

leader after consultation and with information, of course, being provided to the minority.

As previously announced, there will be no rollcall votes during today's session since we have 6 hours reserved for debate on the State Department reorganization.

The next vote will then occur at 6 p.m. on Monday.

THE EDUCATION BILL

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I wish to speak briefly on a couple of issues. I will not take long. But I want to again express my appreciation to a number of Senators and to the Senate as a whole for the passage of the education bill on Thursday night by a bipartisan vote of 56 to 43 with one Senator being absent. I think you have to acknowledge that Senator COVERDELL of Georgia was persistent. He was fair. This issue really has been considered in one form or another for over a month. But he stuck with it. There was a lot of give and take. I appreciate the involvement of Senator TORRICELLI of New Jersey and his support of the bill. But more important than that, I appreciated the tone of the debate. There are fundamental disagreements on how we begin to improve the quality of education in America, deal with violence in the schools, and drugs in the schools. That is understandable. But we don't have to be nasty in our disagreements. We weren't.

I thought the debate was of a high quality. While the disagreements are passionate, we covered a lot of subjects over the last week, a lot of amendments. We probably voted on 10 or 12 amendments on this bill. Others were accepted or agreed to in one way or another or set aside by agreements. It took cooperation to get it done even after most of the week was spent on that. I think we came up with a good bill. Education is important. This is the best debate I have seen on education in many years. Having been in Congress for 25 years, the debate on education over those 25 years has always been the same: more decisions from Washington, more programs from Washington, more strings from Washington, more money from Washington. And the test scores and the violence—the test scores have been going down and the violence and drugs have been going up. What we have been doing is not working. We need to try some different things.

This bill does that: More choice in elementary and secondary education, No. 1.

I emphasized in my remarks that in my own State, higher education in America is the best in the world. People want to come from all over the world and go to schools, from Stanford to Harvard to Ole Miss, to get degrees in science and engineering, business, or whatever.

But our elementary and secondary education has been deteriorating, and

we are way down on most lists. Why is that? What is the difference between higher education and elementary and secondary education? One difference is choice. When you finish high school you can go to a trade school, you can go to a community college, you can go to a denominational college, or you can go to a university. You have a choice. The second big difference is you have financial assistance to be able to do it.

For 2 years I worked in the placement and financial aid office at the University of Mississippi. I know the importance of grants, loans, scholarships, and work-study programs for any student in America. Any student in America can go to college. He or she has a choice. Not so in elementary and secondary. If you are poor, if you come from a blue-collar working family like I did, son of a shipyard worker and a mother that taught school to help make ends meet, they couldn't afford to send me to a different school. They couldn't afford today's market. They wouldn't have been able to afford tutors or computers. They just couldn't have done it. We don't have financial assistance. There needs to be some. How can you get it?

No. 1, allow the parents to keep more of their money and make choices about how to spend their money in helping their children. This is not an attack on public schools.

I am a product of public schools. My wife is a product of public schools. Both of my children went to public schools from the first grade through college. Now, a lot of people who are pontificating as great defenders of public education went to private schools and send their children to private schools. It makes it difficult to believe that you are as sincere as I am. I want to help public education, but I want to give parents a choice.

When I give this sort of speech to some of the traditional education groups, they say, "But the bad schools, the bad public schools may not make it." Right. That is the idea. It is called competition. It is called quality. Get right, improve the quality of your teachers, improve the quality of the administration, or go out of business; let somebody else do it that can do a better job.

This bill also included merit pay for teachers, teacher testing. I still don't understand why it is OK to test and test and test the students but, oh, you can't test the teachers. That is one of the problems we have all over this country. We don't always have good-quality teachers. Should we encourage it? Should we pay them better? Yes. Should they be paid by the Federal Government? No. That is a local decision, State decision.

Senator GORTON came up with a block grant approach, but it was an interesting approach. Again, it is a choice. He took programs, consolidated them into something over \$10 billion, and he said, Well, now, States, if you want to continue with the traditional

strings-attached, Washington-knows-best controls from the bureaucracy, you can do that. If Massachusetts wants its money to come through the Federal multiplicity of programs with directions of how it must be spent, Massachusetts can choose that. But if Texas wants to bring it through their State government and then to the local schools, they can choose that.

Or in my State of Mississippi, I hope we would choose to let it go direct to the schools. Why does it have to stop in Atlanta or Jackson and trickle down and trickle down and trickle down, with everybody taking a bite for administrative costs—5 percent, 10 percent, 15 percent? Why not let it go from Washington directly to the schools and let the administrators, the parents, the teachers, and the children decide where that \$10 billion portion that they get would be spent? Hopefully, they would spend it for STAR teachers, merit pay for better teachers, teachers who work hard, do the extra thing. Maybe they would decide to spend it on construction. That is OK if they make the decision at the local level. That is their choice.

I think they are crying wolf. Those who want the status quo, those who want Washington to make the decisions, those who want controls and directions of how the money is going to be spent from Washington, they didn't like what we did this week and what we voted on last night. Those who say the status quo is not good enough when it comes to education should feel good about our effort last night. Now, they say, Well, the President is going to veto it. I don't know that he will. It is like laws; they are not unconstitutional until some court or the Supreme Court says they are unconstitutional. A bill is not vetoed until a President vetoes it. It will have to go through conference. Perhaps changes will be made. Perhaps the President will have a conversion and decide this is good legislation. But if he does veto it, the parents will know who has faith in them and the local education apparatus and those who believe Washington is the only place that can decide what is best for education in America.

So I slept better last night knowing that at least we were trying to make sure that my prospective grandson will have more opportunity and greater choices in education.

STATE DEPARTMENT REAUTHORIZATION

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, on the legislation we are fixing to take up, the State Department reorganization bill, this is the result of literally years of work, give and take, by Senator HELMS, the chairman of the committee, and by the administration. I think credit has to go to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. She worked with Senator HELMS on this State Department reorganization, which is so long overdue, which would allow us to do a