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Senate

(Legislative day of Wednesday, February 28, 1996)

The Senate met at 11 a.m., on the expiration of the recess, and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray:

Father, we are Your children and sisters and brothers in Your family. Today we renew our commitment to live and work together here in the Senate Chamber and in our offices in a way that exemplifies to our Nation that people of good will can work in unity with mutual esteem and affirmation. Help us to communicate respect for the special, unique miracle of each person with whom we work and with whom we debate the issues before us. We need Your help to reverse the growing cynicism in America about government and political leaders. Today we want to overcome this cynicism with civility in all our relationships and the business we do together. May we be more aware of Your presence than we are of television cameras, more concerned about the image we project as we work cooperatively than our personal image, and more dedicated to patriotism than to party. Help us show America how great people pull together to accomplish Your will for our beloved Nation. In the name of the Lord. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able acting majority leader, Senator LOTT, is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. LOTT. Thank you very much, Mr. President. Today there will be a period for morning business until the hour of 12 noon, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each with the following exceptions:

Senator MURKOWSKI for 15 minutes, Senator DORGAN for 20 minutes; following morning business today at 12 noon, the Senate will begin 30 minutes of debate on the motion to invoke cloture on the D.C. appropriations conference report.

At 12:30, the Senate will begin a 15-minute rollcall vote on that motion to invoke cloture on the conference report. It is also still hoped that during today's session the Senate will be able to complete action on legislation extending the authorization of the committee regarding Whitewater. Senators are reminded there will be a rollcall vote at 12:30 today and additional votes are possible.

THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I do not see other Senators wishing to speak at this time, so I would like to be recognized for 5 minutes on my own time, not out of leader's time.

I do hope the Senate will think carefully about this vote at 12:30 today. The District of Columbia is in dire straits. We may not approve of the way they do business, or what their plans are for the future, even. However, it is our Nation's Capital. They need this appropriations conference report to be resolved, and resolved right away.

The problem is there is some language in this conference report using vouchers for children in the District of Columbia that have remedial reading problems, or tuition vouchers for them to be able to go to other schools. It has a lot of flexibility built into it.

The Senator from Vermont, Senator JEFFORDS, has worked very hard to come up with a reasonable compromise. These vouchers will not be available, as I understand it, if the District of Columbia decides against it. Why should not the Congress at least give them that option? Why do we resist allowing children that need remedial help in reading, for instance, being

able to get this opportunity to go where they can get the help they need—perhaps after the regular school hours. Why would we want to lock children in the District of Columbia into schools that are totally inadequate, but their parents are not allowed to or cannot afford to move them around into other schools or into schools even in adjoining States?

It is a question of choice and opportunity. We are saying we should at least give the District of Columbia the opportunity to consider whether or not they want to allow these children to have this option. The Members of the Senate, the Democratic leadership, the Senator from Massachusetts says, no, we will not even allow this option to be considered. We will vote against this conference report because of this one point. I do not understand it.

We all say we are concerned about education in America, learning and children, but we do not want to give the children in the District of Columbia that option, even? I would urge my colleagues here in the Senate to vote for this conference report. If we do not do it, we are going to wind up at some point—in a week, or two, or I do not know how far down the road—with a continuing resolution for a few weeks or a couple of months or maybe even the remaining 5½ months of this year, or maybe it will wind up in some omnibus appropriations bill, but I can tell my colleagues on the other side of the aisle it will be funded at less than is in this conference report, probably.

I just think that the Senate looks very bad in refusing to vote cloture so that we could even debate this appropriations conference report. I hope we will have additional votes for cloture today. I think we will pick up some. If we do not succeed today, I hope we will try again next week, and I hope the Senate will find its way clear to vote

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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