

of Washington, Mrs. MURRAY, who is a member of the Labor-HHS appropriations subcommittee, a very important subcommittee when it comes to spending money for education. She comes to the Senate floor speaking not only as a Senator from Washington but as a former classroom teacher. So her perspective on education and what we are doing to either meet our obligations or fail to meet them is especially important.

At this point, I reserve the remainder of my time and yield to the Senator from Washington.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington is recognized.

Mrs. MURRAY. I thank the Chair and my colleague from Illinois for defining for us what our challenge is in this week as we reach the October 1 deadline and our commitment to make sure the budget is enacted and appropriations bills are passed. Clearly, we are going to be unable to do that.

LABOR-HHS APPROPRIATIONS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, what is most appalling to me is that we have left the Labor, Health, and Human Services bill to the very last. This bill is extremely important to every family in this country. It funds everything from health care to NIH research to education, key programs that we are responsible for at the Federal level, being a partner in making sure every child in this country gets an education so they can be successful.

Last night, we referenced the Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and Human Services. We were unable to offer any amendments, and I was disappointed in that. I was pleased that the Republicans put forward a budget that does appear—and I use the word “appear”—to fund education at much better levels than the House, and we are grateful for that. We have been out here on the floor innumerable times saying education is a top priority and in this budget we want to make sure that happens. Surely our colleagues have listened to this, and the numbers on the paper show they have. However, what is underneath those numbers is very disconcerting to me, and it should be very disconcerting to every parent and every family across this country.

Let me talk for a minute about a very important initiative we passed last year to reduce class size in the first, second, and third grades.

It was a bipartisan effort. We negotiated with our Republican colleagues. Every Member in the Senate and House voted for it and agreed with us that reducing class size would make tremendous gains in education across this country. In the budget that is put forward that the Labor Committee will be hearing this afternoon, I do not see any class-size money. This money has been taken away. The 30,000 new teachers who have been hired this year who are in our classrooms looking our children in the eyes as we speak will be fired if

we pass this Labor bill as it now appears before us.

I do see \$1.2 billion for something called teacher assistance initiative. We have no idea what that is. Clearly, it is not class-size reduction. We do not have any idea what it is, and it is subject to authorization, meaning essentially those dollars will never come forward. If that is the case, this bill is terribly underfunded when it comes to education and the needs of families across our country. But I am very concerned that the class-size money has been taken out of this budget.

I simply cannot support going out and firing 5,000 teachers across this country. These teachers are in place today. This was a commitment we made in the Senate 1 year ago when we told them we were going to work with them to reduce class size.

Why did we say we wanted to reduce class size? Because we know that students from small classes enroll in more college-bound courses such as foreign languages, advanced math, and science. This has been proven. We know students in small class sizes in first, second, and third grades have higher grade point averages. We know they have fewer discipline problems. And we know they have lower drop-out rates.

We knew that last year so we said as a Federal Government we were going to begin a process of hiring 100,000 new teachers across this country so students in the first, second, and third grade can have the attention they need and the teacher time they need to learn the basic skills of English, math, and science. We know those kids who come from those classes will do better.

Smaller class sizes mean higher grades, more kids will be able to compete when they graduate from high school, more kids will be successful, and more students will less likely have discipline problems and, as we all know, turn to violence as a means of making their voices heard.

We are going to fight for class size on this side of the aisle. We want those teachers who have been hired and those children in those classrooms to know what we said a year ago will not be taken away because it is a new year. We want them to know we are committed to education, we are committed to being the partner we are supposed to be, and it is not just for today, it is for tomorrow.

Numbers and rhetoric on a piece of paper do not educate a child. Making sure our kids are in classes that are small enough and that we have the dollars and commitment is critical, and making sure school construction is part of what we do—and there is no money in this bill for school construction—and making sure each child knows we care about them is critical. The Senator from California has been out on the floor many times to talk about afterschool programs, which are funded in this bill but less than what the President requested.

We are pleased the Republicans have brought us a budget with the numbers

on a piece of paper, but we want to know that those commitments are real, that those teachers are not going to lose their jobs because of some rhetoric on the floor this year and smoke and mirrors and no funding, and we do not know how it is all going to happen in the end and, gee, 6 months from now, gosh, the program is gone. We want it real, we want language now, we want numbers now, and we want to tell our kids we care about them in a manner that is true. That is for what the Democrats are going to be fighting. I thank my colleagues on this side of the aisle.

Mrs. BOXER. Will my colleague yield for a few questions?

Mrs. MURRAY. I will be happy to yield.

Mrs. BOXER. First, I thank the Senator from Illinois for setting the stage for this conversation, and I thank him for yielding such time as she needed to the Senator from Washington because, as he has stated, she has been a leader in this whole area of education.

