department of Justice, 3 by the Department of the Interior, 7 by the Department of Agriculture, and 8 by various other agencies. We have 127 Federal programs right now that are directed to at-risk and delinquent youth. We take it from 127 to 128. I think we can't kid ourselves that by adding another new program to address this fundamental problem, that that will be the answer.

The task force also held a hearing on January 28 called ''Federal Education Funding: The State and Local Perspective.'' It was made clear at the hearing that additional Federal programs, which have numerous regulations and are costly to administer, is just simply not the best approach. In terms of the Federal burden, the commissioner of education for the State of Florida told the task force, using an example, that it takes 297 State employees to oversee and administer $1 billion in Federal funds; in contrast, only 374 employees oversee approximately $7 billion in State funds. The point being it takes almost six times as many people to administer a Federal dollar as a State dollar.

For some reason, and it has been reflected on the floor over the last 2 days, we had a problematic reluctance to ask the question, ''What works, what doesn't work,'' and let us promote what works. I have been dismayed through the whole process of the last several months looking at education, looking at the sort of chart that you just saw where we have 127 programs already designed to look at that at-risk youth. Is 128 going to make a difference? I think not.

In summary, if you step away from it, we have a too-complicated Federal effort today. We don't need to have one more program in this already incoherent structure. No. 2, we have data to show that we have made, since 1960, dramatic progress, improvements in the dropout rates. Still, we have a problem. Still we need to address it. I argue that the best place to address that instead of right now on the floor where very few people have this data is in a committee, where you can debate it, look at the data, analyze it, and say why is one group doing better and one is not.

Third, the Senate did agree yesterday to the Gorton-Frist block grant approach which gives the opportunity for a State or a locality to obtain the same amount of funds and use those funds to address the specific problem—whether it is the dropout rate or whether it is technology or whether it is more books, they get to choose.

For these three reasons, I urge my colleagues to oppose and defeat Senator BINGAMAN's amendment. I look forward to working with him in the Labor Committee to address the issue that he has brought to the floor.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I am pleased to support Senators BINGAMAN and REID today and I thank them for including my suggestions to be more explicit in how school districts use funds authorized for dropout prevention.

At my suggestion, Senators BINGAMAN and REID added several specific strategies to the activities authorized by their original amendment. Under the original Bingaman-Reid amendment, funds would be authorized as grants to states and states would in turn award grants to public middle and secondary schools for activities like professional development and planning and research.

Under the Feinstein amendment, schools could also use grants for remedial education; reducing pupil-teacher ratios; efforts to help students meet achievement standards, such as tutoring or enrichment programs; and counseling for at-risk students.

I believe that the additions I suggested provide some concrete guidance to the states and represent specific, targeted strategies aimed at the underlying causes of the dropout problem.

Students at risk of dropping out need extra help and attention, such as smaller classes, counseling, and after-school academic programs and summer school. They require more than the normal school program, but schools are strapped as it is and this new ''injection'' of funding can help schools provide these extra services.

For example, limited English speaking proficiency is a major risk factor for dropping out school, especially for Latino children, according to the General Accounting Office in their July 1994 report. For Latino students born in the U.S., the dropout rate is 18 percent. For newly immigrated Latino students, the dropout rate is 44 percent. For African-American students the dropout rate is 12 percent and for Anglo students it is 9 percent, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Nearly one in five Latinos between ages 16 and 24 leaves school without a diploma [Hispanic Dropout Project, U.S. Department of Education, February 1998]. Whatever the numbers, in my view, one percent is too high for any group. Everyone needs a solid education.

Other risk factors for dropping out are poverty, pregnancy, motherhood, disruptive behavior, academic failure, and lack of skills, said the General Accounting Office and the National Center for Education Statistics.

Dropping out of school can begin a downward spiral to delinquency, unemployment, disillusionment, drug and alcohol abuse and crime. Dropping out forecloses opportunities for a lifetime—having children who are poor and uneducated; lack of job skills; civic breakdown.

Public schools need help and the added resources of this amendment in an effort to bring concentrated attention to at-risk students and to prevent the downward plunge that can begin when children drop out of school. We should not give up on these children but give them extra help to stay in school. This amendment can provide some help and I urge the Senate to adopt it.

Mr. COVERDELL. How much time is remaining on both sides?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The proponents have 3 minutes 27 seconds remaining and the opponents have 2 minutes 40 seconds remaining.

Mr. BINGAMAN. I would like to have the opportunity to summarize my arguments at the end. If the opponents would go ahead and complete their opposition, I prefer that.

Mr. COVERDELL. I think this would be the appropriate time for you to do that and we will yield back and proceed.

Mr. BINGAMAN. You are planning to yield back your time?

Mr. COVERDELL. Is there anything further from the Senator from Tennessee?

Mr. FRIST. I reserve 30 seconds, but otherwise I have nothing further.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, let me first just respond to a couple of points that were made by the Senator from Tennessee. He says we made huge progress. That is not what the people in my State believe. That is not what the school administrators and students and parents in my State believe.

The Department of Education report that just came out this year indicates their conclusion is that there has been no overall progress in lowering dropout rates during the last 10 years. That is the decade during which we were supposed to be moving up to 90 percent of all of our students completing high school before they left school.

In 1989, when the Governors and President Bush met in Charlottesville, the goal was set at 90 percent. It was 86 percent then. It is today 86 percent, according to the National Education Goals Panel. In the last 10 years there has been no progress, in spite of the fact that we have had this national goal.

Another part of the goal, in addition to getting 90 percent of our students to complete high school, was to eliminate the disparity in the different groups in our society so that you didn't have such a large dropout problem among one group—in this case, the Hispanic students—and such a disparity between the problem with that group and other groups. Clearly, those disparities have not been eliminated. The problem is very much with us. It needs attention, and it is every bit as serious now as it was in 1989 when we established the national goal of getting to 90 percent.

The Senator from Tennessee says we have too many programs already. I point out that my friend and colleague from Georgia is getting ready to offer another proposal here. We seem to have a double standard. When the proposed new programs are brought up on that side of the aisle, they are acceptable; when they are brought up on our side of the aisle, there are too many programs. The reality is that there are no programs—there is no Federal money focused on dealing with this problem of dropout prevention. That is one reason we have never dealt with it. It is not on the national agenda, it is not on the agenda of the Department of Education, and, frankly, it is not on the agenda of most of our States and school districts, and it needs to be.

