

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

ELIMINATING FEDERAL BARRIERS

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Mr. President, I rise to enthusiastically applaud George W. Bush's community and faith-based initiative which he announced yesterday and is emphasizing and talking about this week. It is a very exciting prospect that we have a President who recognizes the vast untapped potential of the charitable and faith-based sector and who wants to rally what he calls the "armies of compassion" to solve the deeper social problems and the deeper social challenges we face in this Nation.

The government can do many things. Some of those things it does well, but there are many things government cannot do. It cannot put hope in our hearts or a sense of purpose in our lives. This is done by churches, synagogues, mosques, and charities that warm the cold of life. It is done by the faith-based sector in our society.

I am pleased the President has established the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. By creating this office, we now will have a clearinghouse in the executive branch to point up where we have legislative and administrative barriers that have been erected to make it more difficult for people to encourage and support these faith-based initiatives. It will identify such problems in Federal rules, practices, and regulatory and statutory barriers in order that we might find relief and coordinate new Federal initiatives to empower and partner with faith-based and community problem solvers.

As he rolled out this plan—some of it, I am sure, is going to be controversial, and that is where the media would like to focus—much of what the President has rolled out makes common sense if we go beyond welfare reform, passed a few years ago and signed by President Clinton. Welfare reform has had a dramatic impact. We have seen the welfare roles decline by half across the Nation. All of us involved in the effort understood that was but the first step, and if we were ultimately to get to the deeper problems in a welfare culture, if we were going to deal with the problems of drug dependency, if we were going to deal with the high rate of recidivism in our prisons that we had to embrace, we had to involve the faith-based sector.

The President has suggested we should expand private giving, we should grant a charitable deduction for nonitemizers. The Federal charitable deduction, under the President's plan, will be expanded to 80 million taxpayers. Seventy percent of all filers do not itemize, and thus currently cannot claim this benefit. This initiative will spark billions of dollars in new donations to charitable organizations. He has suggested that we should promote corporate in-kind donations. The ad-

ministration seeks to limit the liability of corporations that in good faith donate equipment, facilities, vehicles, or aircraft to charitable organizations, thus enhancing the ability of these organizations to serve neighborhoods and families. That, I say to my colleagues, is common sense. It should not be controversial. He suggested that we permit charitable contributions from IRAs without penalty. Under current law, withdrawals from IRAs are subject to income tax. This creates a disincentive for retirees to contribute some or all of their IRA funds to charity.

President Bush supports legislation that would permit individuals, over the age of 59, to contribute IRA funds to charities without having to pay income tax on their gifts. He promotes a charitable State tax credit. He supports raising the cap on corporate charitable deductions and creating a compassion capital fund.

All of these are a simple means in which we can use the Tax Code to encourage donations to the faith-based and charitable sector and unleash this vast source of energy to help solve these very deep-rooted problems that we have in our society.

Among the new approaches, he suggests action that would help the children of prisoners, improving inmate rehabilitation, providing second chance maternity group homes, and more afterschool opportunities.

I want to tell one such story from the State of Arkansas that I believe the President's initiatives will assist. We had a wonderful organization started in Little Rock, AR, called PARK. It stands for Positive Atmosphere Reaches Kids. It was established by someone whose name will be familiar to football fans across this country. It was established by Keith Jackson. Keith was raised in a single parent household in a low-income neighborhood of Little Rock. He held steadfast to his course of finishing high school, playing football, and ultimately graduating from college. Unfortunately for us, he played football for the University of Oklahoma. But he went on to the NFL where he had a stellar career. He returned to Little Rock with this burden to help underprivileged children in Little Rock.

This is what he said in 1989. He said, while watching an evening newscast, he was struck by the number of stories involving teenagers and violent crime. He said: It seemed like every story was about a kid getting shot or robbing a liquor store or being in a gang fight. It really hit me for the first time that somebody had to do something to stop this. What we are doing now isn't working.

He said the Government programs, as many and as well motivated as they were, were not doing the job. He established PARK. It is a wonderful program. It is an afterschool program. From September through May, the program operates 4 days a week. Kids ride schoolbuses to PARK. When they ar-

rive, they eat a nutritious snack. They participate in the required academic program which requires homework, tutoring, reading or research in the library, working in the computer lab that is equipped with software designed to enhance skills in reading, math, and language arts.

Volunteer tutors and mentors come in. After they spend the hour doing the academics, they then get to enjoy the recreation. They have a skating rink, a weight room, basketball courts, racquetball courts, and an arcade. Some kids may go so they can be involved in the recreation, but they first have to do the academic work. They have a summer program. They have a community service program. They emphasize parental involvement.

When school is over, the buses take the kids to PARK, where they enjoy an extra hour of academic emphasis. Then they have the recreation. They have a nutritious snack. They have parental involvement. They have mentors and tutors. And they have a college prep program. All of this is done without one red cent of Government money. It is all from donations. It is all from foundations; not any Government assistance.

Why shouldn't we make it easier for people who believe in programs such as PARK to be able to give and contribute and have a tax incentive to do that? I simply applaud President Bush for seeing this need and for stepping forward and being willing to take some of the barbed attacks he has faced, and will continue to face, for this initiative because it is sorely needed.

I want to tell one more example. Here in Washington, DC, a group of Hill staffers, a few years ago, saw the need of children in disadvantaged homes in the District of Columbia, where many of them did not have the same educational opportunities as children from more affluent homes. They went out and they started a school called Cornerstone. They started it on a shoestring. They had no great resources. They had no great endowment. They had no great foundation. All they had was a vision and a dream. They are Hill staffers. They have started a school that is now serving scores of young people here in the District of Columbia. While we may argue about vouchers, we surely should not argue about making it easier for people to support faith-based initiatives such as Cornerstone.

DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, the following is our completed list of Democratic members of the Energy Committee: Senators BINGAMAN, AKAKA, DORGAN, GRAHAM, WYDEN, JOHNSON, LANDRIEU, BAYH, FEINSTEIN, SCHUMER, and CANTWELL.