What this amendment will do is provide that assistance to those schools immediately when the failing nature of that school is recognized. I think this is an extremely important amendment. It is something we ought to do. I hope this is considered by each Senator as a good-faith effort to better use the funds we are spending in this bill.

Once again, I remind all my colleagues, this amendment does not add money to the bill. This is not a question of whether we are going to spend more or less on education. It is a question of how effectively we can spend the funds we are going to spend.

Mr. President, I gather my time is up. I yield the floor at this time and wait for the response, if there is any opposition to the amendment, which I certainly hope there is not.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time in opposition?

Without objection, the Chair, acting in my capacity as an individual Senator from Kansas, notes the absence of a quorum, and the clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COVERDELL. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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. COVERDELL. Mr. President, the Bingaman amendment will provide $200 million from the funds the committee provided for basic and concentration grants to support State and local accountability efforts to identify school failure and provide progressively more interventions to turn around the performance of the local school. Under the current law, States may now reserve 0.5 percent for such activity. This amendment would set aside $200 million, or 2.5 percent, specifically for State and local accountability efforts. States would not, therefore, be given the choice of whether or not to spend funds for accountability purposes which resemble very much a mandate. This amendment would take education funds away from States to educate low-income students. Most States already have adopted statewide accountability systems that include State assessments to measure whether students are meeting State standards, report cards that summarize performance of individual schools, and rating systems that determine whether a school's performance is adequate.

The authorizing committees have not had the opportunity to carefully examine the issue of whether to increase the amount set aside for accountability. Hearings should be held where States can express their views, and this issue should be addressed during the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia has 12 minutes 42 seconds.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, may I ask if the Senator will yield for a question?

Mr. COVERDELL. I would be glad to yield for a question.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I was informed that the Governors Association supports this amendment, and that the States would want the initial ability to use these funds. Does the Senator have information to the contrary? I know he raised a concern about requiring States to do something different. My information is that this is the authority they would want.

Mr. COVERDELL. I am advised by the committee staff that we don't have the same information the Senator has just expressed, so I cannot comment one way or the other.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I might just respond that we will try to get that information to the Senator from Georgia before the vote occurs at 11:30.

Mr. COVERDELL. Very good. I appreciate the comment of the Senator.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WELLSTONE. 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. WELLSTONE. Would it be in order for me to call up my amendment in order to move on? I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up amendment numbered 1842.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection to setting aside the amendment?

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, reserving the right to object——

Mr. WELLSTONE. Just to be clear to colleagues, I thought we were finished and were trying to move along. I am willing to wait, if Senator BINGAMAN wishes to continue.

Mr. COVERDELL. We may wish to continue.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Very well.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WELLSTONE. 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. WELLSTONE. I wonder whether I could ask unanimous consent for 3 minutes as in morning business to make a statement while we are in deliberations. I ask unanimous consent to be able to do that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I do not object to yielding 3 minutes of time as in morning business, and that following that we go back to this.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Absolutely. I am trying to make the best use of our time, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized for 3 minutes.

MERGERS IN THE MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRIES

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, we are in the midst of an unprecedented wave of mergers and concentration in the media and the communications industries. We are talking about the flow of information in democracy and whether a few are going to control this. But instead of doing anything about it, to protect American consumers or to safeguard the flow of information that our democracy depends upon, I am troubled by efforts underway to undermine protections that are already on the books.

I cite that the CBS-Viacom merger announced last month would be the biggest media deal ever. Today, the FCC announced its approval of a merger between SBC and Ameritech. On Tuesday, Clear Channel Communications announced that it is buying AMFM to create a huge radio conglomerate with 830 stations that will dominate American radio.

I am amazed so few people are concerned about these developments. The reason I rise to speak about this is that when FCC Chairman Bill Kennard is so bold as to point out that the MCI-Sprint deal would undermine competition, he is simply doing his job. I want to say on the floor of the Senate, he should not be punished for doing his job.

Last year, when the FCC approved the merger of Worldcom and MCI, Chairman Kennard said the industry was one merger away from undue concentration. Now this merger would be the one that pushes us over the top.

So when Antitrust Division Chief Joel Klein of the Justice Department brings some very difficult cases to enforce our country's antitrust laws, he is simply doing his job. When FCC Chairman Bill Kennard raises these kinds of questions, he is simply doing his job.

We cannot expect these agencies to enforce our laws, to do their job, if we take away their budgets or their statutory authority every time they do it. We need to strengthen our review of these mergers. We need to strength our antitrust laws, on which I think we have to do much better. And we need to give the Justice Department, the FTC, and the FCC the resources they need to enforce the law.

So more than anything else, I rise to support Bill Kennard's concerns, to tell him he is doing his job, and urge my colleagues to understand that he has an important responsibility to protect the consumers. The flow of information in our democracy is the most important thing we have. He certainly

should not be punished for doing his job and doing his job well.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, AND EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000—Continued

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, is there time remaining on the amendment I have offered?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is not. All time has expired.