Education, in my view, is the No. 1 issue in this country today. Why? Because we know that if we do not give our children a good education, a series of bad things happen: They will not be productive, they will drop out, they will get into trouble, and all the rest.

We are now in the global marketplace. We all know this. I daresay everyone on both sides of the aisle says that education is important. I want to probe my friend a little bit because she sits on that all-important appropriations subcommittee on education. I want to make sure I understand exactly what she has told the Senate.

My understanding is that the Senate, on paper, is spending more than the House and even exceeds the President's number on paper; is that correct?

Mrs. MURRAY. That is correct. If one looks at the numbers, that is what it looks like.

Mrs. BOXER. But is it not true that out of that increase there is \$1.2 billion for a program that does not exist and the funds will not be spent unless the program is authorized? And is it not true that \$1.2 billion is supposed to replace the lower classroom size initiative that my friend has been pushing in the Senate?

Mrs. MURRAY. The Senator from California is absolutely correct. They took the number of \$1.2 billion, which we passed last year and were supposed to continue this year, to reduce class size, only our commitment was to increase that to \$1.4 billion so we would add on to those 30,000 teachers until we reached our verbal commitment of having 100,000 new teachers.

On paper, they took the \$1.2 billion and put it into something called teacher assistance initiative. I have never heard of that. I do not know what it is. I have seen no language about it. I can tell my colleague one thing: sitting on the education committee in the Senate, it is not a program anyone knows about, and the language in the bill says

it is authorized, meaning we are going to have to go through hearings, pass a bill through the Senate and the House, and have it signed by the President before we leave in a few short weeks, and I just do not see that happening. Really it is smoke and mirrors.

Mrs. BOXER. It seems as if there is a shell game being played with money that is not behind the piece of paper, and they have completely zeroed out this important class-size reduction plan which we began.

Is my friend saying to me that unless we can change that, school districts are going to have to fire teachers? Can my friend elaborate on that? How many teachers is it, and is it all around the country?

Mrs. MURRAY. The Senator is correct. If this bill passes as written and we go home, what will happen is next year, beginning in September, those 30,000—it is actually 29,000—teachers who have been hired will no longer be there.

Mrs. BOXER. So this bill that purports to do something for our children, in essence, is a pink slip for 29,000 teachers across this country who were hired under the Clinton-Murray initiative to lower classroom size; is that correct?

Mrs. MURRAY. The Senator from California is correct. I was out in one of my school buildings last Monday, a school in Tacoma, where they have taken their class-size money for first, second, and third grades and put it all into the first grade, and the first grade teachers have 15 students.

Each one of those kids in those 57 classrooms will read at the end of this year. You can see it in 10 days of classroom instruction. These kids were moving ahead rapidly, and they were going to be reading. Contrast that with a class of 30 kids where maybe part will be able to read at the end of the year and, obviously, some will not. They move on to second grade, and the second grade teacher starts all the way back at the beginning with the kids who are at the bottom.

These 57 classrooms and those 15 kids in each of those classrooms will know how to read, and that second grade teacher next year can move them on from there. It is going to make a tremendous difference.

Those teachers pleaded with me not to lose funds so they can continue to do the job they have been trained to do.

Mrs. BOXER. If we do not make changes and if the President does not prevail with the Republicans and this bill passes as it is, we will not only lose 29,000 teachers out of the classrooms, but next year a lot of those kids who were in classroom sizes of 15 will now find themselves in classroom sizes of 30, and we are back to where we were and we have wiped out this advantage we have given some of our children.

I have two more other questions.

Mrs. MURRAY. That will take away the promise we have given to students

across this country, and their families, that we are going to invest in education. Essentially, this \$1.2 billion put in there as a teacher assistance initiative will never go out to districts, never be seen, and everyone will lose.

Mrs. BOXER. I think it gets back to what our colleague from Illinois said: There is a lot of chaos. Imagine the chaos. Last year we passed this school reduction effort, and then we turn around—the Republicans do—and walk away from it. Talk about chaos—chaos on Capitol Hill because we do not know what we are doing, chaos in the classrooms—a terrible message.

I have two other areas I want to ask the Senator about. One that she mentioned is very near and dear to my heart, which is afterschool care. We know it works. We know that juvenile crime peaks at 3 o'clock and starts to go down at 6 or 7 in the evening when the kids go home. We know if they do not have a place to go after school, they get in trouble.

All of these things are so obvious. The smaller class sizes—it does not take a degree in sociology or education or psychology to understand if a teacher can give you one-on-one help, you are going to do better. If you have a safe place to go after school, you are not going to get in trouble. Again, we can track academic performance.