Mr. President, if we are going to make progress on this, at some stage we are going to have to quit coming up with excuses. The title of a report that came out this year was ''No More Excuses.'' To my mind, that sums it up well. Let's get on with dealing with this problem.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator has expired.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I yield back the opponent's time. I believe that would move us to the next order of business. This amendment would be set aside for the stacked votes later this afternoon.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia is correct. The amendment is set aside.

AMENDMENT NO. 2309

(Purpose: To provide for reading excellence)

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Georgia [Mr. COVERDELL] proposes an amendment numbered 2309.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

(The text of the amendment is printed in today's RECORD under ''Amendments Submitted.'')

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, as we have noted throughout this debate, we have a lot of Americans who are exceedingly deficient in reading. When more than 40 million Americans cannot read a phone book, a menu, or the directions on a medicine bottle, and only 4 out of 10 third graders can read at grade level or above, new solutions are needed—I might add, not programs, but solutions.

This amendment, based on Senate bill 1596, the Coverdell-Gorton Reading Excellence Act, will help children learn to read. The reading excellence amendment would focus on training teachers to teach reading. Fewer than 10 percent of our teachers have received formal instruction on how to teach reading.

My amendment would also send 95 percent of the funds associated with it directly to the classroom, which I know the Chair would applaud, as he has been the author of the money-to-the-classroom legislation. It requires that funds be spent on research-based reading instruction, methods with proven track records. It provides extra tutorial assistance for at-risk children, as well as literacy assistance for parents, so they can be their children's first and most important teacher.

It is already funded. That is unique here. Two hundred and ten million dollars were set aside in the fiscal year 1998 Labor-HHS appropriations bill specifically for literacy work. However, this is contingent on the passage of an authorization bill by July 1, 1998. The House has already acted and passed a Reading Excellence Act by voice vote on November 8, 1997.

President Clinton endorsed the Reading Excellence Act in his radio address February 28, 1998, and has called on the Senate to act. This amendment is a response to that call. I will read the actual statement on behalf of the President of the United States:

But we need Congress' help to meet this goal.

The goal is that we are on track to give extra reading help to 3 million children at risk of falling behind.

He says:

But we need Congress' help to meet this goal. This past November, the House of Representatives voted with bipartisan support to promote literacy efforts in the home, the

school, the community. Legislation with these goals is now awaiting action in the Senate——

Not anymore—

which means $210 million in targeted assistance is now on hold in Washington, not at work in our communities.

We are getting ready to end that.

So today I call on the Senate to pass this legislation without delay. We need it. Our children need it.

That was the address of the President of the United States to the Nation on February 28, 1998. This is the answer to the call. The research is overwhelming. Most recently, the National Research Council, at the request of the Department of Education, released a report calling for a direct, systemic approach to teaching so that children can learn to connect the letters of words to the sounds they represent. Our amendment does this by requiring that proven scientific methods be used, ensuring that 95 percent of the funds reach the classroom, and providing teachers with the skills to help our children.

We should seize this opportunity, as the President requested, to put our children first, which, I might add, is the genesis of this whole underlying proposal: Children first, system second. We have been fighting this system a long time, and we have bad numbers. It is time that we put the kids first. This amendment is in complete sync with the nature of the underlying bill and does just that. We know you can't have a free population, Mr. President, if it is uneducated. It denies them the rights and privileges of American citizenship. If you can't read a phone book or a medicine bottle, you can't get a job. If you can't get a job, you can't take care of yourself, you lose your dignity, you are robbed of everything that America is all about.

Mr. President, on April 17, 1998, I received a letter that was signed by Jim Barksdale, president and CEO of Netscape Communications; Carol Bartz, chairman of Autodesk; John Chambers, president of Cisco Systems; Eric Benhamou, president of 3COM; Floyd Kramme, a partner at Kleiner, Perkins, Caufield and Byers; and John Young, retired president and CEO of Hewlett-Packard.

It says a lot of good things about what we are trying to do here today, but the last paragraph is particularly poignant:

In our respective businesses, we are creating thousands of jobs that our Nation's education system is not preparing youths to fill. The 21st century economy will depend on one resource more than any other—qualified people—and dominance of the world economy in the next century will shift to the nation that best educates its population. We are grateful that the Senate Republican leadership understands the seriousness of this challenge.

Mr. President, I can't think of a more fitting concluding amendment to the debate than the Reading Excellence Act. People have to be functional in our society. This amendment puts kids first. This amendment helps American teachers to do this job. This amendment has been passed by the House. This amendment has been called on for enactment by the President of the United States and, through this amendment, the leadership of the Senate. I hope that our colleagues on both sides of the aisle in a continuing bipartisan spirit at the appropriate time will vote in favor of this amendment.

Mr. President, I reserve the remainder of my time.

Mr. KENNEDY addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, for those who may be in opposition, we have some time, as I understand it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 15 minutes.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I am not sure that I qualify for being in opposition because I will urge our colleagues to support this amendment. I want to commend the Senator for giving some focus and attention on the floor of the Senate to the issues of literacy and literacy training.

On next Tuesday in our Human Resources Committee, Senator JEFFORDS will be having a hearing on our literacy legislation. It is his hope and certainly all of ours in the committee that we will pass out a strong, bipartisan proposal that will incorporate a number of the ideas that are included in the Coverdell amendment and a number of the ideas that have been included in President Clinton's literacy proposal of a little over a year ago. As we all know, now that the President has asked the colleges of this country in the work-study program for those young people to devote time for literacy training, I take pride that our Massachusetts colleges are No. 2, with California being No. 1, in the number of colleges where the young people who are benefiting from the work-study program are actually involved in tutorial work. We have tried to get every one of the colleges in our State—there are 126—to be involved in that tutorial work.

I think, the fact that this afternoon we are focusing on the issue of literacy, hopefully we will pave the way for a bipartisan effort and for an outcome that will result in our ability to utilize the $250 million which have been designated for literacy training as a part of the budget of last year and was worked out in a bipartisan way. We may have had differences on the number of the education issues that we have been debating in the past days, but I certainly hope that we can in these next very, very few weeks have legislation out here that will have a responsible literacy initiative.

