

of \$1,400 in extra income tax each year because they chose to get married. The Tax Code in its simplest form should encourage people to get married and not leave them with a heavy tax bill because they did get married. I look forward to working with Senator HUTCHISON, from Texas, on eliminating this tax.

Mr. President, the Republican Congress needs to return to its core values. We need to reduce taxes and get on with the job of helping American families and especially young American families that are just starting out. The American families are working and saving to send their children to college. They are trying to save for their own retirement and, in many cases, to look after elderly parents. In spite of all this, today we have a higher tax burden on them than ever before. We are still taking 38 percent of a family's income. People have to work until May 7 of each year before they begin working for themselves. We need to reduce taxes. The Budget Committee has taken a step in the right direction by proposing \$30 billion in tax cuts. As I repeat, what better way to spend the money? We need the marriage penalty relief and we need it before next year.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

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

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KEMPTHORNE). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. MOSELEY-BRAUN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Ms. MOSELEY-BRAUN. I would like to take as much time as I may require in morning business.

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

EDUCATION SAVINGS ACT FOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Ms. MOSELEY-BRAUN. Mr. President, tomorrow, I understand, the Senate will begin debate on S. 1133, probably one of the most important debates on education that this Senate will take up this year. This is a vitally important debate, so I want to take this along with other opportunities to talk about various aspects of the underlying legislation, that is, S. 1133, as well as amendments that I and others intend to offer which we believe represent a better approach to education policy at this time in our Nation's history.

At the outset, let me say that the underlying bill will allow families to put up to \$2,000 a year into special education savings accounts and then allow those families to withdraw those funds to meet the costs of attending private or religious schools, middle schools and high schools. Contributions into these accounts would not be tax deductible, but interest on the accounts would be tax free.

There are several problems with this proposal, and I would like to discuss them. But I think the most important point was made this afternoon by the minority leader when he asked the question, is that all there is? Given the tremendous need for educational resources, for providing national support for our elementary and secondary schools in this country, given the results just last week of international tests that showed the United States coming in dead last in science and math, below even some Third World countries, given the need of our country to prepare this next generation of Americans for their role and leadership in this world economy, in this technological age, it seems to me we should be able to engage a more appropriate national response to the tremendous need for educational support than this proposal provides.

In the first instance, the changes made to the Education IRAs by S. 1133 will only give families an average annual benefit of \$7. That is to say, the average annual benefit to a family with a child in the public schools will be \$7 a year—\$7. And that \$7 will cost an estimated \$1.6 billion over the next 10 years. Seven dollars a year. I think it is appropriate to ask, is that all there is? Is this the best we can come up with in response to the crisis in education our country is facing?

Mr. President, \$7 a year is hardly a windfall for American families. It is not enough to cover the expense in a day, in most instances, of pencils or crayons or construction paper for that matter. But the point is that with \$7 we will essentially be providing what some have referred to as leeches to cure a disease. That is to say, we will be draining away resources from our public school system in order to provide an average of \$7 a year for parents. That is not good policy. That is not practical. And certainly that is an inadequate response to the challenges we face in education policy.

Some have argued that the bill is a good idea because it represents savings policy; we want to encourage Americans to save. And, of course, it is almost an article of faith that Americans do not save as much as citizens of other industrialized countries. We want to do everything we can to bolster the savings rate in this country.

Of course, I agree with that proposition; we do want to encourage people to save. But this is bad savings policy. The purpose of IRAs, individual retirement accounts, is to encourage long-term savings, again, by definition, for retirement. The proposal today makes a mockery of that concept, allowing withdrawals to begin only a few years after contributions have been made. It has nothing to do with retirement and has nothing to do with long-term savings. There is no benefit associated with contributions into these education IRAs. It is when the withdrawals are made that the benefit is realized. There are no taxes paid on with-

drawals from the accounts, no matter how much the contributions have grown over time. So the benefits, therefore, are directly related to the length of time that the money remains in these accounts.

By allowing withdrawals only a few years after contributions have started, this bill ensures that the only people who will be able to see any noticeable benefit at all from those accounts will be those who can afford the maximum contribution every year. In other words, the only people who will really benefit from this legislation are the wealthiest eligible Americans. According to the Department of the Treasury, the bill does exactly that; it concentrates the benefits of the legislation into the hands of the wealthy.