In this bill, the Republicans did put more money into afterschool care, but they underfunded it by \$200 million less than the President's request. The President requested \$600 million; they came in with \$400 million. That \$200 million affects thousands and thousands and thousands of children.

I know my friend taught in the classroom. I know how she supports afterschool care. Is it not a fact, I say to my friend, that she was unable to offer an amendment on afterschool care or school construction or smaller class sizes, that she was prohibited by the Republicans under the rules of their markup?

Mrs. MURRAY. The Senator from California is correct. We did not even vote. We are moving to full committee this afternoon, and I intend to offer my amendments. I hope my colleagues will support us. If they don't, we are going to be debating this again and again and again.

Mrs. BOXER. Exactly.

Mrs. MURRAY. Because the investments we make in our children, as the Senator from California knows, pay dividends far into the future. Putting down numbers on a piece of paper—that is not reality, that does not provide teachers, that does not provide classroom space, that does not provide afterschool care—does not mean anything to anybody.

We want to make sure the budgets we pass are real, that they are funded in reality, that those programs are there, and that this country makes sure that our kids get the education we ought to be providing in our schools.

Mrs. BOXER. The last question I have for my friend is in regard to

school construction. I read in the paper today that the President was in a school in Louisiana. It was a school that was built before the turn of the century. The school is falling down. The tiles are falling down from the ceiling. When it rains, the rain comes into the classrooms.

It reminded me of a school I visited in Sacramento where the same thing was happening. I could not believe it. We were in the gym, I say to my friend from Washington, and I looked at the ceiling. Tiles were gone. I said to a construction worker: What has happened to the tiles on the ceiling? He said: They fell down. I said: Do they ever hit a student? He said: Yes.

I have to ask my friend, what kind of message are we sending to our kids when, on the one hand, we say to them as parents that education is crucial to them in this incredibly important global marketplace where they are in competition with students from Europe and Asia and all over the world, and then we send them to a school where the tiles are falling on their heads? Can my friend tell me again, how much do the Republicans have in their education bill for this important and worthy project of school construction and fixing up our schools? How much do they put in?

Mrs. MURRAY. The Senator from California is correct. There is zero for school construction. What kind of message is that for our young kids, who are sitting in public schools, to show that we care about them, and that we are paying attention to them, and that we believe their education is important.

It is hard to pass that message along when you are sitting in classrooms with a leaky roof, with no new desks, with materials that are inappropriate, that are not good for education. A child goes home and says: The adults in my world don't care about me.

We all know the results of that. There is not a dime in this bill for school construction.

Mrs. BOXER. So in my sum up, from what I get from the Senator from Washington, there is no money for school construction, there is no money for class size reduction, and there is \$200 million less for afterschool care.

I say to my friend, please, when you are in that committee this afternoon, do what you did on the floor; lay out the situation. I hope all of America is going to learn that despite the moving of the numbers and the smoke and mirrors and all the rest of it, the things that need to be done are not done in this bill.

I thank my colleague for yielding.

Mrs. MURRAY. I thank the Senator from California and urge all of our colleagues to look at this and past rhetoric and put the numbers in reality for our children in our country.

I yield my time back to the Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, how much time is remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There are 5½ minutes remaining.

Mr. DURBIN. I thank the Chair for that information.

Four years ago, we had a Government shutdown. Congress failed so miserably in its responsibilities to fund the agencies of Government, we actually shut down agencies. We sent Federal employees home. They were paid later on even for the time they missed. We barred the door when they wanted to come back to work, and the Republican leaders in Congress said: We're going to prove a point.

They certainly did. They proved they could not pass the spending bills on time; they could not maintain the orderly flow of Government services to the people of America. That was 4 years ago.

You would think that over time the Republican leadership in the House and Senate would have learned from that experience. Last year, we had a little different experience. In the closing minutes of the session, we were presented with a 4,000-page budget bill, an appropriations bill, which literally no Member of Congress was able to read, and we were told: Take it or leave it. We either pass this and go home or sit around here for weeks, if not months.

The bill passed. A lot of us, with regret, voted for it saying: What is the alternative?

This year, we are going into a new phase, a new chapter in the Republican congressional leadership when it comes to budgetary responsibility. October 1—this week on Friday—is the new fiscal year. It is, in fact, Republican Responsibility Day. As leaders in Congress, they are responsible for passing spending bills or at least charting out a course so we can see an orderly process to result in spending and budget bills that do serve America.

As I stand here today, we do not have it. We will pass a continuing resolution which says we will continue Government for another 3 weeks, with no end in sight. Neither the leaders on Capitol Hill nor anyone on the Republican side have suggested how we are going to end this.

