

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 11 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

Under the previous order, the time until 10:30 a.m. shall be under the control of the Senator from Wyoming, Mr. THOMAS, or his designee.

The Senator from Tennessee.

EDUCATION

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I rise to speak briefly this morning on an issue about which we have heard a lot in the last few days and in which a number of us have participated diligently over the last several months. The subject is education, kindergarten through 12th grade, a period of time which, as we all know, in large part determines how successful one is later in life—how well equipped one is to deal with challenges in an increasingly challenging world.

This important issue has caused many of us to reflect over the last several years on what has been accomplished in the last 35 years with Federal intervention in education. What we have found, for the most part, is that in spite of major expenditures by the Federal government—a small fraction of what is spent across the country but a huge and growing investment, to the tune, in just one program, title I, of about \$120 billion focused on disadvantaged children—the results have been disappointing.

They have been disappointing to Republicans, Independents, and Democrats. They are disappointing because through careful study, through careful documentation, people have come to realize that we have not succeeded. By practically every single measurement, the results have been flat.

Some people say that is a good result; we could have gotten worse.

But there is no reason in a time of economic prosperity and increasing prominence of the United States in the world order—we are the superpower—for results to be flat when billions of dollars are being expended.

When we peel away the layers and look at the results, we see growing achievement gaps between the served and underserved; between those financially well off and those less financially well off; between minority and non-minority. However one looks at the achievement gap over the last 35 years, it has deteriorated; it has gotten worse.

The subject is complex. It is hard. It is not a matter of just more money, smaller class size, or better school

buildings. Society has changed. The challenges before us have changed. Our responsibility is to look at the last 35 years and address what has not worked and, through debate, hearings, and discussions, come forth with a policy that will reverse the trend of an achievement level that is flat. No net results after an increase in attention and after an increase of dollars is not an acceptable outcome.

From both sides of the aisle, we have heard over the last several days—and very appropriately so—applause for President Bush's first 100 days. Education is his No. 1 policy priority. We have made significant progress on tax relief, spending, and a number of military and defense issues.

Now we come back to what is most important to the United States of America—where we are today and where we want to be 5 years from now, 10 years from now, 20 years from now in what is becoming a smaller and smaller world.

The President's top priority is education. We have heard it from all sides; we have seen it in the newspapers and other media; and we have said it ourselves on the campaign trail. But the message really comes from the words of President George W. Bush, and that is "to leave no child behind." When you say "leave no child behind," you look at an individual and wonder how, in spite of 20, 50, 100, 150, 200 programs, all well intended, coming out of a Congress that says here is another good program to address a particular problem, we fall short. In spite of hundreds of different federal education programs, and in spite of \$120 billion spent in a single program, title I, we continue to fail.

Leaving no child behind means we probably have to change our targeting. Many of us believe we should channel increased resources to the child who is disadvantaged, to raise that child's performance. That has not been possible from a political standpoint.

In leaving no child behind, the solution means we should focus on the child. We do not focus on bureaucracy. We focus on the child. We do not focus on more money for still another program. That has been tried again and again. It means we need to make sure the child, the individual, learns.

Right now, we have testing and some general accountability measures. People argue passionately about national standards, State standards, and local standards. That needs to be debated. But for 35 years we never said of the child: we will follow you over time so we can determine whether you are failing, staying the same, or progressing and, based on that, determine the proper action for this body.

We need to make sure kids learn. That will require increased accountability.

How do we do that? The bill that will be put forward and marked up in the Health Education Committee, the BEST bill, is strong on accountability.

Through the bipartisan working groups that have been very actively involved over the last 2 months, that accountability can be strengthened. We need to reward schools that are performing well. If schools are not doing well, we will have to give them the tools, the equipment, the resources, and the chance to do better. When they repeatedly fail, year after year after year and if a child is locked into such a school, at some point we have to reconstitute that school or give the parents the opportunity to take their child out of that failing environment that society has created and put them in an environment where they have a real chance to learn.

Students in persistently failing schools should not be trapped there. They are trapped today. We need to do something about it. We have not been able to do anything about it in 30 or 35 years. The failure is in part because of Federal involvement. It is in part a failure of the current system. We need to change the system. That means make sure kids learn, with accountability. No. 2, give parents a choice. No. 3, let's proceed with reform.

No longer can people sit back and say: here is the system of 760 programs, let's pour more money into that system and we will be OK. We know that will not work. Therefore, we have to have reform. We have to have modernization of that system.

The good news is Democrats and Republicans together and from a policy standpoint understand what modernization means today. It means flexibility, knowing what works and what doesn't work, taking what works and putting it on a pedestal and supporting it. Yes, that means financially. More money will be put in education. We heard the President of the United States say again and again and again over the last several days, especially as we are at the negotiating table, that he is willing to put more money than has been put into education last year or the year before that or the year before that. This President will invest in education if we agree to link it to reform, to modernization, to flexibility, to accountability, to having some element of parental involvement. Nobody cares more about that individual child than the parents.

Global competition is one of the reasons we can stand up and say we are failing today in spite of our good intentions, in spite of teachers who are working hard, getting up each morning, teaching all day, preparing through the night and working summers to become even better teachers. In spite of their best efforts, we are failing. The National Assessment of Educational Progress, NAEP, is the only test using an accurate and careful statistical sampling from a cross-section study across the country of what happens at a certain point in time in various States and various school districts. It is also longitudinal, comparing what happens after 1 year to 3 years to 5 years to 10 years later.