

a positive way by moving on these areas of agreement in a comprehensive reform approach.

Mr. Speaker, I include the Washington Post article for the RECORD.

[From the Washington Post, Sept. 15, 1997]

#### WRONG MOVE ON EDUCATION

The Senate voted almost casually last week in effect to abolish most of the current forms of federal aid to elementary and secondary schools for the year ahead by merging them into two block grants to school districts. The 51-49 roll call after only perfunctory debate seemed mainly meant to score a political point—that Republicans, all but four of whom supported the amendment, favor local control of schools, while Democrats, all of whom opposed it, would have the federal government dictate school policy. But the issue is phony. Democrats no more than Republicans favor anything like federal control of the schools, of which there is scant danger—and the schools deserve better from the Senate than to be used as political stage props.

The federal government pays only a small share of the cost of elementary and secondary education—about 6 percent. The rest is state and local. The federal role thus never has been to sustain the schools, but fill gaps and push mildly in what have seemed to be neglected directions. About half the federal money—some \$6 billion a year—has been aimed since the 1960s at providing so-called compensatory education for lower-income children. The block grant amendment, by Sen. Slade Gordon, would have the effect of converting this into general aid. The requirement that the money be spent on poorer students would be dropped in favor of letting school districts spend it as they “deem appropriate.” That’s more than just a shift to local control; it’s a shift away from a long-standing sensible effort to concentrate the limited federal funds on those in greatest need. Does Congress really want to reverse that policy?

Most other Department of Education programs—though not such popular ones as aid to the disabled—would be bunched in the second block grant. As in most departments, a pretty good case can be made for some such bunching. Some programs are always floating around for which the original rationale was weak or has faded and that are too small to warrant separate administration. But that’s true of only some, not all, of those Mr. Gorton would dispatch. Example: the Senate voted Thursday in favor of a compromise version of the national testing program the president supports—but in voting for the block grant, as Education Secretary Richard Riley observed, “It then voted to eliminate the funding for this purpose.”

Other special-purpose programs in aid of particular groups or in support of reform likewise would disappear, the secretary said, including several the president has touted as evidence of his commitment to education. The president and Democrats generally have made effective political use of the education issue in the past few years. Block-granting would leave them less of a stage from which to do so.

The Gorton amendment would be only for a year, at which point the appropriations bill to which it was attached would lapse, and the issue would have to be fought all over again. That’s another reason why, even if mainly for show, it was the wrong way to do business. Mr. Riley was authorized to say it was “unacceptable” to the administration, meaning presumably that the president would veto the bill if the amendment were to survive in conference. He’d be right to do so.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HASTINGS of Washington). The Chair would remind Members or caution them not to characterize action of the Senate or to quote from publications which are critical of the Senate.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I am sorry. I did not know that we cannot quote from publications.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are not to characterize action of the Senate in any way, critical or otherwise.

#### THE YEAR 2000 PROBLEM: CAN IT BE MANAGED?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from California [Mr. HORN] is recognized for 30 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. HORN. Mr. Speaker, as many of my colleagues know, we have a major problem coming up on January 1, the year 2000. It is called the “Year 2000 Problem”, and it relates to our problems with computers that have been programmed going back into the sixties, where we had very little capacity and somebody came up with the bright idea that we could save a few digits here and there by not putting 19 before the year. If it is 1967, let us just put in ‘67 and we can do all our subtraction and addition based on that.

As we near the year and the day of January 1, 2000, we face the problem of thousands and tens of thousands of computers within the Federal Government, throughout the private sector, State government and other parts of society where we will have 00 and the computer will not know whether it is the year 1900 or the year 2000.

Now, this affects millions of people in terms of Federal entitlements, in determining age eligibility, and so this is the second report card that the Subcommittee on Government Management, Information, and Technology, which I chair, has issued. The other one was last year. We first began focusing attention on this matter in April 1996. We urged the administration to focus attention on this problem.

The big problem that year was to get the administration to make an estimate as to what it would cost to make the conversions, where lines of code, some of them placed in computers in the sixties, the seventies, the eighties, and the nineties have to be brought up on the screen. That information has to be looked at, by a technician, who determines: Is this date relevant? If so, should we save it? And if we are going to save it, we need that date to be in 4-digit years, not 2-digit years.

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We now have unbelievable capacity in our computers. Many laptops have a storage capacity now that would take a whole room of computers to provide

such storage in the sixties. So this is a solvable problem. But there are no easy answers. If there were, somebody would be a billionaire in solving this problem. So I urge high school students that might watch this to think about how they can fit into helping us solve this crisis, because it is a crisis and it involves not only the Federal systems but State systems, and systems in local governments and the private sector.

When we held our hearings in April 1996, we had experts in computing estimate that this was a \$600 billion worldwide problem. And since half the computers are in the United States, it is a \$300 billion problem for the United States in private and public sectors. The Gartner Group also estimated that the Federal Government had a \$30 billion problem. I thought that was high. But we are not sure. We will know on January 1, 2000.

We asked in the appropriations legislation last year for the submission by the President of the budget it would take to solve this year 2000 problem. The budget for fiscal year 1998 that will end September 30, 1998 and will begin on October 1, 1997, which is just a few weeks away. We asked the administration to give us a recommendation. The recommendation was that it was a \$2.3 billion problem to make the various renovations and conversions of existing computer systems in the executive branch.

I must say I had a hearty laugh when I read that figure. I felt that was so far out of touch with reality that maybe it was not even worth considering. So we held a hearing and we had a number of key experts testify. Obviously, one major user of computers is the Department of Defense. We had the very able Assistant Secretary for Command, Control, Communications, and Intelligence General Emmett Paige, Jr., as a witness. We asked him about the administration figure of \$2.3 billion for the whole executive branch. He smiled and responded that \$1 billion of that \$2.3 billion was his recommendation; and that DOD has not even started to look at the assessment to see what is really there in the thousands of systems that the Department of Defense has responsibility to operate.

So we knew that the administration had not quite done its homework. What we have been pressuring for the last few months is to get a much more solid figure on which Congress could depend.

I have very high regard for the Director of OMB, the Office of Management and Budget. Dr. Franklin Raines is a very able person. He immediately started to get on top of this when he became Director last fall. He is planning to make it a major issue in his budget reviews as the Cabinet departments, independent agencies, and smaller commissions come before the Office of Management and Budget to prepare their recommendations to the President for fiscal year 1999 that will begin October 1, 1998.