like to discuss with my colleagues a provision which will be contained in the legislation introduced by the Senator from Georgia, Senator COVERDELL, relative to education. This provision relates to public school construction.

Mr. President, as you and others in this Chamber and millions of Americans know, we are facing a near crisis in terms of the construction of public school facilities. Too many communities in America have schools which are crumbling because of age and inattention. Other communities have dramatically oversized classrooms because they do not have the financing to build enough new schools to meet their exploding student population.

There is no simple answer to this issue. The General Accounting Office recently estimated that it would cost about $112 billion to repair our schools sufficiently to bring them into good condition. Additionally, although there is no single authoritative source of information on the need for new school construction, that cost is also estimated in the range of $110 billion to $120.

It is clear to me, and to others who have looked at this issue, that we need to look for opportunities to provide flexibility to school districts in responding to this massive need for school construction and repair. If I can quote Mr. Roger Cuevas, who is the superintendent of schools for Dade County, FL, when he recently wrote:

> It is important that financing options be defined in as flexible a manner as possible and especially not be limited to general obligation bonds . . . Flexibility in the choice of the type of eligible debt financing, as well as the capacity of the program to adapt to State-by-State differences are as critical to all school districts in the Nation as is its funding level.

The provision which will be contained in the legislation of Senator COVERDELL provides for public school construction the same opportunities which are currently available in a wide variety of other public-need areas; namely, airports, seaports, mass transit facilities, water and sewer facilities, solid waste disposal facilities, qualified residential rental projects, local furnishing of electric energy and gas, heating and cooling facilities, qualified hazardous waste facilities, high-speed inter-city rail facilities and environmental enhancements of hydroelectric generating facilities. In all of those 12 separate areas, the U.S. Congress has provided assistance in the financing through what is known as private activity bonds.

This legislation adds a 13th category for public schools. This new category builds upon the experience that already exists from using private activity bonds to finance transportation, energy, environmental, and housing projects.

What would be the essence of this proposal? This proposal would provide to each State the opportunity to issue tax-exempt private activity bonds to finance construction of public schools. These bonds would be administered at the State level, just as are the other 12 categories of private activity bonds. States containing school districts experiencing high growth would be allowed to issue bonds each year in an amount equal to $10 multiplied by the population of the State. For example, if a State with high-growth school districts has a population of 5 million, it could issue up to $50 million of bonds to finance school construction. A high-growth school district is defined as one with an enrollment of at least 5,000 students and the enrollment has grown by at least 20 percent during the five years previous to the year of bond issue. States without high-growth school districts would still receive $5 million of bond authority.

Potentially, this could provide to the Nation bonding capacity for public school construction of about $2.5 billion a year, if each State fully participates. That would be a noticeable contribution toward the enormous need that the Nation faces for financing the construction of new public schools and the rehabilitation of old ones.

More important, it would provide a new source of financing for public school construction, because the nature of private activity bonds involves a partnership between a public agency—in this case typically a local school district—and a private entity. A typical example of what would be anticipated under this legislation would be that a school district needing to build two new elementary schools would solicit requests from the private sector for the construction and financing of those schools. The school district would select which of the proposals that best served the interest of that school district. The school district would then enter into a leaseback arrangement where the private builder would construct the building, would be responsible for paying the indebtedness on the private activity bonds and, at the end of the lease term, would turn the facilities over to the school system with no additional consideration. This would allow the school district to take advantage of private sector innovation in design and construction, as well as the private sector involvement in financing.

I might say that I had an opportunity in October of last year during one of my monthly work days to work on McNiclo Middle School in Hollywood, FL, which was being built under this type of arrangement, although the financing was the conventional type of general obligation bond financing. In this case, because the contractor was doing a design-and-build project, the construction time and cost were less than they would have been under standard procedures.

There happened to even be a third benefit. This school was being built not only to meet educational standards, but also was being further strengthened so that it would serve as a community shelter in the event of a hurricane or other emergency situation. This legislation seeks to encourage and accelerate those kinds of innovative public-private relationships.