Instead, to quote a friend of mine with whom I served in the House, Congressman DAVE OBEY of Wisconsin, we hear the Republican leadership posing for holy pictures as they stand and say: We will not breach the caps on spending which led to the balanced budget. And we certainly will never touch the Social Security trust fund.

The facts do not back that up. What we find is they have broken the caps already. They have already reached deep into the Social Security trust fund to fund their favorite projects, and we still have no end in sight.

It is one thing to beat your chest and say you are going to stand up for certain principles, but it is hollow rhetoric when you cannot produce the spending bills.

You heard the Senator from Washington and the Senator from California. Imagine, if you will, in this time of prosperity, when the Repub-

licans have said we are so awash in money in Washington that we can offer a \$792 billion tax cut—and thank goodness the President did not sign that and explained it to the American people—at the same time the Republicans are calling for a massive tax cut, primarily for wealthy people, they cannot fund education, sending 29,000 teachers home.

Imagine families across America that get a note from the school saying: Mrs. Smith will not be here next year. She may not be here next month because Congress failed to continue a program to provide teachers in our school, teachers to make sure that class sizes are smaller.

Is that what this is all about, that we have gone on for month after weary month with all of this rhetoric in Washington, and at the end of the day we are going to send 29,000 teachers home and say to the schools: You have no choice but to increase the enrollment in each one of your classrooms.

That is as good as we can do for all the billions of dollars that we have to spend. I don't think so. I certainly hope the Republican leadership will sit down with the Democrats and the President and work out something that is good for the Nation and good for families across our country that are concerned about quality schools and quality health care.

I visited St. Francis Hospital in Peoria, IL, yesterday, a wonderful hospital that has faced Medicare cuts that, frankly, threaten this teaching hospital, this safety-net hospital, another item we have to address and should address before we go home.

I didn't run for the House and for the Senate to come here and punch the clock on my pension. I came here to work on the issues that are important to people in Illinois and across the Nation. To date, this Congress has failed miserably when it comes to addressing those issues, whether it is education or health care, the basic things we expect.

We had the Columbine School massacre a few months ago; it shocked the Nation. We passed a juvenile justice bill because Vice President GORE came and broke the tie. We said we need sensible gun control, background checks, to make sure fugitives, felons, and stalkers don't get their hands on guns. We passed that bill over to the House, and it disappeared, never seen again.

We are now in another school year. We still want safe schools. We still want sensible gun control. This Congress has failed miserably when it comes to bringing that issue through, passing a law, and sending it to the President. It hasn't happened.

Time and again we have made the speeches; we have punched the clock; we have gone home without meeting our responsibilities. If last year's Congress was a do-nothing Congress, this Congress has done less, less to meet the challenges the American people have given to us, challenges which include a responsible budget, education, and

health care, challenges which include, of course, a Patients' Bill of Rights so those who have health insurance through managed care companies have a decision made by a doctor and not by an insurance bureaucrat.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator has expired.

Under the previous order, the time until 11 a.m. shall be in the control of the Senator from Maine, Ms. SNOWE, or her designee.

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I yield 5 minutes of my time to the distinguished Senator from Arizona, Mr. KYL, at the conclusion of my 25 minutes.

I further ask unanimous consent that following the expiration of my control of the time, Senator ROBERTS be recognized for up to 15 minutes.

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

Ms. SNOWE. Will the Chair inform me when I have consumed 10 minutes?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair will do so.

SENIORS PRESCRIPTION INSURANCE COVERAGE EQUITY ACT

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I rise today, along with my distinguished colleague from Oregon, Senator WYDEN, to discuss legislation we introduced in July concerning prescription drug coverage. The legislation is known as the Seniors Prescription Insurance Coverage Equity Act, or SPICE.

We have come to the floor to address a number of questions that have been raised with respect to our legislation. We want to answer some of those questions so the Members of this body can be informed in terms of what our legislation is all about on this most critical issue.

I am also pleased to announce Representatives ROUKEMA and PALLONE have introduced a companion bill to our legislation in the House of Representatives.

I have always believed, as being part of the elective process, we have an obligation to serve the people by addressing the problems that are the most immediate and most critical. We are not here solely for the purpose of creating issues so our parties can run on those issues in the next election. Yet it seems all too often now Congress is only focusing on the difference between the two parties, the difference between Congress and the President, instead of focusing on how we can achieve a consensus on the most significant issues facing this country, where we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of our constituents. The people of this country rightfully expect us to legislate good public policy on those issues, to address problems facing this country.

Yet, time and again, it seems the more critical issues we face in Congress and in this country are the ones that are the most polarized. Time and time