Mr. President, we know that the Academy of Sciences has recommended a modality for the development of literacy programs. If we take the Coverdell proposal, we will find it quite prescriptive in relationship to the range of initiatives that have been recommended by the Academy of Sciences that provide greater flexibility. How we eventually are going to come out on that issue remains to be seen. But the strong emphasis on the teachers that they be well trained to teach is something that we all would have common agreement on. The idea of the role of the tutors under the President's program is an important role. I think under the Coverdell proposal we find that feature of it, hopefully, would be strengthened.

I think there is probably some difference in this body about the administration of the program. Under the Coverdell proposal, you set up a whole new bureaucracy effectively with your partnership program rather than working with the State programs. It is quite prescriptive in the naming of a number of members that will serve on various boards. You have a number of States now that are doing some very, very important work. This would be a circumstance where I hope that the program would work through the State agencies that are in the Coverdell proposal.

I also believe that you have particular features in here where you have the devoting of a good deal of money for assistance grants for tutors. I think most of those involved in literacy training feel that having a school-based system is a better use and a more effective use of the funds.

Mr. President, I hope that at the time we address this issue Members will vote in favor of the Coverdell amendment. Then we will have an opportunity to vote after in terms of the Bingaman and Reid proposal. I hope that we will vote in favor of that as well.

I think the President's proposal and ones which will be advanced in our Human Resources Committee will give greater emphasis to volunteers and to tutors than would necessarily be the case in the Coverdell proposal.

We have under the leadership of our colleague and friend, Senator JEFFORDS, the Everyone Wins Program, which is a reading program which a number of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle have been involved in at the Brent School on the Hill. We have good attendance from a number of our Members here where they go over and read each week to students. I think the kind of flexibility provided in the President's program as well as the kind of support for a number of school-based systems has some additional credibility. I hope that we will support it.

I commend the Senator for giving focus and attention. I want to pledge to the Senator from Georgia, as well as to our other colleagues, that we will certainly work every way that we possibly can, those of us on the Education and Human Resources Committee, to work under the leadership of Senator JEFFORDS who has really been a strong, strong leader on the issues of literacy long before many others in this body, and hopefully we will have a chance to all be together and join in something that can pass and be successful and

really move us towards a country that has a real commitment towards literacy.

It is interesting that, if you go back into the history of our country, in the early days of this Nation at the time of the birth of the Republic we had a much higher rate of literacy than we have today. That is rather surprising to many, many people. The reason was because of the reading of the Bible, because we had church-related efforts for literacy in every community across the country in order that children were going to be able to read the Bible. We had much higher degrees of literacy at other times in our history than we have at the present time. That is one of the areas where we have slipped. I think we need to call for focus, attention, energy, and I think some resources to really galvanize the sense of voluntarism, which I believe is out there, in an effective way to really make a dramatic impact on reducing illiteracy in the country.

I hope our colleagues will support that amendment. I commend him for bringing it. I pledge that we will try to work to find ways to get a meaningful program.

Mr. President, I reserve the remainder of my time.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, How much time remains on both sides?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia controls 6 minutes 59 seconds.

Mr. COVERDELL. And they have?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The opponents have 7 minutes 8 seconds remaining.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I am prepared to yield back here in just a minute so that we might proceed to a unanimous consent request to clarify for the Senate where we might head from here.

I thank the Senator from Massachusetts for his remarks. As he has noted, there are some differences remaining, but I pledge to work with the Senator as we move forward on this amendment. There is still the conference. Maybe there are other differences that we might deal with even at that time. But I do appreciate the Senator's words in support of the amendment, and I am glad we are in a situation here where we can, by and large, respond to the President. I think we would both agree at least on this point that there is nothing more important or no more important skill than American citizens having the capacity to read. Again, I appreciate very much the genuine remarks of the Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. President, I am prepared to yield back the time on our side so that I might proceed to a unanimous consent request if that is agreeable.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I will just take one moment. I hope we can move forward. We may have a number of differences—probably will—in the conference, but this is an area where we really ought to try to get the best ideas that all of our Members have and then move it forward.

I look forward to working with the Senator from Georgia on that. I know I speak for all of the Members on our side on the Labor and Human Resources Committee. No matter how the underlying legislation comes out, I will look forward to working with the Senator from Georgia and others to make sure that we are going to get an effective bill. I am prepared to yield back the remaining time that I have.

Mr. COVERDELL. I yield back the time we have.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has been yielded.

Mr. COVERDELL. We have now debated all outstanding amendments. I know that may be hard to believe by anybody listening. I ask unanimous consent that this next voting sequence occur beginning at 2:15, with no additional amendments in order to the sequenced amendments and with 2 minutes of debate between each vote for explanation. I further ask that at the conclusion of the amendment debate Senator BYRD be recognized for up to 30 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? The Chair hears none, and it is so ordered.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, the voting series will be as follows: the Levin amendment regarding vocational education, the Boxer amendment regarding after-school programs, the Coverdell amendment regarding reading and excellence we have just concluded, and the Bingaman amendment regarding dropout prevention. It is my hope that following the voting series the Senate could quickly move to third reading and a final vote on the Coverdell A+ education bill. I thank all of my colleagues for their continued cooperation and support.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I intend to vote for this bill. Some amendments have been adopted, however, with which I do not agree, and I would prefer that they had not been adopted. But that was the Senate's will. Even so, I think this is a new approach and it is entitled to be tested. So I am going to support this legislation for that reason.

Mr. President, the Bible tells us that Solomon prayed for wisdom and knowledge. He did not pray for riches. He did not pray for honor. He did not pray for the life of his enemies. He asked the Creator for knowledge and wisdom, and perhaps we in the Senate should do the same.

Mr. President, I am very concerned by our Nation's failure to produce better students despite the billions of Federal dollars appropriated every year for various programs intended to aid and improve education. To put it simply, the sums of money invested in our Nation's education system continue to grow each year and, yet, the quality of our Nation's students does not keep pace.

