

to direct access users to offset COMSAT's signatory costs. I would also add that Congress is addressing direct access to INTELSAT before it privatizes. After privatization, when INTELSAT become a commercial company like any other, it can make whatever business decisions it wants with respect to marketing or distribution arrangements—again, just as other companies do. Once privatized, the government should not be interfering, let alone dictating, these arrangements one way or another.

#### EDUCATING OUR CHILDREN

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about an issue of paramount importance to this nation, how we educate our children.

We in the Senate have the difficult task before us of passing legislation that re-authorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act which determines how the Federal Government allocates money to our public schools.

Unfortunately, all signs from the Committee point to yet another political stalemate and neither side appears to be pushing any closer toward common ground.

In hopes of breaking this unproductive dynamic, I have joined with a group of my moderate Democratic colleagues here in the Senate to promote a "Third Way" on ESEA, one that synthesizes the best ideas of both sides into a whole new approach to federal education policy.

We are calling this bill the "Three R's" and it is a bold effort at streamlining numerous Federal education programs and refocusing federal resources on raising academic achievement. This blueprint will give more funding and flexibility to local school districts, in exchange for greater accountability.

Mr. President, today I would like to specifically talk about the component of the bill that focuses on teacher quality. We call our bill the "Three R's" and a similar acronym can apply to our efforts to improve teacher quality. Our plan can best be summed up by "Four R's": recruiting, retention, resources, and above all . . . RESPECT.

The difficulty schools experience today in recruiting and retaining quality teachers is one of the most enormous obstacles facing our education system. We cannot expect students to be successful if they don't work with quality teachers; and we can't expect quality teachers to stay in the profession if they don't get adequate training, resources or respect.

Most experts agree that teacher quality is as important as any other factor in raising student achievement. The legislation we are introducing today would consolidate several teacher training initiatives into a single formula grant program for improving the quality of public school teachers, principals and administrators.

This proposal would increase professional development funding by 100 per-

cent to \$1.6 billion annually and target that funding to the neediest school districts. In my home State of Arkansas, this will mean an additional \$12 million for teacher quality initiatives.

In addition, the "Three R's" would give States and school districts more flexibility to design effective teacher recruitment and professional development initiatives to meet their specific needs.

One overreaching goal we propose today is to require that all teachers be fully-qualified by 2005. Even the best teachers can't teach what they don't know or haven't learned themselves. To be successful, we must work harder to reduce out-of-field teaching and require educators to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach.

I have the highest respect for the teachers, principals, and superintendents who dedicate their talent and skills everyday to prepare our children for tomorrow. I think they have some of the hardest, and most important, jobs in the world. Our Nation's future, in large part, depends on the work that they do. Our teacher quality proposal is an example of how combining the concepts of increased funding, targeting, flexibility and accountability, we can join with state and local educators to give our children a high-quality education every child deserves.

I hope this plan will serve as a blueprint to improving public education as we enter into what is sure to be a lengthy and contentious ESEA debate.

#### ST. PATRICK'S DAY STATEMENT BY THE FRIENDS OF IRELAND

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, last week, the Friends of Ireland in Congress released its annual St. Patrick's Day Statement. The Friends of Ireland is a bipartisan group of Senators and Representatives opposed to violence and terrorism in Northern Ireland and dedicated to a United States policy that promotes a just, lasting and peaceful settlement of the conflict, which has taken more than 3,100 lives over the past 30 years.

I believe this year's Friends of Ireland Statement will be of interest to all of our colleagues who are concerned about this issue, and I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the RECORD.

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

#### STATEMENT BY THE FRIENDS OF IRELAND, SAINT PATRICK'S DAY 2000

On this first St. Patrick's Day of the new millennium, the Friends of Ireland in the United States Congress join 45 million Irish-Americans of both traditions in celebrating the unique bonds between our two nations. We send greetings to the President of Ireland, Mary McAleese and warmly welcome the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, on his third St. Patrick's Day visit to Washington. We share the hopes of the Irish people that the current impasse in the Northern Ireland peace process will be broken soon.

We are deeply troubled by the suspension of the democratically elected Government of Northern Ireland by the British Government and the stalemate over decommissioning. We urge all political leaders in the North to recommit themselves to the spirit and letter of the Good Friday Agreement. We have provided strong and consistent support throughout the peace process to all parties committed to peace, and we reaffirm our commitment to the full implementation of the Agreement.

The Good Friday Agreement was endorsed decisively by the people of Ireland both North and South with majorities from both traditions. It is a mandate given to those working on behalf of peace, justice and the creation of a new beginning in Northern Ireland. Successful implementation is predicated on the concurrent resolution of all the interdependent aspects of the Agreement. The successful implementation of the agreement must be the clear goal for all who want to consolidate the progress that has been made and to avoid the danger of failure for yet another generation in Northern Ireland.

At this time, the institutions of devolved government are suspended. The suspension was not caused by any failure of the institutions themselves, nor by any violation of the Agreement, but by an internal political crisis focused on the issue of decommissioning. We encourage the political leaders to bridge this crisis of confidence and secure the reinstatement of the institutions as soon as possible. Their absence creates a gap which the enemies of peace can and will exploit. It is vital that they are not permitted to succeed. The ongoing cease-fires are major confidence building measures, and it should be made clear that any return to violence is not an option. We condemn unequivocally all acts of violence.

We call on all sides to implement additional confidence building measures. Root causes of violence—prejudice, religious intolerance and sectarianism—must also be eliminated. The nationalist and unionist communities must see that politics is working and believe their future can rest with the actions of their democratically elected representatives in the Assembly.

The issue of confidence in the integrity of the democratic institutions set up under the Good Friday Agreement must not be seen as confined to the agenda of any one side. It is a shared requirement which all have a vital stake in restoring. Each party is committed under the Agreement to ensure the viability and effective operation of the political process pledged in the Agreement by persuading those who hold weapons that such weapons can have no role whatsoever in a democratic system.

In spite of discouraging setbacks, we believe that a way forward can be found on this difficult issue by building on the progress already made. We welcome the acknowledgment by the IRA that "the issue of arms needs to be dealt with in an acceptable way and this is a necessary objective of a genuine peace process." We also welcome the work in identifying and advancing the context where this goal can most successfully be achieved. We consider a crucial test to be whether the electorate in Northern Ireland can be reassured that their democratic wishes will not be undermined by actual or threatened recourse to guns from any side.

We believe there is now an acceptance of this fundamental principle across the entire political spectrum which offers a basis for reaching an accommodation, provided the parties approach it in a spirit of reciprocal action, and with sensitivity about the real constraints on each side and the need for skillful and patient management of these constraints. We urge renewed dialogue in