

Mr. President, this is what my amendment is all about, promotions at the top versus the needs of the infantry battalions, sergeants versus generals. What does the Marine Corps need more, sergeants or generals? If we want the Marine Corps to be the 911 force, always ready to go, then we should make sure that the 27 infantry battalions are rock solid. We better make sure they have the essentials to be effective. We better make sure that they have a full complement of sergeants and lieutenants.

It would be irresponsible to give the Marine Corps more generals when its heart and soul is short of the stuff that it needs to do battle. The Marine Corps should not be topsizing while it downsizes. As the Marine Corps gets smaller, it seems to me it is legitimate to cut the brass at the top, as the other services have already done. I had a chart here to demonstrate that.

Of course, most importantly, the point was made by our Secretary of Defense of how important modernization is. Those at the top of the heap should have what they need to get the job done. By voting for my amendment, you will send the right message to the Marine Corps. I yield the floor.

Mr. STEVENS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to yield, as in morning business, to the Senator from Indiana for such time—how much time would the Senator wish? Five minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. COATS. I want to thank the Senator from Alaska for yielding this time.

EDUCATION IN AMERICA

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, earlier this afternoon the Senator from Massachusetts, Senator KENNEDY, spoke on the floor indicating his concern and expressing his criticism of remarks that Senator Dole made today in Minneapolis. I want to take just a few moments to respond to those remarks. I thank the Senator for yielding the time for me to do that.

What Senator Dole said today in Minneapolis was that this country needs education reform, not education reform as defined by this administration and by some in this Congress, but real education reform. Education reform that ensures that parents have authority to be involved in their children's education, and in their curriculum, and in the formation of educational programs for their children. Education reform that would break up the monopoly that dominates public education. Education reform that gets money into the classroom instead of the bureaucracy. Education reform that rewards teachers, and rewards the Governors who run effective programs, and rewards mayors and school boards. Education reforms that try new ap-

proaches, and education reform that loosens Washington's grip on this country's schools.

For a decade or more now, the Congress and the public have been debating how we can improve our public education system, and a number of proposals have been made. But there is an entrenched bureaucracy that insists on making no real changes, on perpetuating the status quo. What Senator Dole was talking about was shaking up that status quo and bringing about reform that brings real results.

One of the issues that was discussed and was criticized earlier is the question of choice for low-income students. This is an issue that I have been involved with for some time. I have offered amendments, on a bipartisan basis with Senator LIEBERMAN, allow test programs, or pilot programs, for vouchers for low-income parents which would allow us to test the concept of school choice.

It seems hypocritical for those of us who have the means to afford school choice, whether by moving to another school district because we are unhappy with the public school where we currently are situated, or by enrolling our children in private schools or parochial schools, to deny that freedom of choice to those families who do not have the resources to send their children to a private school.

The voucher demonstration program is an attempt to understand the impact of enabling families choice over their children's educational opportunities. Many of these families have children who are consigned to some of the most violence-prone, educationally challenged schools in America. Mothers and fathers know that the only way to successfully give their children a chance to escape a lifetime of these difficult environments is to get a better education. Yet the Congress and this administration have repeatedly blocked attempts at even the most minor of reforms to allow low-income children to escape their poor-performing, violent schools.

The reform Senator LIEBERMAN and I proposed was a 3-year demonstration grant. We proposed trying it in 10-20 school districts around the country—costing a very modest amount of money—to see if it works. Even that small of a reform effort is rejected, time after time. My Project for American Renewal includes an expansion of that concept to provide experiments in up to 100 school districts. By trying a demonstration program, we'll be able to see if what the opponents of school choice say is right, but the only way to test their arguments is to get some objective evidence to evaluate school choice. I fear, Mr. President, that the opponents know that school choice would work: they know it would pose a challenge to the existing system.

I suggest that that is exactly what the existing system needs—a challenge, a challenge to improve its educational efforts. That challenge will come

through competition. Public schools and private schools and parochial schools can exist side by side. The competition among the three of them provides better education for all students involved. This has been demonstrated in my hometown of Fort Wayne, IN, on a number of occasions. We ought to move in that direction.

To criticize Senator Dole for calling for education reform because he has failed to support the status quo initiatives provided by this administration that make no major change, efforts of the Clinton administration and the status quo that is perpetuated by Members of this body and call that educational reform—I think the American people know better. Call this what it is, and that is an attempt by a Presidential candidate to bring about some change in our educational system that will benefit the children—not the bureaucracy, not the unions, not the administration—the children that are actually receiving the education, or would like to receive the education. I commend Senator Dole for his remarks, for his initiative in this area. I hope he has the opportunity to carry it out.

I regret we cannot seem to get beyond the status quo of what in many cases is a failed education system, particularly in areas where children live in poverty, the District of Columbia being the prime example. We have struggled and struggled and struggled to try to give the young people opportunities that others of us have and they do not have. It is regrettable that we cannot discuss this on a rational basis and cannot support the efforts of someone trying to bring about this change.

I thank the Senator from Alaska for his patience and his time on this. I yield the floor.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 1997

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

AMENDMENT NO. 4443, AS MODIFIED

(Purpose: To strike \$2,000,000 available for environmental activities with respect to the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana)

Mr. STEVENS. I send to the desk an amendment numbered 4443, as modified, pertaining to the Joint Readiness Training Center in Fort Polk, LA, and ask to set aside the pending amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Alaska [Mr. STEVENS], for Mr. McCAIN, proposes an amendment numbered 4443, as modified.

The amendment (No. 4443), as modified, is as follows:

On page 8, line 3, before the period, add the following: "Provided, That the amount made