Several Senators have championed efforts to improve the dilapidated state of our Nation's school buildings, and I commend them for their leadership. According to the General Accounting Office (GAO), over fourteen million students attend schools in need of major renovations, and I am concerned by this figure. Then, why, my colleagues may ask, have I chosen to vote against an initiative to use Federal funds for construction of our Nation's school buildings? It is not because I do not recognize the benefits or the need for better school facilities—I certainly do. The GAO has estimated that the total bill for addressing this problem nationally tops $100 billion. However, I have reservations about the administration's approach to school repair and construction, which may be more appropriate for better-heeled school districts than are to be found in West Virginia and other rural States. Many poor districts do not have the ability to repay any loan, even an interest-free loan.

We are right to be concerned about dilapidated school buildings in this Nation. However, Mr. President, I believe that before the Federal Government embarks upon the new mission of providing massive amounts—and they will be massive amounts—of scarce Federal dollars for school construction, we should just step back and take a fresh look at why our students are not performing well scholastically. Is it due to aging school buildings? No. Reasons much more fundamental than aging school buildings underlie the poor academic performance by American students. It is these problems which must be addressed.

Senators stand on this Floor and we argue about the benefits of tax credits for education, we argue about funds for aging schools, we argue about funds for private schools versus funds for public schools. Yet, I tell you that I believe we are all just talking past each other and past the problem. The problem is rather clear. It has two major components. The problem with education in America has, as its root, (1) the quality of our teachers, and (2) the quality of what they are teaching.

We have many good teachers and many of us owe more than we can ever pay to our good teachers. I had dedicated teachers when I was a child. They didn't get paid much back in those days. We came through the Great Depression. But they were dedicated. They loved the children that they taught and they inspired us to excel. And a good teacher can do that, can inspire his or her students to excel, to try harder, to work harder, and strive to be at the head of the class.

According to the Third International Math and Science Study, released on February 24 of this year, ''U.S. 12th graders outperformed only two (Cyprus and South Africa) of the 21 participating countries in math and science.'' This is deplorable, absolutely deplorable.

Why is it that from 1993 to 1998, education spending has increased by 25 percent, and at the same time, results from the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) rank U.S. high school seniors among the worst participants in the areas of math and science? Why is that? Why is it that in all three content areas of advanced mathematics, U.S. advanced mathematics students' performance was among the lowest of the twenty-one participating nations? It is not because of lack of money.

James A. Garfield, one of the Presidents, said with regard to the value of a true teacher: ''Give me a log hut, with only a simple bench, Mark Hopkins on one end and I on the other, and you may have all the buildings, apparatus and libraries without him.'' He wasn't talking about massive buildings, impressive halls and corridors. So why is it? Why is it that in all three content areas, as I say, of advanced math, U.S. advanced—the best—math students' performance was among the lowest of the 21 participating nations? These are supposed to be our Nation's stellar students, our Nation's best students. This is not to say that all our students fall short. We have some excellent students. We have some good schools.

I am 100 percent for education. In all my life I have endeavored to press to improve myself. I wanted to start at the beginning, start with myself, improve myself. And I think I have—my colleagues know that. I also wanted to help others. So, in 1969, almost 30 years ago, I started a program in West Virginia to reward the high school valedictorians. And I started a program that is referred to as the Robert C. Byrd Scholastic Recognition Fund. When I began it, I began it with money out of my own pocket. In the beginning, a $25 savings bond was presented to each high school valedictorian in the State of West Virginia. That was in 1969. After a while, I established a trust fund for purchasing the savings bonds, which, in recent years, have been $50 bonds. I wanted to reward students—not the athletes, they get their rewards—but the students who work hard to excel in reading and in mathematics and algebra and geometry and music and so on, encourage those students to excel and to recognize them for excellence. As I say, we recognize the great athletes. We don't recognize the best spellers. Often I hear my colleagues talk about their State's No. 1 standing in football teams and so on. The question that occurs to me is how well can they spell? How well can they add and subtract and multiply and divide? How well can they read? That is what we need to reward—the children who are in the libraries and in the laboratories and who are working hard to improve themselves, to get an education.

So I am 100 percent for education but I want to have some confidence, more than I presently have, that my vote to spend the hard-earned dollars of taxpayers will produce a return to merit that investment. I have been voting for Federal aid to education for decades—not just years, for decades—since 1965, to be exact. That was the year in which the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was passed as well as the Higher Education Act. I have been supporting those acts.

But, we still seem to be losing the battle against mediocrity. I do not want to vote against spending for education. But, Mr. President, when do we admit that we are doing poorly, and try something new? It is glaringly apparent from the results of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and other similar studies that increased education funding does not necessarily translate—does not necessarily translate—into higher student achievement levels. An even more recent study, conducted by the Fordham Foundation, a private organization committed to quality-based reform of elementary and secondary education, indicates the low quality of state standards in math and science. In mathematics, the Nation flunks, with only three States out of 50 receiving a grade of an ''A'', and just nine others a grade of ''B''. In science, the United States is just mediocre, if we can call it that, with nine States failing and seven earning ''D's''.

The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation found that our schools are also doing a pretty dismal job of teaching history and geography. I quote from the foreword of the report on history: ''. . . the vast majority of young Americans are attending school in states that do not consider the study of history to be especially important.''

Now think of that.

''. . .the vast majority of young Americans are attending schools in states that do not consider the study of history to be especially important.''

Napoleon said: ''Let my son often read and reflect on history; this is the only true philosophy.'' That was Napoleon.

''No doubt some children are learning lots of solid history from excellent teachers in fine schools. Their good fortune, however, appears to be serendipitous. State standards rarely constitute a ceiling on what can be taught and learned. But it's not unreasonable to view them as the floor below which no child or school should fall . . . when it comes to history, most states have placed that floor where the sub-basement ought to be . . . in only a few instances is history itself the focus of the state academic standards that pertain to it. In most jurisdictions, history remains mired in a curricular swamp called 'social studies,' . . . ''

Social studies is all right. I don't have any quarrel with social studies, but let's also have history. Let's don't substitute social studies for history. There is no substitute for history.

History, of all things, is not thought to be important enough in many of our states to be taught as a separate subject, and that is most unfortunate.

Mr. President, merely continuing along this same path of proliferating education programs and investing more and more Federal dollars into our Nation's education system will not solve the problem of improving the quality of our Nation's students.