The Treasury Department analyzed a slightly different version of this tax scheme and calculated what we refer to as its distributional effects, that is to say, who gets what from a given proposal. That analysis found that 70 percent of the benefits would go to those Americans in the top 20 percent of the income scale. That is to say, families with annual incomes of at least \$93,000. Fully 84 percent of the benefits would go to families making more than \$75,000. The poorest people, the poorest families in the country, those at the bottom percent of the income scale, would receive 0.4 percent of the benefits.

So here we are saying we are going to do something to help education, and we turn the benefit on its head so that those who have the least get the least, those who have the most get the most, not based on ability to support education, not based on children's needs.

I do want to make it clear that the proposal we will debate tomorrow is slightly different than the proposal on which the Treasury Department estimates are based and so you may hear other figures. But the point has to be made that the distributional effect, the benefit of the bill going to the wealthiest Americans still holds as a valid point of observation with regard to this legislation.

Another point that was made by the analysis of this bill, this time by the Joint Committee on Taxation, is that more than half of the benefits of the bill would flow to the 12 percent of families whose children are already in private schools. So that is to say, most of the money will go to families with children in private schools.

There are right now in our country about 46 million children in public schools and about 6 million children in private schools. This bill would direct more than half of its benefits to the families of those 6 million children—half to 6 million, the other half to 46 million children.

Federal education policy, I believe, should be designed to help to improve the quality of education available to all American children, not just a small group of them.

I mentioned that this was, in my opinion, bad savings policy, bad tax

policy and bad fiscal policy, but I would point out that it is also bad education policy. The bill is a backdoor way of diverting resources from public schools to the private schools. It represents a ploy to dismantle the public schools that, frankly, have made our country what it is today. Public education is central to the American dream of opportunity, and the rungs of the ladder of opportunity have always been crafted in the classroom. The public schools provide an opportunity for every child, no matter how wealthy or how poor. By diverting resources away from the public schools, we diminish the opportunities available to the vast majority of students who will be left then in the public school system. We will be essentially, again using the analogy, using a leech to cure whatever ails the public school system. That is not good education policy, and I think this legislation should therefore be rejected.

We cannot afford to leave any child behind. This voucher proposal, or tax scheme, whatever you want to call it, in that regard, presumes that a market-based solution will solve such problems that exist within our public school system. The plan presumes that by giving parents money to send their children out of the public schools and into private schools will somehow improve the quality of education available to our children. But by definition markets have winners and losers, and we cannot afford to lose any child in a game of educational roulette, or, more to the point, a game of educational triage in which we spin off or assist people to spin off the better students and the more affluent students into private systems.

Supporters of similar voucher plans claim that they will help the neediest children the most. Research, experience, and common sense suggest otherwise. Researchers have concluded that academically and socially disadvantaged students are less likely to benefit from school voucher programs. Voucher programs in Britain, in France, the Netherlands and Chile confirm this research. They led to increased economic and social segregation of students. They widened the gap between students, instead of narrowing it. In Chile, performance actually declined for low-income students. Of course, that is not surprising, because any use of public funds of this magnitude for private schools will require that fewer resources will be available to be devoted to public schools. Since the vast majority of low-income students will remain in the public schools, and the worst of these schools are for the most part already sorely underfunded, it makes sense that private school vouchers would further weaken the public school system.

Supporters of using Federal funds to support private schools claim that those schools are better managed, that they perform better and they cost less than the public schools. Again, the

facts show otherwise. While it is true that some public schools are inefficient, vouchers, again, do not solve that problem; they only drain resources. What will solve the problem and what does solve the problem and has been shown to solve the problem with public education is parental and community involvement and good management.

In Chicago, in my State of Illinois, innovative leadership and a "no excuses" attitude have reshaped the school system in only 2 years. Under the new leadership there, in a few years the Chicago public schools will be transformed into a first-rate school system across the board. The innovations, the reforms, the initiatives that are being undertaken there in Chicago will benefit all 425,000 students in the public system, not just a select few who might benefit from a voucher scheme or a tax plan such as this legislation suggests.

