

say that on the floor of the Senate and say it in every possible way. I also think it is true that all parties have to be engaged. There is a role for European leadership and a role for Arab leadership.

Certainly, Israel and the United States have to be engaged, also. That is the good part of the President's statement. I think there has to be active support from the U.S., the EU, and the Arab States in strengthening indigenous Palestinian pressure for reform, in advancing the consolidation and control of these competing militias, and insisting on the transparency of government and judicial operations and on more effective leadership. Second, we have to attend to urgent humanitarian needs. Basic public services are breaking down. Power cuts are frequent and there are shortages in a range of products, from school books to critical medical supplies. Ordinary Palestinians are unable to get the medical treatment they need.

The Palestinian economy has to be allowed to develop. We have to rebuild the physical infrastructure and revitalize the economy as the Palestinian Authority is effectively bankrupt, and any semblance of a modern economy is disappearing. We need to understand that vital social, economic, and security functions have broken down. This is leaving an enormous vacuum. I fear that far more radical and more extremist groups would be eager to fill this vacuum.

I believe this was an important missing piece in what the President said. The conditions on the ground for the Palestinian people have to change if, in fact, the democracy that we call for and the reform we call for will lead to the election of what we would consider to be responsible leadership. We are going to have to be very engaged in this process. Israel is going to have to step up to the plate and be very engaged.

Yes, we need to be clear on the need to end the terror; yes, we need to be clear on the need for reform; but also, yes, we need to be clear in calling for the sustained and vigorous engagement of key actors—the United States, Israel, moderate Arab leadership, the European Union, and we must be clear that the conditions on the ground change.

All you have to do is read the paper every day and look at the conditions on the ground. You see a complete lack of hope among Palestinians. You see people not being able to move. People have no access to jobs or to schools. There is very little hope, and this is not the stuff of social stability. We need to address these issues if, in fact, we are to be able to get this crisis back on the political track, with some sort of political process that truly might lead to an end to this violence.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Vermont is recognized.

#### HISPANIC EDUCATION

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, first, I thank the Senator from Massachusetts for raising the issue of problems in our educational system. He referred to Hispanics. What makes that dramatically worse is that, as a whole, in the Nation we are in deep trouble with respect to competition, international competition, and the status of our educational system. When you realize how far behind the Hispanics are from a base that is far behind the rest of the world, it doubly amplifies the need for us to be very deeply concerned about our educational system.

#### POWERPLANT POLLUTION

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I wish to shift the talk now to pollution and spend a few moments talking about homeland security in relationship to that.

The citizens of this Nation have been hearing a lot about the war on terrorism. They read daily in the papers about our troops overseas. I think often of our men and women overseas and pray for their safe return to their homes and families. I have the greatest respect for those who serve in the national armed services. I have fond memories of my time in the service myself. I learned about the world, about commitment, and about service during my years in the Navy. I would not have traded that time for anything.

There is a war on, and we all need to remember that we conduct the business of this Nation in accordance with that reality. This war continues to be a top priority for this administration. The administration indicates that we have the opportunity to protect hundreds of thousands and possibly tens of thousands of people by taking the right steps now to root out terror. In fact, this Congress passed a massive supplemental appropriations bill to assist in those efforts. We are also debating a Defense Department authorization bill that adds to that cause.

Here in the Capitol, we have begun debating the need for increased security at home and the creation of a new homeland security agency. I fully support the President in his efforts to address these great challenges, and I agree with the efforts the President has put forth following the lead of Senator LIEBERMAN.

I think this Congress should move quickly and pass legislation creating the Department of Homeland Security.

Let us all pause for a moment and consider what we are doing.

Over the last few months, we have listened carefully to the administration about their efforts to conduct this war both home and abroad. We can prevent the loss of life in the future, they say, by investing in homeland security and the war on terrorism, and I do not disagree with these efforts.

But if homeland security is about protecting our citizens from harm and

even death, I have a suggestion for this administration that they may not like to hear.

I hope they are listening.

It has to do with public health. It will not cost the Federal Treasury a penny. It will save thousands of lives. It will reduce hospital visits. It will save consumers money.

What is my grand idea?

Well, it is not new. And it is something we can do today with long lasting results for every man, woman, and child in this Nation. Here it is. It is simple. Reduce powerplant emissions. Let me repeat that: Reduce powerplant emissions.

Studies show that 30,000 Americans die every year due to powerplant pollution—30,000 deaths from powerplant pollution alone. Incredible.

Let me work slow through a list of real, but depressing, statistics on powerplant pollution.

Powerplant pollution results in 20,000 hospitalizations each year, 600,000 asthma attacks, 5 million days of lost work due to pollution-related illness, and 18,000 cases of bronchitis.

Powerplant pollution has resulted in mercury advisories in 44 of the 50 States. In these 44 States, our citizens are asked not to eat the fish caught in the lakes and streams.

Because of powerplant pollution, 6 million American women and children are exposed to mercury levels well above those considered safe by Federal health authorities.

According to the CDC, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 10 percent of women in the United States have mercury levels above those considered protective of newborns. As a result, as many as 390,000 children are born each year at risk for neurological development problems due to exposure to mercury in the womb.

The March issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association found that millions of people who live in areas polluted by fine particles have about the same increased risk of dying from heart or lung disease or lung cancer as people who live with a cigarette smoker. Here is the problem. You can ask a smoker to go outside or to quit, but you cannot kick a dirty powerplant out of your backyard.

This is simply the beginning of my list regarding the impacts of powerplant pollution.

There is acid rain, smog, lung disease, heart disease, asthma, on and on.

Actually, I would like to touch on asthma for one minute. I have a chart indicating what is happening because of these problems. Many of us know children who have contracted asthma. For asthmatics, like the boy in the picture beside me, it is a frustrating and dangerous condition that disrupts many lives.

Just this year, a respected public health journal published the first study showing a direct connection between the onset of asthma in young, healthy children and their exposure to ozone.