I congratulate our colleagues who work diligently on their committees to bring bills to the floor and manage the bills, who are highly dedicated to serving the students of the Nation and to improving the schools of the Nation and to getting better teachers. I congratulate my colleagues for their efforts. They, too, must become discouraged.

On a fundamental level, however, there is something askew with the way we are approaching education in this Nation.

I started out in a little two-room schoolhouse along about 1923, when we did not have hand calculators. Lord, have mercy—calculators? We did not have them. We did not have computers or other high technology. We did not have much money for supplies, just the bare essentials. We got by with spring water. We had only one bucket in the school room. A two-room school; two buckets in the school. I was glad when the teacher chose me from time to time to go with another lad across the hill to the spring to bring back the bucket of water. We all drank out of the same bucket and out of the same dipper.

We didn't have any indoor plumbing. We had an outhouse—a couple of them—and we didn't have electricity. When the storms came, we had to light a candle or a kerosene lamp. So I do know something about so-called ''difficult'' conditions. I am one of those children who started out with the bottom two or three rungs of the ladder gone; they were missing.

In those days, mathematics was about rules, memorized procedures, memorized multiplication tables and other methodical tables. Science was stern stuff. History was about dates and heroes. That is where many of us who went to school in the mountains and hollows of West Virginia learned about our heroes, the people we wanted to be like.

There is where we learned about Nathanael Greene, one of Washington's top generals, perhaps his top one. Francis Marion, the Swamp Fox; Daniel Morgan; Nathan Hale, who died on September 22, 1776, because he had been asked by George Washington to go behind the British lines and to draw pictures of the breastworks and other military excavations, and so on. Hale was discovered the night before he was

about to return. He had these drawings in his pockets. The next morning, he was executed.

He was asked if he had anything he would like to say. He had already asked for a Bible and a chaplain and had been denied both of those. He asked if he had any statement. He said, ''I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.''

So there in our history books is where we children first learned about American heroes, our heroes.

History was about dates and heroes. And with these basics, the United States became a mighty industrial power, a leader in medicine, and a winner of world wars. But, somewhere along the line, we seem to have gotten off the track. Today, our students have algebra textbooks that include discussions of chili recipes and hot pepper varieties. I made a speech on this floor a year or so ago about this and brought the particular so-called algebra book with me. And these textbooks do not even begin to define an algebraic expression until page 107—107 in this particular book, so it is no wonder that our students do not fare better on international tests such as the TIMSS!

On Friday, March 20, I noted an article on the front page of the Washington Post, which reported a new trend among teachers to teach without the benefit of textbooks. The article discussed how teachers are increasingly relying on the Internet or on materials that they prepare themselves, and spurning the traditional student textbook. Now, what is the reason for this phenomenon? I quote from the Post piece, ''Scientific knowledge is expanding so rapidly that many textbooks are outdated only a few years after they are published. Recent political disputes''—get this; this is the Washington Post talking—''Recent political disputes over textbook content have made publishers wary of offending any interest group, and the result is that the books have become bland and shallow, some teachers complain. . . . Some teachers even cite a decline in children's reading skills as a rationale for abandoning the tomes.''

Mr. President, imagine that. Our kids can't read well enough to effectively digest a textbook. And furthermore, textbooks have become such worthless amalgams of touchy-feely, politically correct twaddle, that many teachers are casting them aside in favor of doing the extra work to prepare material themselves.

Mr. President, if we ever hope to improve the quality of students in this country, it is essential that we recultivate an interest in education for its own sake—education for education's sake—not only in our Nation's children, but also in their parents. Our Nation's ailing education system is, in part, influenced by the parents of those children, and of young adults attending high school and college. Parents need to take an active role in their children's education. Without parental involvement, dumbed-down textbooks will continue to creep into the local school systems, and it will be our children and our grandchildren who suffer.

I hope that we do not try to tell the American people that fighting over school vouchers or the size of an education IRA, or even the repair of our school buildings will solve the problem of the often shallow, substandard, low quality education we are offering our kids these days. I strongly suspect that our students' poor performance as scholars has a lot more to do with the general dissolution of the family structure, loss of respect for authority, rampant alcohol and drug use by students even in the lower grades, and a pervasive change in attitudes about the value of discipline, than it does with dilapidated school buildings.

We can rebuild all the school buildings that we want, and, yes, I agree that we undoubtedly need to modernize and to rebuild some of these structures, but let no one believe that school construction will solve what is wrong with education in this country today. The problems assail us from many directions. How can our teachers teach if they have to create their own textbooks as well as attempt to maintain discipline, and please every interest group? When one considers the meager salaries of teachers generally, and having to struggle against the backdrop of a society that glorifies athletics and the attainment of any type of celebrity far more than it cares about scholarship, it is easy to see why good teachers are increasingly hard to come by. How can mundane scholarship, which requires commitment and hard work on the part of the student, compete with sensational television and movies that offer brutal murder, steamy sex, and filthy language as standard daily fare for our young people? What in the world has happened to a society that is intent on rewriting every single discipline from algebra to geometry to history to be sure that those essential basic subjects are, first and foremost, absolutely politically correct? It has taken us over lock, stock and barrel. We are pulverizing essential knowledge and facts to pulp, easily digested by even the laziest and most undisciplined brains—baby pablum for the mind.

So, while we rage on here today about which political party will capture the education issue, let us remember that we are only skimming the surface with any and all of these well-intentioned solutions.

There is something much, much more fundamentally wrong with education in America today than a shortage of funding. The public school system had better shape up, or else public support for it is going to completely erode. And I, for one, am willing to try some new approaches—new approaches—anything that may help our most precious resource.

The Democratic party is not our most precious resource. The Republican party is not our most precious resource in this country. Our children are our most precious resource—our kids. And so I am willing to try some new approaches to achieve the kind of scholastic excellence that our children need and deserve.

My only hope is that someday—someday—in some effective manner, we will find the courage and the practical means to address what amounts to educational child abuse in this Nation in a bipartisan fashion.

It should not make any difference whether the right approach is Democratic or Republican. We ought to forget that stuff. That is mere junk partisanship. What matters is the education of our children.