Mr. BINGAMAN. I ask for the yeas and nays on the amendment.

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 Senator from Georgia.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the vote occur in relation to the Bingaman amendment at 11:15, with 2 minutes equally divided prior to the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, may we have 4 minutes equally divided?

Mr. COVERDELL. I change the unanimous consent to ask that we have 4 minutes equally divided.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Minnesota.

AMENDMENT NO. 1842

(Purpose: To express the sense of the Senate regarding the importance of determining the economic status of former recipients of temporary assistance to needy families)

Mr. WELLSTONE. I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment, and I call up amendment No. 1842.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Minnesota [Mr. WELLSTONE] proposes an amendment numbered 1842.

The amendment is as follows:

At the appropriate place add the following:

SEC. . It is the sense of the Senate that it is important that Congress determine the economic status of former recipients of assistance under the temporary assistance to needy families program funded under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.).

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, let me first explain this amendment to colleagues and then marshal my evidence for it.

I believe we will have a good, strong vote on the floor of the Senate for this amendment. I have introduced a similar amendment in the past, which lost by one vote, but I have now changed the amendment which I think will make it more acceptable to colleagues.

In the 1996 welfare law we passed, we set aside $1 billion for high-performance bonuses to go to States, and currently this money goes to States. The way it works is, it uses a formula that takes into account the State's effectiveness in enabling TANF recipients to find jobs, which is terribly important. The whole goal of the welfare bill was to move families from welfare dependency to becoming economically independent.

This amendment would add three more criteria. We have had, in the last year or two, a dramatic decline in food stamp participation, about a 25-percent decline. This should be of concern to all of us because the Food Stamp Program has been the most important safety net program for poor children in our country. Indeed, it was President Nixon, a Republican President, who, in 1972, federalized this program and said: One thing we are going to do as a national community is make sure children aren't going hungry in our country. We are going to make sure we have a program with national standards and that those families who are eligible to participate are, indeed, able to obtain this assistance.

In addition, what we want to find out is the proportion of families leaving TANF who were covered by Medicaid or health insurance. Families USA, which is an organization that has tremendous credibility with all of us, issued a disturbing report a few months ago. To summarize it, because of the welfare bill, there are about 670,000 Americans who no longer have any health care coverage.

Maybe that is worth repeating. Because of the welfare bill, there are about 670,000 Americans who no longer have any coverage. Since about two-thirds of welfare recipients have always been children—this was, after all, mainly for mothers and children—we want to make sure these children and these families still have health care coverage.

We want to also make sure we get some information about the number of children in these working families who receive some form of affordable child care. In other words, again, what we want to find out is, as families move from welfare to work, which is the goal—and I think work with dignity is terribly important—we also want to make sure the children are OK.

Again, I will use but one of many examples. It will take me some time to develop my argument, but one very gripping example, I say to the Chair, is when I was in east LA, I was meeting with a group of Head Start mothers. As we were discussing the Head Start Program and their children, one of the mothers was telling me she had been a welfare mother and was emphasizing that she was working. Indeed, she was quite proud of working. In the middle of our discussion, all of a sudden she became upset and started to cry.

I asked her: If I am poking my nose into your business, pay no attention to me, but can you tell me why you are so upset? She said: The one problem with my working is when my second grader goes home—she lived in a housing project; later I visited that housing project—it is a pretty dangerous area. It used to be I could walk my second grader to school, and then I could walk her home, make sure she was OK. I was there with her. Now I am always frightened, especially after school. I tell her to go home, and I tell her to lock the door. I tell her not to take any phone calls because no one is there.

It makes us wonder how many children are in apartments where they have locked the door and can't take any phone calls and can't go outside to play, even when it is a beautiful day. I think we do need to know how the children are faring and what is going on. Again, this is a matter of doing some good policy evaluation.

Finally, for those States that have adopted the family violence option, which we were able to do with the help of my wife Sheila and Senator PATTY MURRAY, we want to know how well they are doing in providing the services for victims of domestic violence. This is important. The family violence option essentially said we are not saying these mothers should be exempt. What we are saying is there should be an opportunity for States to be able to say to the Federal Government—it would be up to States, and they would not be penalized for that—look, this woman has been battered and beaten over and over again and we are not going to get her to work as quickly as we are other mothers; there are additional support services she needs. When she goes to work, this guy is there threatening her. Because of these kinds of circumstances, please give us more flexibility.

We want to find out how these States are dealing with that. Otherwise, what happens is if you don't have that kind of flexibility, then a mother finds herself sanctioned if she doesn't take the job; but she can't really take the job and, therefore, the only thing she ends up doing is going back into a very dangerous home. She has left, she has tried to get away, and she is trying to be safe. If you cut off her assistance, then she has no other choice but to go back into a very dangerous home.

That should not happen in America. By the way, colleagues, I know it is an incredible statistic, but October is the month we focus on violence in homes. I wish it didn't happen. About the most conservative statistic is that every 13 seconds a woman is battered in her home in our country. I can't even grasp the meaning of that. A home should be a safe place.