

ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2005

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, the Senate adjourn until 9 a.m. on Wednesday, March 16. I further ask that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved, and the Senate then resume consideration of S. Con. Res. 18, the budget resolution; provided further that Senator FEINSTEIN then be recognized for 20 minutes as provided under the previous order; further, that following those remarks, Senator SPECTER be recognized to offer the NIH amendment under the limitations provided under the earlier agreement.

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

PROGRAM

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, tomorrow the Senate will resume consideration of the budget resolution. We will continue the amendment process tomorrow morning. Under the previous order, we will conclude debate on five amendments during tomorrow morning's session. It is anticipated that we will have votes in relation to all five of these amendments around 1 p.m. tomorrow, and we will keep Senators posted as to the timing of these stacked series of votes.

For the remainder of the day, the Senate will continue working through the amendments on the budget resolution. We have made good progress on the resolution thus far, but we still have a long way to go prior to passage. We will be very busy over the next couple of days, and Senators should continue to make themselves available for the remainder of the week.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. CRAIG. If there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask the Senate stand in adjournment under the previous order, following the remarks of Senator HARKIN for up to 10 minutes.

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

The Senator from Iowa.

PERKINS VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION ACT AMENDMENT

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I have an amendment that I just sent to the desk. It is pending. I will not call it up now or ask unanimous consent, but I will do so at some point, probably tomorrow. I want to take this time to at least lay out the reasons for this amendment and what it does, because I know what the crunch will be like tomorrow when we come back here.

The budget resolution for fiscal year 2006 basically eliminates funding for an enormously effective and popular education program called the Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act. The straightforward purposes of my amendment, which I will offer for myself, Senator DURBIN, Senator MURRAY, and others, are, first, to restore funding to the Perkins Vocational Education Act; second, to reduce the deficit; and, third, to offset the costs by rescinding two tax-cut provisions in the 2001 tax bill.

These tax-cut provisions, the so-called PEP and Pease phaseout provisions, are scheduled to start taking effect next year for the first time.

President Kennedy used to say that to govern is to choose. Right now the budget resolution chooses very unwisely. It eliminates funding for a critical education program, vocational education, while allowing to stand two new tax cuts. While these two new tax cuts cost \$23 billion in the first 5 years, after that the costs explode. They will cost at least \$146 billion in lost revenue in the coming decade, with 97 percent of the benefits going to those earning at least \$200,000 a year.

This is the wrong choice. The budget resolution does not reflect the priorities of the American people. Overall, the budget resolution would cut funding for education, the first cut in education funding in 10 years. It underfunds the President's No Child Left Behind Act by \$12 billion. It leaves behind nearly 3 million children who could be fully funded and fully served if title I were funded at the authorized level. And, as I said, it eliminates all the funding for the Perkins Vocational Education Act.

This is one I am particularly concerned about. It is a program that was just reauthorized in the Senate on a bipartisan basis by a vote of 99 to 0. The Perkins Act makes possible a broad range of vocational and technical education programs for millions of young people and adults. It is a true lifeline for students at risk of dropping out of school.

For millions of these at-risk students, vocational education programs are relevant, and they are meaningful. They give kids a reason to stick it out until graduation, maybe to go on to a community college, and they lead to good, solid jobs.

In Iowa alone, elimination of the Perkins Vocational Education Program would impact 93,000 high school students and more than 37,000 community college students. The impact nationwide would be a disaster for millions of students.

We are eliminating the Perkins Vocational Education Program for two new tax cuts? Overwhelmingly for the most affluent? This makes no sense. In fact, it borders on the obscene.

Our friends on the other side might claim the budget resolution does not expressly eliminate the vocational education program, but the reality is this

budget resolution effectively endorses the budget proposed by President Bush, and President Bush endorsed eliminating the Perkins program.

So there are only two ways to retain funding for vocational education under this budget resolution: either cut other educational programs or increase the overall allocation for education.

This chart here shows what I mean. Right here basically you have a puzzle. We put it all together. This is education. We have title I, we have after-school centers, we have special ed, bilingual ed, impact aid, Pell grants—all the things that make up our education plan.

What is left out? Vocational education, ed tech, TRIO, Safe and Drug-free Schools, arts education. These are left out.

Someone on the Budget Committee might say, we didn't say that voc ed couldn't be funded, but here are all the things we fund. If you want to put voc ed back into the puzzle, what do you take out? Because, you see, this is the limit. We only have this much money. If you put voc ed in, do we take the money away from title I or do we take it away from Pell grants? How about special ed; do we take money away from special ed to put it back in? Or do we make the square bigger and then put it in, so we don't take anything away from the educational programs that are already there.

That is exactly what my amendment accomplishes. We add more overall funding to the educational budget. How do we do this? Where do we get the money? My amendment offsets the cost of restoring the Perkins program. It also reduces the deficit by rescinding two tax cuts that have not even taken effect yet. Both of these tax cuts, the so-called PEP and Pease provisions, were enacted in 2001 and they start next year.

We have a unique opportunity. We are not proposing to repeal or undo a tax cut that is already in effect. Rather, we are saying that because of radically transformed budgetary circumstances—that is the huge debt we are in, the deficits we are running up—we are not going to go forward with two new tax cuts that haven't even taken effect yet, two new tax cuts we can no longer afford.

When PEP and Pease were put in in 2000, the argument was made that we had all of these budget surpluses that were left over from President Clinton, and we could afford it. That was then and this is now.

Because of the surge in Federal spending, because of the deficits since President Bush has taken office, the surpluses left by President Clinton are gone. Instead, we are looking at projected deficits in excess of \$200 billion a year, and annual deficits in excess of \$500 billion a year decades from now, unless we straighten out our house.

It makes good sense to stop these two new tax cuts from going into effect next year—\$146 billion that this will cost us over 10 years.