There is no room for mere political jousting on a matter of such momentous importance to our people and to our Nation. And that is exactly what the country is witnessing in Washington with regard to the education debate—political jousting.

Mr. President, with U.S. high school seniors ranking 19th out of the 21 countries in mathematics, and 16th out of 21 countries in science, we must devote greater attention to stimulating excellence in education. Getting back to the basics is the obvious starting point, and we better start now.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SESSIONS). Under the previous order, there are 2 minutes of debate evenly divided.

Mr. COVERDELL addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. COVERDELL. Parliamentary inquiry. First, I think it has to be said that was a startling speech by the Senator from West Virginia that cuts to the core. I do not think much else needs to be said.

Mr. President, it is my understanding that we are now moving, by previous order, to the votes. The first vote will occur on the Levin amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. COVERDELL. Two minutes equally divided?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Two minutes equally divided.

Mr. LEVIN. Let me thank the Senator from West Virginia for his comments.

AMENDMENT NO. 2303 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2299

Mr. LEVIN. The demands that are being made on teachers, as a matter of fact, are what is behind my amendment, which is to provide a credit to teachers who now have all these new technologies that are brought into the schools to help those teachers go back to learn how to utilize those technologies, should they choose to do so. These demands are huge. We are putting a fortune into computers, software and connectors to Internet and everything else, but we are only putting pennies into the professional development of our teachers.

This amendment would provide a 50 percent tax credit for the cost when

those teachers go back for that training. It pays for it by not allowing the use of this new IRA in the K through 12 area because it is so skewed against public schools. That is the main point here. It keeps the IRA increase for college education, and it keeps other parts of this bill. But what it says is that withdrawals will not be permitted in the K through 12 grades because of the manner in which most of the money goes to private-school families, although they represent only 10 percent of the families with children in schools.

Mr. ROTH. Mr. President, I oppose the Levin amendment as it takes away the ability of parents to use educational IRAs to pay for K through 12 school expenses. It runs contrary to the whole purpose of the Coverdell bill, which is to allow parents greater resources to meet the educational needs of their young children.

Instead, Senator LEVIN wants to take these resources and expand the lifetime learning credit from 20 percent to 50 percent for those teachers who participate in technology training. A 20 percent lifetime learning credit is already available to teachers for continuing education, just as it is for members of other professionals. Let me remind my colleagues that the Coverdell bill already contains a provision that allows teachers to receive tax-free technology training provided by their employer, the school.

We all agree that it is vitally important for teachers to be proficient in the use of technology in the classroom, but this is not the way to do it. This amendment takes the resources of an expanded IRA from our families, our children, and creates a more distorted and complex learning credit.

For these reasons, I oppose this amendment and urge my colleagues to vote against it.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I move to table the amendment offered by the Senator from Michigan, and I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to lay on the table the amendment of the Senator from Michigan.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 61, nays 39, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 99 Leg.]

YEAS—61

Abraham	Cochran	Grassley
Allard	Collins	Gregg
Ashcroft	Coverdell	Hagel
Bennett	Craig	Hatch
Biden	D'Amato	Helms
Bond	DeWine	Hutchinson
Breaux	Domenici	Hutchison
Brownback	Enzi	Inhofe
Burns	Faircloth	Kempthorne
Byrd	Feinstein	Kyl
Campbell	Frist	Lieberman
Chafee	Gorton	Lott
Cleland	Gramm	Lugar
Coats	Grams	Mack
McCain	Sessions	Thomas
McConnell	Shelby	Thompson
Murkowski	Smith (NH)	Thurmond
Nickles	Smith (OR)	Torricelli
Roberts	Snowe	Warner
Roth	Specter	
Santorum	Stevens	

NAYS—39

Akaka	Glenn	Leahy
Baucus	Graham	Levin
Bingaman	Harkin	Mikulski
Boxer	Hollings	Moseley-Braun
Bryan	Inouye	Moynihan
Bumpers	Jeffords	Murray
Conrad	Johnson	Reed
Daschle	Kennedy	Reid
Dodd	Kerrey	Robb
Dorgan	Kerry	Rockefeller
Durbin	Kohl	Sarbanes
Feingold	Landrieu	Wellstone
Ford	Lautenberg	Wyden

The motion to lay on the table the amendment (No. 2303) was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2299, AS AMENDED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the amendment numbered 2299, as previously amended, is agreed to and the motion to reconsider that action is laid on the table.

The amendment (No. 2299), as amended, was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2306

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be 2 minutes of debate, evenly divided, on amendment No. 2306.

Mrs. BOXER addressed the Chair.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the remaining votes in this series be limited to 10 minutes in length.

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

The Senator from California is recognized.

Mr. FORD. Mr. President, parliamentary inquiry: How many votes are we having?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Three additional votes.

The Senator from California is recognized.

Mrs. BOXER. Thank you, Mr. President.

Three weeks ago, my after-school bill was included in the budget agreed to by the Senate. It passed unanimously. Now what we are doing is authorizing the after-school program. It is paid for by cutting Government travel.

My friends, there is absolutely no national after-school grant program today. The after school program I am proposing today will have total local control. Community organizations and businesses will be brought into school buildings that now get padlocked at 3 p.m. when the juvenile crime rate goes up. That is why 170 of the Nation's leading police officers, sheriffs, and prosecutors endorsed after-school programs, so we can lift up our children and raise their academic performance, and keep them out of trouble. We cut Government travel to pay for this program and use school buildings that are lying fallow.

I hope we will have a strong bipartisan vote for this amendment.

Thank you.

Mr. HUTCHINSON addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Mr. President, this is an old formula to identify a problem and then you create a new Federal program that might solve it.

There is a problem. There is a problem with after-school care. The solution is not to create yet another Federal program. We already have four existing programs that allow for after-school care. One of the problems with this amendment, or this program, would be that it would be school-based, school-run, and, therefore, prohibit scores of organizations like the YMCA that are currently providing for after-school care. They would be excluded entirely. There are 19 existing Federal programs that provide tutoring and mentoring for students on a one-on-one basis. So it is simply unnecessary to start a new Federal program at a price tag of $250 million. I ask my colleagues to oppose this amendment.

Mr. COVERDELL addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays on the amendment of the Senator from California.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second? There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment. The yeas and nays have been ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 49, nays 51, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 100 Leg.]