So, with this description, I hope that my colleagues will see the benefit of the flexibility and creativity that this provision will bring and the appropriateness of the Federal Government offering this degree of assistance to our public schools, just as it has in a whole variety of other public activities.

The Federal Government is not intruding into areas of curriculum or personnel or other aspects of education which are the appropriate responsibility of the local school district. But we are extending a hand to States and local governments to help them see that all American children go into a classroom which is safe, which is adequate, which meets modern educational needs and into a school in which there are sufficient classrooms so that there can be that relationship between the teacher and the student that will advance quality education.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. INHOFE). Under the previous order, the Senator from Nevada is recognized to speak for up to 10 minutes.

Mr. BRYAN. I thank the Chair.

NUCLEAR WASTE DUMP SITE

Mr. BRYAN. Mr. President, I am dismayed to hear that there are continuing efforts to process through this Congress an ill-conceived piece of legislation that would establish a temporary nuclear waste dump in my State at the Nevada test site. I believe those efforts will be defeated, and I believe that the policy indications overwhelmingly indicate that is an ill-conceived piece of legislation.

Most of the debate that has occurred on this floor in this session and the previous session has been by my colleague Senator REID and I in discussing this with other Members of this body, and the issue has frequently been framed that it is Nevada versus the rest of the country.

I want to enlighten my colleagues this morning on some developments that I think are most interesting. The voices of the average citizen in America have not been heard in this debate. In fact, a recent poll commissioned by the University of Maryland indicates that slightly more than 35 percent of Americans, when questioned about this ill-conceived proposal, know anything about it at all. So my colleagues have not heard from the public.

The nuclear energy industry and its advocates and supporters have been a massive presence on Capitol Hill. Their voices have been heard. Their power and their influence through the Halls of Congress have been immense. I freely acknowledge that they are a frightening and impressive adversary in terms of the resources that they bring to bear. But again, about 35 percent of the American people are even aware of this proposal at all.

Under the commission survey by the University of Maryland, when Americans are told about this proposal, and they are asked about this concept of transporting high-level nuclear waste throughout the country, 66 percent express opposition. And of the 66 percent who expressed opposition, 75 percent were strongly opposed.

I hope, as this debate is likely to resume during the present Congress, that my colleagues will hear the voice of their constituents. They know that this is bad policy, they know it is unsafe, and they know that it is unnecessary once the facts are freely laid out for them.

Mr. President, you will recall, during the course of the debate we made the point here that in order to transport high-level nuclear waste to the so-called temporary site at the Nevada test site, it must pass through 43 States and that 50 million Americans live within a mile or less of the major rail and highway corridors in America. The red lines depicted on this map of the United States indicate the highway corridors. The blue lines indicate the rail corridors.

One does not have to be a student of geography to understand that these highway and rail corridor systems make their way through the major metropolitan centers of our country. Indeed, they are arteries of commerce that connect the major cities of our country. So in transporting high-level nuclear waste, that waste is going to go through the major metropolitan areas of our country. When citizens in those communities are made aware of this peril, they react without reference to partisanship but to strongly express their opposition.

We have communities such as St. Louis, Denver, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, Philadelphia, and other communities that have passed ordinances expressing their strong opposition. What brings me to the floor this morning is that just earlier this week in Flagstaff, AZ, its city council passed a resolution expressing its strong opposition to this proposal.

It is unnecessary. It is opposed by the scientific community. It is opposed by the Department of Energy. It is opposed by sensible Americans who have looked at the issue because it is unnecessary. Transporting 70,000 tons of high-level nuclear waste across the country to a temporary facility makes no public policy sense at all. As we have pointed out time and time again on the floor, this is not a new proposal. The origin of this proposal can be traced to one group and one group only, and that is the nuclear utility industry. Two decades ago they came before the Congress and urged the Congress to pass what was then referred to as an away-from-reactor program to remove the nuclear waste from the reactor sites and place it in some other facility off-location, off-reactor, as it was referred to. But Congress wisely rejected that proposal two decades ago.