Every mismanaged school needs to have the kind of leadership that, as we have demonstrated in Chicago, can work; not a draining off of what limited resources it already has. As for cost, private schools can charge less because only 17 percent of them—and you know the argument has been made that private schools can do it cheaper. But, again, look at the facts. Only 17 percent of the private schools provide special education, for example, and it costs at least twice as much to educate a disabled child. Remember that we have compulsory education in this country, so our public schools accept every child no matter the situation. No matter whether the children are disadvantaged or disabled or disruptive, the public schools accept them. If private schools were required by law to accept everyone, then it is likely that their costs would be commensurate with the costs in the private system.

Many private schools also limit admission to students with good academic records, and they do not have to accept the disruptive students. These selective admissions policies mean that in practice what would really happen is that instead of parents choosing a school for their children, the school would choose the children that it is willing to accept. Again, this is turning things upside-down in terms of education policy, because for a school to be able to decide that some group of children or some children should not be admitted seems to me to set up the kind of dichotomy that I do not think, in this country, we want to see develop. Vouchers in this situation and the tax scheme that's suggested in S. 1133 would offer false hope to parents and children who could be denied admission to selective private schools.

The Federal Government currently meets only about 6 percent of the costs of public education nationally. We do not even cover the costs of our mandated programs. The Presiding Officer and I, when we first came to the Senate, worked on the issue of unfunded

mandates and recognized that, in many instances, the Congress will tell local governments to do something, will give directions, but we do not pay the costs of those directives. Education is yet another example, and public education particularly is another example of unfunded mandates flowing to the schools that we do not pay for because, again, on average we pay about 6 percent of the costs of education.

For us now to further divert resources from an area where we are already not doing enough makes absolutely no sense, is counterproductive, and, it seems to me, flies in the face of our national obligation to see to it that no child is denied the opportunity to receive a quality education in America. But, transferring funds from public schools to private schools will not buy new textbooks for public school children nor will it encourage better teachers to go and work in the public schools. This tax scheme will not fix a single leaky roof or handle one set of management issues. It does nothing but, again, divert resources from a system already sorely in need and already grossly underfunded by our national contributions.

Here in the District of Columbia, and in all cities, many businesses and apartment buildings—and this is by way of an analogy—businesses and apartment buildings hire private security guards to supplement their security because they do not believe that the local police will do an adequate job in protecting them. Does that mean, then, that we should skim money off of what we give to the police departments so we can make it easier for businesses to hire private security guards? Or that those funds would be better spent improving the quality of law enforcement by draining money off to private security forces? I do not think so. If anything, we have a responsibility as a community to use our public resources toward the public welfare and the public good.

The reason we have compulsory education in this country is so that every child can receive a quality education. If our public schools are not all meeting that challenge, then it is our responsibility to fix them. It is our responsibility to engage in a partnership with the States and local governments, so that education can be the priority for our country that it must be. Spending taxpayers' dollars on private schools, again, is not going to fix a single public school.

One of the more troubling aspects of the legislation is the underlying premise that the public schools cannot succeed, that we just have to write them off. This bill says to America's public schoolteachers and principals and families with children in the schools, "You have failed." It starts a process of diverting resources from public schools to private schools, and it seems to me that is absolutely the wrong message.

There is, however, good news from public education. I think we need to

talk about that a little bit. Again, relating to some of the innovations going on in Illinois, there is a consortium of some 20 school districts in the Chicago area. It is called the First in the World Consortium. They lived up to their name because in the international math and science tests of which I spoke earlier, this group of schools scored first in the world. They were all public school students and they scored first in math and science—the public school system, and they received the best results in the world in these areas.

The results of these tests prove that America's public schools can produce the best and the brightest students in the world if only they have the support, the resources and the tools with which to do the job. What does the First in the World Consortium have that too many of our schools lack? It is not the kids. It is not the makeup of the students. Our children are as capable of performance as children anywhere else in the world, whether they come from rich families or from poor families. We have some of the brightest students in the world, who only need the opportunity to learn. The difference, however, is what support we as a community provide for those children. The schools that comprise the First in the World Consortium have some of the best facilities in this country. They have small classes. They have modern technology. They have supportive communities. And they have engaged and involved parents and teachers.

We all, I think, have a responsibility to ensure that every American child will have access to the same kind of quality education that is made available in the public schools at the First in the World Consortium. The tax changes envisioned in this legislation will not accomplish that goal. The bill will not result, again, in the improvement of a single public school. The amendment which I hope to talk about suggests that we have to undertake a partnership between the State and local and National Governments to provide the kind of resources for public education that made our country the strongest in the world and will keep it the strongest in the world for the 21st Century.

