

that I be in North Dakota for a conference I cosponsored, Women's Health-Women's Lives, to join Secretary of Energy Richardson for meetings on a range of energy issues, and for a meeting with the Governor and other state leaders about the state's water resources.

Had I been present for rollcall vote No. 32, to table the Jeffords amendment to S. 280, the Ed-Flex legislation, I would have voted "nay." On rollcall vote No. 33, to table the Gramm amendment to prohibit implementation of the "Know Your Customer" banking regulations, I would have voted "nay" had I been present.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, on Tuesday, March 9, 1999, I missed the second cloture vote on S. 280, the Education Flexibility Act.

I fully intended to be in the chamber for the vote yesterday, and had I been there I would have voted against cloture. While I support the concept of flexibility for education, I also believe that Democrats deserve right to offer education amendments on key priorities such as reducing class-size, providing after-school care, addressing the concern of crumbling schools, and a few other major priorities.

Senate Democrats have offered in good faith to accept time agreements and limited debates on our education priorities.

It is disappointing that instead of voting on education priorities for American students, teachers, and parents, we are debating procedural motions and closure petitions. Instead of using the time wisely to discuss the major education issues facing our schools, we are facing gridlock on procedure. That is not what the American people sent us to the Senate to do. We are willing to have our debate and cast our votes to reduce class sizes, to fix crumbling schools and to provide after-school care for children that need it to learn and be safe while parents work. If our Democratic amendments prevail, we strengthen the Education Flexibility Act and help schools. If our amendments do not get a majority, then we had the opportunity to debate and we can move forward on the underlying bipartisan legislation.

I wish I had been here on Tuesday to participate. Unfortunately, I got trapped in Charleston, West Virginia when the Ronald Reagan National Airport closed at 11 a.m. on March 9, 1999 due to the snow storm in Washington, DC. I had been in Charleston, West Virginia to vote in the mayoral election and to participate in the United Airlines announcement of two Mileage Plus Service Centers in my state which will create 600 new jobs. The new centers will be located in Charleston and Huntington. This is exciting news for my state, and I have been in touch with officials for months about this economic opportunity. At the time, I felt that I could personally vote in the local election, attend this exciting announcement and return in plenty of

time for the 2:45 vote on the Senate floor. Due to the snow storm, I missed the vote.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to a period of morning business with Members permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

THE EDUCATION FLEXIBILITY PARTNERSHIP ACT

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I will use a little of the morning business time myself to just bring everyone up to date as to where we are at this point. This concludes the debate time for today. Tomorrow there will be, I believe, 1 hour evenly divided for Members to talk on the amendment process.

The purpose of that time will be to try to make sure everybody understands the amendments, because we have a number of amendments. They seem low in number—there are about eight or nine amendments—but some of those are complicated by combinations of amendments. So I urge all of our Members to make sure that they understand the amendments.

Because this is an important piece of legislation, which I want to get through, and the leader does also, we will be using probably a tabling situation for many of the amendments. I want to explain why that is. That is because most of these amendments should be on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization which is being worked on at this time. That is a very important bill. It is a \$15 billion bill. It has most of the Federal programs. And we will be looking at it very closely to determine whether there should be a paring down of programs, how effective the various agencies and departments have been, and we will be spending the time of deliberation to better utilize and to make sure we can maximize our improvement.

As I said earlier today, the evidence is very clear that we have made very little improvement in our schools over the last 15 years, although we have been trying. Thus, it is important we take a close look at the Department of Education to see that those funds are being well spent.

PREVENTING HEARING LOSS

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, today I bring to the attention of my colleagues an article that recently appeared in The Washington Post, "Hearing Loss Touches a Younger Generation." This article raises important issues related to hearing loss and gives us practical advice for protecting our hearing.

Hearing loss affects approximately 28 million Americans and is affecting

more of us at younger ages. Hearing difficulties among those ages 45 to 64 increased 26 percent between 1971 and 1990, while those between ages 18 and 44 experienced a 17 percent increase.

About one third of the cases of hearing loss are caused, at least in part, by extreme or consistent exposure to high decibel noises. While the Environmental Protection Agency has worked to decrease our exposure to loud noises at work, many Americans now face threats to optimal hearing during their leisure hours from loud music, lawn mowers and outdoor equipment, automobiles, airplanes and other sources. Too many Americans simply are not aware of the devastating impact loud sounds can have on their hearing.

At the encouragement of the Senate Appropriations Committee, the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) is leading a collaborative effort with the National Institute on Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the National Institute on Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) to help improve awareness about noise-induced hearing loss. It is my hope that this effort ultimately will help reverse the trend toward increasing noise-induced hearing loss.

Health professionals, too, play an important role in the treatment and prevention of hearing loss. In particular, I'd like to highlight the important work of audiologists in successfully combating and treating hearing loss. Over the years I have been impressed by the cost-effective, quality care they provide, most notably demonstrated in the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system, which has allowed veterans direct access to audiologists since 1992.

Through high standards of care by qualified health care professionals and through improved education about the dangers of hearing loss, I believe we can protect and improve the hearing of millions of Americans. I ask unanimous consent that the attached article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Washington Post]

HEARING LOSS TOUCHES A YOUNGER GENERATION; WITH RISE IN NOISE, MORE SEEKING HELP

(By Susan Levine)

Tomi Browne listens to people's ears. To how they hear and what they don't. And for most of her 22 years as an audiologist, her clients have been overwhelmingly older—stereotypically so. Seniors pushing 70 or beyond. The hearing-aid set.

But lately, surprisingly, Browne's contemporaries have been showing up at her Northern Virginia office.

These are men and women in their forties to early fifties, baby boomers. They confess that they strain to catch words in crowded restaurants or meetings, or that the television suddenly needs to be turned higher. Loud sounds really hurt their ears, and maybe they've noticed an incessant buzzing.

Some walk out with the startling news that they've permanently lost hearing. More