I might say that the arguments then, as now, are that catastrophe will occur in America if this is not transported to some temporary location away from reactor sites. In the 1980s, it was asserted that we would have a nuclear brownout, that these utilities would simply be unable to function because they did not have onsite storage if these shipments were not made. It is now two decades later. No nuclear utility in America has closed as a result of the absence of storage capacity onsite. Many have closed because they are unsafe. Others have closed because, from an economic point of view, to retrofit older reactors to bring them up to the safety standards that are required is simply uneconomical.

Many of my colleagues find it difficult to accept, but the nuclear industry is an energy dinosaur in America. No new reactors have been ordered or built in America in two decades. I think it is highly unlikely, in light of increased public knowledge and understanding of what is involved in siting a reactor in a community, that we will ever again have a new reactor built in America.

So when the public is presented with the facts—namely, are you aware that the Congress is considering in this session of the Congress a proposal to transport nuclear waste through 40 States, 50 million Americans within a mile or less; and what do you think of that proposal?—the overwhelming reaction, two-thirds, expressed strong opposition.

My point, Mr. President, in bringing this to the floor today is that I hope my colleagues will listen to their constituents and hear from them. We have heard the arguments of the nuclear utility industry. But the American public, by and large, because they did not know about this proposal, we have not heard their voices. I can tell you, having been to St. Louis and Denver, when you talk with citizens in those communities, and make them aware of what is involved here, they understand the risk and they express strong opposition to this proposal.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. CAMPBELL addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Thank you, Mr. President.

TAXPAYER FUNDS AND THE PRESIDENT'S PERSONAL LEGAL DEFENSE

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. President, I come to the floor today not only as a concerned citizen but also as a concerned lawmaker. As the chairman of the appropriations subcommittee which oversees the White House budget, I have some serious concerns about the taxpayer funds being used to pay for the President's personal legal defense.

In addition, I have to also state that I am concerned about the lack of response to committee requests. Specifically, on March 3, a request was made to the White House from this committee to provide responses to two simple questions: First, has the size of the legal staff within the Executive Office of the President, funded by appropriated money, changed significantly between fiscal year 1997 and fiscal year 1998? And, second, what is the current specific number of lawyers detailed to the Executive Office, and has that number changed significantly during this time?

In a recent report, Mr. President, it appears that the cadre of attorneys at the White House has ballooned from 4 to 39 in just the last year and a half or 2 years. Fully one-tenth, according to that newspaper article, one-tenth of the White House budget now goes to pay those attorneys. A number of them were transferred from other agencies. And in this year's budget request from those agencies, they are asking for a full FTE for those attorneys.

It appeared at the time that this information was both readily available and easy to provide, yet the White House has not given us any specifics. As of about a half an hour ago, we did get some partial answers but not nearly clear enough. During this same time, I continued to get Members and constituents asking me, as the chairman of the Treasury Subcommittee which appropriated the White House's budget, to provide them with some answers.

Finally, on this past Friday, March 13, I wrote a letter in an attempt to get a response from the White House. In that letter I requested that I receive the information by them by 12 o'clock yesterday, March 18. In that letter, I also asked the White House to provide me with a list of the total number of attorneys detailed to all of the Executive Office and from which agency they came. Yesterday, the subcommittee received a call from the General Counsel's Office stating that we would receive that information by 9 o'clock this morning. And as I have mentioned, we did receive a partial answer.

So now it is March 19, Mr. President, exactly 16 days after the initial request for information was made, and we still do not have the full answer. We are now preparing to do a hearing, as many of my colleagues know, Mr. President. I believe the American taxpayers have the right to ask some specific questions.

The 12 attorneys that were so-called ''borrowed'' from the other agencies to help the President with his personal legal problems command very good salaries for which we expect them to do work in keeping with the mission of their agency and for what they were hired to do.

What I would like to ask the Executive Office is, was the work of those attorneys in their agencies important? If it was important, then who is doing their work while they are temporarily borrowed or reassigned to the Executive Office? And if it was not important