YEAS—49

Akaka	Feingold	Lieberman
Baucus	Feinstein	Mikulski
Biden	Ford	Moseley-Braun
Bingaman	Glenn	Moynihan
Bond	Graham	Murray
Boxer	Harkin	Reed
Breaux	Hollings	Reid
Bryan	Inouye	Robb
Bumpers	Johnson	Rockefeller
Byrd	Kennedy	Sarbanes
Cleland	Kerrey	Snowe
Conrad	Kerry	Specter
D'Amato	Kohl	Torricelli
Daschle	Landrieu	Wellstone
Dodd	Lautenberg	Wyden
Dorgan	Leahy	
Durbin	Levin	

NAYS—51

Abraham	Frist	Mack
Allard	Gorton	McCain
Ashcroft	Gramm	McConnell
Bennett	Grams	Murkowski
Brownback	Grassley	Nickles
Burns	Gregg	Roberts
Campbell	Hagel	Roth
Chafee	Hatch	Santorum
Coats	Helms	Sessions
Cochran	Hutchinson	Shelby
Collins	Hutchison	Smith (NH)
Coverdell	Inhofe	Smith (OR)
Craig	Jeffords	Stevens
DeWine	Kempthorne	Thomas
Domenici	Kyl	Thompson
Enzi	Lott	Thurmond
Faircloth	Lugar	Warner

The amendment (No. 2306) was rejected.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. CRAIG. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2309

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SMITH of Oregon). The question is now on amendment No. 2309, offered by Mr. COVERDELL. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, may we have order in the Chamber?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will be in order. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, this is the reading excellence amendment. It is designed to attack the reading deficiency. We have 40 million Americans who could not read a phone book or a medicine label. The President of the United States called for this initiative to be adopted by the Senate. Senator KENNEDY from Massachusetts spoke on behalf of the amendment. In deference to time, it is my understanding both sides will be agreeable to a voice vote, which I will call for after we have heard from the Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, may we have order?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will be in order. The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I want to just commend Senator COVERDELL for focusing on the issue of literacy. As we know, President Clinton advanced a literacy program in 1996. Our colleague, Senator JEFFORDS, has been having the hearings on this literacy issue in his committee and has been a leader on literacy issues—child literacy, family literacy, and adult literacy programs. I am very hopeful we will have a good bill that will be strong and bipartisan in the very near future. So I hope everyone will support this program.

I want to just mention quickly the concern that I have is that it is too prescriptive in terms of how it develops the programs. The Academy of Sciences has outlined a series of ways of doing it. I think we ought to consider that. It establishes a new State bureaucracy. I think we ought to build on the States. The tutorial programs are not school based, and I think they would be stronger if they were.

These are important issues, but what I think is enormously encouraging is that we have strong, bipartisan commitment to try to work out in the very near future a strong bipartisan literacy program. I commend Senator COVERDELL for developing this amendment and his strong commitment to work with all of us. We look forward to working with him to get a good, strong bill.

Mr. COVERDELL. I thank the Senator from Massachusetts. My understanding is that the Chair is prepared to call for a voice vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to amendment No. 2309.

The amendment (No. 2309) was agreed to.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote by which the amendment was agreed to.

Mr. FORD. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2308

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, am I correct that the pending business is the vote on the Bingaman amendment?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, this amendment tries to begin to focus national attention and some resources on the problem of students who drop out of school before they complete high school.

In 1989, when President Bush and the 50 Governors met and set some national education goals for the country, one of those goals was that we would have at least 90 percent of our students complete high school before they left school. At that time, 86 percent of our students were completing high school before they left. Today, it continues to be 86 percent. We have done absolutely nothing to reach this very important national goal.

Mr. FORD. Mr. President, may we have order? It is getting a little out of hand here. The Senator from New Mexico deserves to be heard, the same as those on the other side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will come to order. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, thank you, and I thank my colleague from Kentucky.

This amendment is offered on behalf of myself, Senator REID, Senator FEINSTEIN, and Senator CHAFEE. It is bipartisan. It is an important bipartisan issue. We have always before, at least since the national goal was established in 1989, found excuses to not do anything to follow up and achieve the goal. This time we need to go ahead and commit some Federal resources to help local school districts solve this problem. This amendment is a step in that direction. I hope very much that people will support the amendment.

Mr. COVERDELL addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I rise in opposition to Senator BINGAMAN's amendment. Under the Senator's amendment, $125 million is authorized for grants in the first year alone. It would create an office of dropout prevention in the Department of Education. The amendment would allow for the creation of a dropout czar at the Department of Education.

As Senator FRIST so eloquently stated when the amendment was debated earlier, he suggested as chairman of the Budget Committee's task force on education that we look to creative ways to assist all of our students, proposals such as the block grant, which the Senate agreed to only yesterday, which will allow States and localities the flexibility to decide for themselves how to best spend education dollars.

Senator FRIST argued that this amendment adds yet to the complexity of an already encumbered Federal Department of Education. I call on my colleagues to oppose the amendment of the Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to amendment No. 2308. The yeas and nays have been ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 74, nays 26, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 101 Leg.]

YEAS—74

Abraham	Dorgan	Lieberman
Akaka	Durbin	McCain
Baucus	Faircloth	McConnell
Bennett	Feinstein	Mikulski
Biden	Ford	Moseley-Braun
Bingaman	Glenn	Moynihan
Bond	Graham	Murkowski
Boxer	Gramm	Murray
Breaux	Harkin	Reed
Bryan	Hatch	Reid
Bumpers	Hollings	Robb
Burns	Hutchison	Rockefeller
Byrd	Inouye	Roth
Campbell	Jeffords	Santorum
Chafee	Johnson	Sarbanes
Cleland	Kempthorne	Smith (NH)
Collins	Kennedy	Smith (OR)
Conrad	Kerrey	Snowe
Coverdell	Kerry	Specter
Craig	Kohl	Stevens
D'Amato	Kyl	Torricelli
Daschle	Landrieu	Warner
DeWine	Lautenberg	Wellstone
Dodd	Leahy	Wyden
Domenici	Levin	

NAYS—26

Allard	Grams	Mack
Ashcroft	Grassley	Nickles
Brownback	Gregg	Roberts
Coats	Hagel	Sessions
Cochran	Helms	Shelby
Enzi	Hutchinson	Thomas
Feingold	Inhofe	Thompson
Frist	Lott	Thurmond
Gorton	Lugar	

The amendment (No. 2308) was agreed to.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. LOTT. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

MODIFICATION TO AMENDMENT NO. 2299

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to modify Amendment No. 2299, previously agreed to, making technical changes, which I have at the desk.

