

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will stand in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:45 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. MURKOWSKI).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, I understand we are in morning business; is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

EDUCATION

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, I welcome the fact that the leadership has given this time to express our strong views on a very important issue, the whole issue, the quality of education for the children of this country.

It was just about a year ago, Members—I see Senator REED of Rhode Island, Senator DODD from our committee—remember clearly this Nation came together, Republican and Democrat, to sign the No Child Left Behind Act, the gateway of opportunity, of progress, for academic achievement and accomplishment.

We all looked forward to smaller classes, better trained teachers, after-school programs. We looked forward to this with great hope and great anticipation. We looked forward to parental involvement so parents could understand how their children were learning in local schools, with greater accountability for students, for schools, for teachers and parents, and also for the Congress of the United States.

As we come to the time of the President of the United States speaking, if we listen carefully to what is happening all across this country, we will hear we have failed in our understanding and commitment to education and the administration has failed in giving life to our promises in the form of resources to make sure those promises are kept.

Listen to what the Governor of Delaware, Ruth Ann Minner, said recently: Delaware has asked local school districts to return \$10 million from current year budgets. The impact of those kinds of budget-cutting measures takes a tremendous toll in providing enough teachers to continue progress to reduce class size, which is so important to the quality of education. Federal programs, such as No Child Left Behind or IDEA, implemented without adequate Federal funding—no matter that we share the goal and the vision—represent an empty promise.

We have had debates here on whether we have provided the resources or not. Let's listen to what is happening across the country.

In a Washington Post article today, it says Oregon today is on the verge of cutting 15 days, potentially 24 days, from its school year. The United States

ranks 18th among the industrial nations in school year length. How can we expect American schoolchildren to learn in 180 days as much as Korean children learn in 220? And now Oregon may cut back to 165 days of the school year.

The New York Times reported on the impact on the children. Linda Pattison, a fourth grade teacher here uses her fingers to check off the lessons that she usually teaches but will skip. Her pupils will not study the metric system, arithmetic, electricity and science, nor Oregon's history and social studies. "I can only compare this to my divorce," said the teacher.

More than 100 school districts in 8 States have moved to 4-day weeks to cut costs. Oklahoma City has cut bus service entirely for 1,000 students. In Barnstable, MA, they are charging an additional \$200 for music education, \$200 for busing, and \$1,800 now for all-day kindergarten. In Centennial, MN, schools have upwards of 30 students per class. Class sizes have grown significantly in the last year. In Colton, OR, academic classes in the junior high have as many as 41 students per teacher. That's not education; that's crowd control.

I don't fault these communities. They are in a bind. Local schools cannot meet the high standards on a tin-cup budget.

I see my colleagues here. I think they would share with me the hope that tonight the President of the United States will make it clear that help is on its way to those families, to those teachers, to those parents; that we believe the investment in those children will make a real difference, in terms of our economy and in their ability to acquire skills. It will make a difference in terms of young people being able to make a difference for our society and for our democracy and for our leadership. This is something I hope, on the one hand, he will explain, why we have not been able to do it and, second, that he will have a change of mind and he will say—again, what I believe this President understands—what we have failed to follow through with, and that is that we are going to invest in our children and our children's education.

I thank our colleagues who are here. I see my friends from Rhode Island and Connecticut. I know they want to say a word on the subject.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Madam President, I rise to respond and echo the comments of Senator KENNEDY. A year ago, with much hope and great fanfare, we all looked at the signing of the No Child Left Behind Act as a positive step forward, a recognition that we could not simply sit back and let education in the United States continue on its then-current course.

We also hoped the great rhetoric would be matched with real resources. Sadly, those resources have not materialized. The President, only a few

weeks after signing the bill, released his budget numbers for fiscal year 2003 which significantly reduced funding for the No Child Left Behind Act. In fact, the President's budget contained the smallest increase overall for education funding in years. A small increase, but nothing commensurate with the kind of expectations that were generated by the No Child Left Behind Act.

We fear—I fear—that that same reality will be visited upon us this evening in the State of the Union speech, and next week when the President releases this year's budget. There will be no significant increase overall in education spending.

The President may point to an increase in title I that he has advertised, a \$1 billion increase. That would raise title I funding to \$12.3 billion. But let me remind all who are listening, that \$12.3 billion is about \$6 billion less than the authorized figure in the No Child Left Behind Act.

I can remember the discussions, the debate when we were urging a level of title I funding that would be adequate to deal with the challenges we have placed on all the school districts in this country, to be accountable and to perform at a level that is equal to the challenges of this new and very demanding world we face. So the title I money is an increase, but it is insignificant compared to the target we established, agreed on, and fought for in the No Child Left Behind Act.

Mr. KENNEDY. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. REED. I am happy to yield.

Mr. KENNEDY. Seeing the Senator from Connecticut here, does my friend from Rhode Island remember that we had a specific vote? I believe it was a vote on a Dodd-Collins amendment, which ended up with 79 votes, Republicans and Democrats alike. Seventy-nine Senators voted for that full funding here on the floor of the Senate. Yet we were unable to get that kind of support from the administration. Republicans, Democrats alike here on the floor of the Senate said this is a priority for us. Does the Senator remember? This is not a partisan issue. We were joined, were we not, by Republican colleagues?

Mr. REED. Indeed, you are correct, I say to the Senator. We were joined by practically every Member of the Senate regardless of party and region. They believed, as we did, in the need for real resources, particularly for the title I program. What the President is proposing is more of a cosmetic increase in title I, rather than the kind of increase we need to do the job.

I was listening to Senator KENNEDY, my colleague from Massachusetts. He laid out the current dilemma of local school districts, where they are cutting class days, they are charging for transportation, they are charging for music education. That is in response to the current distressed economy. Don't forget, school districts are now required to do much more, by the Federal Government, by the No Child Left Behind