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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 21, 1998, at 12:30 p.m.

Senate

MONDAY, APRIL 20, 1998

The Senate met at 11 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Gracious God, in a world in which we hear so much about self-esteem, we are reoriented by a bracing word from Proverbs.

"Let not mercy and truth forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, and so find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."—Proverbs 3:3-6.

Father, it is Your esteem we long for most of all. Remind us of the high value You place on mercy and truth. We want to build our lives around Your priorities. Help us to base our lives on Your absolute truth. May we be as merciful in our empathy and care for others as You have been for us.

As we begin this new week, may the Senators renew their commitment to serve You and to seek Your esteem above all others. May You be the Audience of One whose approval is important.

Lord, we pray that You will comfort and encourage those who have suffered the damaging, shattering devastation from tornadoes in recent weeks. Today we ask for Your courage and strength for the people of Nashville, Tennessee. Through our Lord and Savior. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able Republican leader is recognized.

Mr. LOTT. Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I hope all the Senators had a restful recess during the Easter period back in their States and are ready for a very active schedule in the next 5 weeks.

I commend those who have been in charge of changes in the Senate Chamber. I think it looks very good. I hope the Senators will appreciate the changes that have been made.

SCHEDULE

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, the Senate will be in a period for morning business until 1 p.m. in order for Senators to make statements and to introduce legislation. At 1 p.m. today, the Senate will begin consideration of the Coverdell education A+ bill under the provisions of the consent agreement of March 27, 1998. As previously announced, there will be no rollcall votes today, but it is hoped that Members will be available to offer their amendments to H.R. 2646, the Coverdell bill. As a reminder, the next rollcall vote will occur tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. on or in relation to the Gorton amendment to S. 414, the Ocean Shipping Reform Act.

Just to remind Senators, we did have debate on the Ocean Shipping Act on Friday when we went out for the Easter recess period, and we completed all the work except for the vote on the amendment and then, of course, final

passage after that, if that is necessary, and I presume it may not be.

Senators should expect further votes throughout Tuesday's session on or in relation to pending amendments to the Coverdell education bill.

In addition, it is hoped that during this week the Senate will be able to consider the NATO expansion treaty and the State Department reorganization conference report under the consent agreement of 6 hours.

I want to say again that there will be no rush to judgment on NATO enlargement. I want to make sure that Senators on both sides of the aisle and on both sides of the issue will have a chance to make their statements and point out their concerns or their reasons for support. So, if it is necessary to take that over into next week before we get to the conclusion of the NATO enlargement, we will certainly do that.

During the next 5 weeks, the Senate can be expected to consider the following items, and therefore Members can expect busy days with votes most every day that we are in session, including Mondays or Fridays, except for those where we have already indicated we will not have votes, and we will reconfirm those during the next 2 days so Senators will know for sure the Mondays or Fridays where there will not be recorded votes.

In addition to the items I mentioned, this week we also will take up, hopefully, with cooperation from both sides of the aisle, the IRS reform legislation; Department of Defense authorization; the budget conference report; supplemental appropriations conference report—perhaps even reports, depending

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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on whether there are one or two there—the nuclear waste bill; a series of high-tech bills. There could be as many as three or four of those coming out of the Commerce Committee. I will have to consult with the chairman as to exactly how many there will be. I believe they have already reported a couple, and there may be two more.

The Iran sanctions legislation is pending. We have tried to be cooperative with the administration on this issue, but we did get an agreement right at the end of the session before we went home for Easter as to when action could occur on the Iran sanctions. I believe that is before May 20, but we will reconfirm that later. And, of course, the tobacco legislation issue is pending before the Senate, having been reported by the Commerce Committee.

This is not an exclusive list, of course, and additional legislation or Executive Calendar items may be cleared for action. I look forward to a productive legislative period.

EDUCATION SAVINGS ACT FOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, if I can just say a few brief words about S. 1133, the Parent-Student Savings Account Plus Act, which is commonly referred to now as the A+ Act. Everywhere I went during the recess period in my State of Mississippi—and I did a number of events throughout the State in a variety of forums in towns and cities—education was at the top of every list.