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

The modification is as follows:

Change the instruction line to read:

Strike section 101 as amended and insert the following:

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE—VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 2305

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. President, prior to the noon hour today, the Senate cast a roll call vote on our colleague Senator DODD's amendment No. 2305 to H.R. 2646, the Coverdell Education bill. This vote to waive the Budget Act with respect to the Dodd amendment failed by a vote of 46–53. I was unavoidably detained in the Physician's Office of the Capitol, but would have voted against waiving the Budget Act. My vote would not have altered the final outcome of the vote.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, just so all Members will be aware of what we are talking about at this point—and I do not have a unanimous consent request ready at this moment, but I will have one momentarily for Senator DASCHLE to review—we will be having additional votes tonight. We try to accommodate Senators' schedules, but we believe we can get an agreement for final debate on the education bill and then have a recorded vote. That I presume would occur sometime around 7 o'clock, or earlier if some time is yielded back. That will be followed, if we can enter the agreement, by a debate of approximately 30 minutes on the resolution dealing with Northern Ireland and a vote after that.

I assume we will have then two additional votes tonight, and then we will have a further announcement about the schedule on Friday, but with no recorded votes on Friday, and Monday with likely recorded votes, at least a vote at 5:30 on Monday. But we will have that for each leader to review momentarily, and we will be asking for consent to that effect.

I yield the floor. Is any Senator seeking recognition?

I observe the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. LOTT. In the interest of making sure we utilize all time that is available, we have here and ready to speak Senators who are interested in the resolution with regard to Ireland.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE HISTORIC NORTHERN IRELAND PEACE AGREEMENT

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the current resolution regarding Ireland; that there be 30 minutes for debate only, equally divided between the majority and minority leaders or their designees; that no motions or amendments be in order, and at the conclusion of yielding back of time, we have the vote on the resolution on Ireland immediately following the education vote. So it would be stacked, those two—first the education vote and then the vote on the Ireland resolution.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? The Chair hears none, and it is so ordered.

Mr. LOTT. I yield the floor, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Con. Res. 90) to acknowledge the historic Northern Ireland peace agreement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

Mr. DODD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut is recognized.

The Senator controls 15 minutes on his side.

Mr. DODD. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, I offer this resolution on behalf of myself, Senators KENNEDY, MOYNIHAN; the Democrat leader, Senator DASCHLE; Senator LEAHY; Senator LAUTENBERG; Senator KERRY; Senator MACK; Senator D'AMATO; Senator HARKIN; and Senator BIDEN.

Mr. President, today we are here considering this resolution when there are renewed hopes for peace in Northern Ireland, hopes that spring from the successful conclusion of 22 months of negotiations on April 10, Good Friday. I do not think it was mere coincidence that it was during Holy Week, one of the most sacred periods in the Christian calendar, that this small miracle occurred, the possibility of peace, political stability, and reconciliation for the 1.6 million people who reside in the six counties of Northern Ireland. Many people deserve credit and congratulations for making this small miracle possible.

First, we should commend the individuals who participated in the peace process for more than 3 years and stayed the course. It took courage on their parts, as Senator Mitchell noted, ''to compete in the arena of democracy.''

I think it is fair to say that one of the giants over the years in Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland peace efforts has been John Hume of Derry, a long-time civil rights crusader and respected leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party. John Hume deserves great praise for his tireless efforts over the past 30 years to bring peace to his people. David Trimble, president of the Ulster Unionist Party, and Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Fein, were also indispensable in making a final agreement possible.

They, along with other participants, deserve enormous credit for their persistence and determination, for their willingness to make honorable compromises so that the people of Ireland can look forward to a day when hatred and bloodshed are not part of their daily landscape.

Let me also take a moment, if I may, to mention a few of the other key actors in this drama who warrant special recognition. First, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who made the search for peace one of his first priorities upon assuming office last year. He did so because he believed that the people of Belfast ''deserve a better future than a life of bloodshed, murder and disharmony.''

Equally important to the success of the process was the Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, also was new to the office, who inspired trust and confidence in the nationalist community. They knew of his commitment to ensuring that any final agreement would protect and guarantee the rights, freedoms, and traditions of the Irish Catholic minority in the north.

It goes without saying that the American people can be justifiably proud of the role played by President Clinton throughout the process. Were it not for the President's vision, perseverance, and unwillingness to give up on the negotiations, we would not be here today talking about a new chapter in the history of Northern Ireland.

Perhaps President Clinton refused to be discouraged because he had looked into the eyes of so many men and women during his visit to Belfast in 1995 and saw how deeply they yearned for peace, most especially peace for their children.

Last but not least, there was Senator George Mitchell, our former colleague, who shepherded the parties to an agreement. As someone who served with Senator Mitchell, it came as no surprise to me that George found a way to overcome what at times appeared to be insurmountable differences among the parties.

With patience, evenhandedness and acute political skills, Senator Mitchell guided and empowered the parties to find common ground and finalize an agreement.

The tireless efforts of Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith should also be acknowledged. She was there at every turn to keep everyone focused on what was happening throughout the process, and to ensure that at appropriate moments, the necessary encouragement from the United States was forthcoming.

I should mention as well that our own colleague, Senator EDWARD KENNEDY of Massachusetts, played a very, very important role over many years to encourage a political and peaceful resolution of the problems in the north.

There have been others of our colleagues here in this Chamber, Senator MOYNIHAN of New York, Senator LEAHY of Vermont, Senator MACK of Florida, and in the other body PETER KING of New York, Congressman NEAL of Massachusetts, BEN GILMAN, of New York, JOE KENNEDY of Massachusetts all of whom have been deeply committed to finding a peaceful solution to Ireland's Troubles. I know there are others as well, but these are the names that come to mind immediately who, for many, many years sought to bring