This conversation is going to go on for a couple of days. I would like to leave you with an analogy which I think is absolutely appropriate when we talk about how we are going to address the challenge of education for the 21st Century.

There have been some arguments that it is not the Federal Government's job; that, indeed, it should be left to the locals to address education, and it is their job, it is their responsibility to see to it that the schools in a local community function well and provide quality education. I would point out to the Presiding Officer and to anyone else listening that that analogy fails altogether to recognize our national interest and our interest as a community

of Americans in seeing to it that all children, whether they live in Chicago or California or Detroit or in Florida or in Georgia or in Alabama—that all children in this country receive the best possible education that we can give them. It is particularly important in this information age, given the technological revolution, because the command of and the ability to manipulate and use information will be more important in the workforce of the future than it is today. If we do not educate our children, we will, as a country, see a lessening in the ability of our national workforce to be productive in these global markets.

So, to use an analogy, when it comes to talking about what is our interest, why should the Senator from Illinois care about education for a child from North Dakota or why should the Senator from Illinois care about the education of a child in Alabama, the reason I care is I love my country and I care about the ability of my country to have a workforce that can function in this global economy. Just as in the 1950s it was seen as in our national interest to bring our country together, this debate holds the same promise. This debate will either turn on a vision of America that says we are all connected to each other, we all have a responsibility to each other, or it will turn on a vision of America that says, "I've got mine; you get yours. In your State, in your city, education is your problem."

I suggest the time for the finger-pointing on education has to stop. We have to form a partnership that will provide our schools with the resources that we will need to educate our children—all of them. Again, to use the analogy from the 1950s, President Eisenhower saw the value in providing our country with an interstate highway system. He brought America together by providing a system whereby the National Government would contribute to the construction and the development of roads all across this country. That interstate highway system brought us together as a nation and served our national interests in transportation.

The way that we are funding education currently would be the equivalent of saying to each and every community in America—which, of course, we are saying to each and every community in America—you go find the money from your local property tax base to provide for your schools. And if you don't have the money in your local property taxes for your schools, it will just be too bad. To use the road analogy again, it's like saying in those communities that have a limited property tax base and in poor communities, they will have shoddy roads if any roads at all. The middle-class communities with moderate means will have kind of a hodgepodge and a mix of decent roads and kind-of-decent roads; and the wealthy communities will have the greatest roads in the world. But

when you put it all together, you have not served transportation from one end of this country to the other. You have left the issue of transportation up to the resources of the specific and discrete communities and, more to the point, the property tax base that that community can resort to. That is how we fund education in this country. By relying on the local property tax base, we depend entirely on the accident of geography and demographics whether or not a child's school will be adequate to provide a quality education.

So I say to my colleagues that, as we look at this issue, let's find common ground, let's stop pointing fingers, and, as much the point, let's not continue to allow the kind of savage inequalities that exist among communities based on wealth to determine the future of our country in this 21st century global economy. If a community does not have the property tax resources to provide for educational opportunity, then that community ought to be supported in its efforts to educate its children by the State and by the National Government. We all have a role to play. We all have a contribution to make.

Again, finger pointing only hurts the children. I am going to, at this point, thank the Chair and yield the floor. I just say I look forward very much to continuing this debate in the upcoming days. I think it is one of the most important debates that we can take up as a Senate. I think the future of our country, indeed our national security, hangs on our ability to address in a sensible and workable and comprehensive way, the challenge of public education for the 21st Century.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas is recognized.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, the parliamentary situation is such that we are in morning business and Senators are permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes; is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

NATO EXPANSION

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, the letter got lost in the mail. It never made it to President Yeltsin. It never made it to the radar crews in Russia. As a result, within minutes, Russian President Boris Yeltsin was brought a black nuclear command suitcase and for several minutes, wild confusion reigned in Russia, as Russia's command and control system was operating in a combat mode.

The letter was from the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, and it was routine. It informed the Russians and other surrounding countries that a joint United States and Norwegian research rocket would be launched to study the northern lights. As I say, it was a foulup, a bureaucratic foulup, and it prompted a hair-trigger war scare, a nuclear war scare, only 3 years ago.

Mr. President, I rise today to focus on this incident, because I believe it is