

results of what is happening across the country? Last year we saw a downpayment. This year “no child left behind” ought to be a priority instead of some of the tax breaks for the wealthiest individuals. That is the result. We have zero. We have zero in terms of the quality of teachers, zero in terms of helping these children move into the education system.

This is one of the most discouraging aspects of the President's budget. Let's look at the dropout rate by ethnic group. What every educator will tell you, if these children are 20 to 30 points behind in terms of a particular grade level and they slip one grade and perhaps two, you can predict, as certain as we are standing here, that child is ready to drop out. One-third of Hispanic high school children are enrolled below grade level.

What has been happening in recent times? We find out we are not investing in these children. We are not giving them the teachers, not getting the smaller class sizes. What is the result? We see a dropout rate by ethnic group. Over four million Hispanic immigrant children—800,000 migrant children. We made a commitment in that bill last year to help States, as many of these children are moving among the States, to assist the States in terms of following records and coordinating their academic efforts. Without that, we see what happens: a 44 percent dropout rate for the children of immigrant students.

Many of these are legitimate immigrants who come here whose children are American citizens. These are American citizens that are going to be a part of the American dream. They are dropping out at 44 percent, Hispanics at 28 percent, which is four times the rate of Anglo students.

Our leader on this issue has been the Senator from New Mexico, JEFF BINGAMAN, who has made the most compelling case about trying to develop a program to identify the dropouts, to figure out what can be done, model programs that can assist school districts.

Last year we had a very modest program. Unfortunately, this is one area where we could not get the administration to agree. We did have inclusion of a dropout prevention program—a very modest program of \$10 million. But this year, zero. Here we go, with a 44-percent dropout rate, and now we see how we are going to respond to that. The administration says zero. It is not important; it is not on our national priorities.

This is going to mean, we all ought to understand, when we are out here making statements and speeches about the conditions and what are the tests and what others show, the challenges out there in terms of Hispanic children, they are going to slip and fall further and further behind. Unless we are going to address these issues, this promise about no child left behind is an empty promise.

I want to mention one of the most distressing and disturbing develop-

ments we have seen with the cutbacks taking place. This is with regard to Los Angeles County. They are reducing their school year by 17 days because they haven't got the resources to hold classes for 187,000 of the children just in Los Angeles County. We have the facts about different communities that are under a similar situation, and that replicates this.

So, Mr. President, I think this is the result of a really almost indifference by the administration in terms of this commitment. I see my friend from Nevada who is also a key figure in the whole issue on the dropout prevention. He has spoken eloquently about this. I am so grateful for his work. I hope he will continue to take that interest in this issue. We cannot let this continue to fester.

Mr. REID. May I ask a question?

Mr. KENNEDY. Yes.

Mr. REID. The reason the Senator has talked about dropouts is because by keeping a child in school we save our society money, time, and aggravation; is that a fair statement?

Mr. KENNEDY. That is exactly correct, Mr. President. If we have a troubled youth, for example, who is held in Massachusetts inside route 128, it is about \$80,000 a year; it is anywhere from \$35,000 to \$45,000 outside of route 128. We need to make sure we are going to have programs that are going to encourage those children to stay in school, and work with them for supplementary services and develop programs that can be helpful to parents and members of their family to keep them motivated.

Mr. WELLSTONE. May I add 10 seconds to what Senator KENNEDY said. This would have to be confirmed. There was a wonderful judge in Minnesota who said to me there is a higher correlation between high school dropouts and incarceration than cigarette smoking and lung cancer. Just think about that.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, 87 percent of the people in our prison system are high school dropouts. I think that says it all.

We have a number of Senators in the Chamber. It is my understanding the Democrats have approximately 15 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. There is 12 minutes 40 seconds remaining.

Mr. REID. I know the Senator from Minnesota wishes to speak for 5 minutes, and the Senator from Vermont wants 10 minutes. I ask unanimous consent, even though this will go over into the Republican time for a couple minutes, that the Senator from Minnesota be recognized for 5 minutes and the Senator from Vermont be recognized for 12 minutes.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, if I am inconveniencing my colleague, I will follow him if that is better.

Mr. JEFFORDS. No, that is fine.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that be the order.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

#### JUSTIN DART—AN INSPIRATION TO US ALL

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I thank Senator HARKIN for last night coming to the floor and talking about Justin Dart, probably one of the greatest 10 individuals I have met in my life, for what he has done for people with disabilities. His courage and leadership was quite unbelievable. He has inspired many of us.

I send my love from the Senate floor to his family.

#### THE PRESIDENT'S MIDDLE EAST PLAN

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I think it is important to come to the floor of the Senate today and briefly respond to the President's statement of 2 days ago on the Middle East. I want to say to the President that I think his vision is very important. His statement has a very strong beginning and a very strong end.

There is one gap in his statement that concerns me and about which I wish to discuss. The President, rightfully so, talked about the need for reform and the need for democracy for the Palestinian people. He is quite right to put on this emphasis. Right now, what we also have to focus on is how we change the environment on the ground, so that the elections that our President has called for actually lead to a more responsible leadership. I think this is a gap in what the President outlined on Monday. That is to say, we might not like the result we get from the democratic elections he has called for. It could well be that Chairman Arafat can say right now: Fine, I will be chosen, no question about it. Some have suggested that Hamas might win such elections, or even worse.

From my point of view, one of the things we have to understand is that none of this will work in terms of the vision the President laid out—two states and two peoples living peacefully, side by side with secure borders. None of this will work unless the conditions on the ground are changed so that indeed when there are elections, we see a responsible leadership elected to office.

When I talk about the need for “conditions on the ground” being changed, there are at least three factors, if you will. Factors: One, people have to have hope. The Palestinian people have to have some hope. Two, there has to be a growing economy. Three, people have to be able to move from place to place.

So what I want to emphasize is, yes, when the President says the terror has to stop, we can all agree, and we should be strong and united in making sure we