I spoke to the Mississippi Economic Council, which is an organization really affiliated with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, but it represents a variety of businessmen and women, professionals, people who really want to make sure that we have what we need to create jobs and move forward economically and have opportunities for all our citizens. An important part of their plans for this year did include, of course, continued emphasis on education.

So I am really excited that a good portion of this week will be spent on debate concerning the education savings account and the other portions that we have added to this education bill in the Finance Committee and other amendments that will be offered on the floor of the Senate on both sides of the aisle.

Some people have said, "Well, it could be messy debating education with as many as a dozen or more amendments being in order and with second degrees being in order." I think there are very few issues that we could be debating in the Senate this year in America more important than education. Of course, there are differences as to how to proceed on this education issue.

I feel very strongly that we should encourage parents to save more for their children's education, not only for college but also for elementary and secondary education. We should make

it possible for parents and grandparents and scholarship groups to set aside money in savings, in an education IRA, and that money then could be used for a variety of needs for children, whether it is tuition, books, supplies, computers, transportation, even uniforms. In my hometown, I was surprised to learn that the school board had voted that the students will begin wearing a certain form of uniform because they think it will help cut down on some of the violence associated with the clothes that are worn to school.

I think there are a whole variety of options now that could be available. There are those who oppose the savings account for education for elementary and secondary students, but I ask why—we just last year, and the President signed into law, increased the opportunity for education savings accounts for higher education, and we raised the limit of those savings that could be set aside up to \$2,000 a year—why shouldn't it be available for elementary and secondary education?

There are some other components of this legislation that have the guarantee that it would be bipartisan. In addition to the bipartisan support for the education savings account, other components in the bill include the expansion of the exclusion of employer-provided educational benefits to graduate education, which is a policy strongly advocated by the Senator from New York, Senator MOYNIHAN. We should encourage employers to provide education benefits as a part of the package that they get in the agreement between employer and employee. This bill does that.

While I was home, I spoke with the treasurer of our State of Mississippi. He made a particular point of coming over and asking me, did the bill still include the State prepaid tuition programs? I assured him that it did. We should encourage parents and students to save for their tuition. In this bill they will be able to exclude from income payments from State prepaid tuition programs.

Also, this bill does provide for some opportunity for bonds for school construction. I personally do not think the Federal Government should begin paying for school construction at the local level. I think that is a decision that should be made by the States, by the local governments.

Some people say, "Well, they can't afford it." I represent the poorest State in the Nation—or what was the poorest State; thank goodness we are making progress now and getting off the bottom of many lists—but one of the ways we have done that is we have been putting more money into education, more money into building new high schools and new elementary schools. The education level in the State has generally been rising. The credit goes to the parents, the administrators, and the teachers at the local level. But to provide some process where there would be this bonding opportunity for school

construction is one that I think we should consider. And it is in the legislation.

There will be a number of other amendments that will be offered from both sides of the aisle. I will agree with some of them, and I will disagree violently with some of the others. But I think this is a debate worth having. I commend Senator COVERDELL for his dogged work in support of education in this bill and the cooperation he has had from and with the Senator from New Jersey, Senator TORRICELLI.

So this will be a great opportunity this week to do some things that will help education. One of the amendments that will be offered could be to consolidate some of the many, many Federal education programs into block grants and then allow that money to go back through the States with the direction that 95 percent of the money go to the school districts. Only 5 percent of it can be eaten up by administrative costs; 95 percent of it will go to the school districts without strings attached. Let the schools decide. Let the local school officials decide if that money will be used for STAR teachers or for construction, if you will. It would be their choice. That is the fundamental difference between what some others will be trying to do, which would mean more decisions, more money, more direction and more strings from Washington. That is not the answer. I think in many cases that is the problem.

So, it will be an interesting debate. I commend the Senators for working with me to try to get an agreement as to how this process will go forward. We will spend today and all of tomorrow and possibly or probably even part of Wednesday completing this legislation, but it is time well spent.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. INHOFE). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there now will be a period for the transaction of morning business not to exceed 2 hours.

Under the previous order, there will now be 1 hour under the control of the Senator from Nebraska, Senator HAGEL.

Mr. HAGEL addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. HAGEL. Thank you, Mr. President.

U.N. GLOBAL CLIMATE TREATY

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, last month the U.N. global climate treaty became available for the formal signatures of those countries who reached