

concerning education, if we follow an equal time proposition. I do want the floor at no later than 10 minutes of 5 o'clock to go into these other amendments, and even prefer to have it before that.

Mr. COVERDELL. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. STEVENS. I yield to the Senator.

Mr. COVERDELL. I wonder, to facilitate this so the response can be conclusive, if the Senator from Minnesota would agree to taking the next 5 or 6 minutes or so and make a statement and then we would take our 30 minutes at that point and try to respond to the other side.

Would that facilitate the Senator from Minnesota?

Mr. STEVENS. Would that meet the Senator's approval? We want to get back to the defense bill before the afternoon is over.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Madam President, I can do it. I will need about 10 minutes. I am pleased to do it either way. Since I am on the floor, I wanted to make sure I had a chance to speak. If the Senator from Georgia would rather I precede him, and he wants to respond to all of us, we will get a chance to get back to this. I would love to respond to what my colleague from Georgia has to say, but I am pleased to do it that way.

Mr. STEVENS. I say to my friend, the difficulty is that we started off with what was supposed to be 5 minutes for each Senator and that turned into 26 minutes and now we are about ready to do the same thing. I do want to limit the time. I hope he will agree with me that we will proceed and the Senator would take his 10 minutes now and the Senator from Georgia has 35 minutes. I will still be back here by 25 minutes of 5 o'clock.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the request? Without objection, it is so ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

SUBSTANTIVE DEBATE ON EDUCATION

Mr. WELLSTONE. Let me thank the Senator from Georgia for his graciousness and let me thank my colleague from Alaska.

Madam President, I think there are two different issues that we are confronted with as we address the Coverdell bill. One of them has to do with just the substantive debate about education, which I want to talk about for a few minutes; and the other has to do with, I guess, the Senate process, which I think is equally important, as we think about the Senate and how we do our work together.

On the substance, I simply say to my colleague I spend about every 2 weeks in a school somewhere in Minnesota. If I could think of any one area that I feel I have the most passion about, it is education: education of children, preschool, young people, high school,

higher ed. For that matter, since I think education is preschool all the way to 85 or 90, education, period.

As I travel the country, with a special emphasis in Minnesota, I say to my colleague, I can think of much better uses and a higher priority for \$1.6 billion to be spent. I put the emphasis not in the direction that my colleague from Georgia goes in, which is people being able to put this money into IRAs. Not a whole lot of families I know have \$2,000 they can put into IRAs. This disproportionately benefits people who are fairly well off. It benefits people who especially want to send their kids to private schools and who have the resource to do so. I would rather make an all-out effort to support the public school system.

I would be pleased to come back to the U.S. Senate some day, the sooner the better, and maybe in a debate change my mind and say that I would be all for applying taxpayers' money to support for private education—and that is why I say the sooner the better—but not until we have made the commitment to public education, not until we rebuild crumbling schools around the country; I have been to too many of those schools in Minnesota, and all around the country as well, and not until we reduce class size, not until we get more teachers and teacher assistants into the classrooms, and not until we have more resources for professional development, not until we make an all-out commitment to really deal with the learning gap between children who do well in school and children who don't do well in school, which starts, I might say, with a real commitment and the resources to early childhood development. I think the medical evidence is irreducible and irrefutable; if we don't get it right for these children by age 3, many of them will never be able to do well in school or well in life.

I don't understand what I think is a misplaced priority that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have about \$1.6 billion that doesn't go directly to public education. And I put the emphasis, and I think the vast majority of the people in the United States of America would put the emphasis, on rebuilding the crumbling schools, on reducing class size, on making sure that we have the best education for our teachers and, I might argue, making sure we do our very best by way of children so that when children come to kindergarten, they come ready to learn. That is where we ought to be investing our resources—not in allocating resources to support private education, not in a Coverdell bill where the benefits disproportionately go to those families which least need those benefits.

The second point speaks more to the majority leader than my colleague from Georgia. I don't have a corner on the truth and I do not want to come off arrogant, but this argument that the majority leader makes about getting to

decide what kind of amendments are relevant and dramatically reducing the number of amendments that are out here on the floor presupposes that there aren't any number of different ways of thinking about what is really helpful for education and the development of children and young people in this country.

I have a number of amendments that I think are important. I think the amendment on rebuilding crumbling schools is right on the mark. I think we devalue children and we devalue the work of adults who work with children when we don't make an investment in rebuilding these crumbling schools. I think reducing class size and more teachers in the classroom is extremely important. If I am going to think about ways of making better use of \$1.6 billion, we ought to get back to making sure young people have the hope to go on to higher education. The HOPE scholarship with tax credits that aren't refundable doesn't help very many families in Georgia or Minnesota with incomes under \$28,000 a year. Spend a little time in community colleges. The education is not affordable. I have an amendment to take that \$1.6 billion and make higher education more affordable for these men and women from working families.

I have an amendment, since we are talking about children and education, that deals with the cuts we made in the Food Stamp Program, the major safety net program for poor children in America. We made a 20 percent cut in food stamp benefits. The vast majority of the beneficiaries are children. The vast majority of beneficiaries are working poor families. Every single doctor and every single scientist and every single nutritional expert will tell you children don't do well in school when they are malnourished. They don't do well in school when they don't have enough to eat. I think we ought to restore that funding for the Food Stamp Program as it applies to children in America. That is a top priority education program.

Now we have a majority leader who is saying, "No, I don't want to have debate on all these amendments." What are my colleagues afraid of? Why would it be too much time to take 4 or 5 days or a week and debate this piece of legislation?

I have another amendment which I think is terribly important and I think it has everything in the world to do with how well kids do in school. We, right now, all around the country, are saying to single parents—and I spoke about this last week—mainly women, you can't stay in college because of the welfare bill. You have to leave school. Take a job at \$6 an hour with no health care benefits. You know what. If those single parents—that means they have children—are able to finish their college education, it means better earnings, better opportunities for their children, more self-esteem for the parent, better educational achievement by

the child. I have an amendment which says we ought to make sure that those single parents, those women, are able to finish their college education. I may or may not be able to present that amendment here in this debate.

I just want to make it crystal clear, Madam President, on both counts I am in opposition with the majority leader on this question. Madam President, \$1.6 billion—put it into rebuilding crumbling schools, put it into smaller class size. Don't put it into a program that benefits mainly upper income people and private schools. It is that simple.

Second of all, let's have a debate about education. You cannot decontextualize what happens to children before they go to school and what happens to children when they go home after being in school from how well they do in school. There are a whole bunch of issues—some of them are direct education issues; some of them have to do with whether the parents are doing well employment-wise; some have to do with nutrition; some have to do with health care; some of them have to do with whether or not these young people think they can afford higher education—that dramatically affect how well children do in school.

I don't think the majority leader ought to, as a priority, decide what are relevant amendments or what kind of debate we ought to have on education. I don't know why my colleagues are afraid of a full-fledged substantive debate about education. Let's take the next week and let's debate the education amendments up or down.

I said to my colleague from Georgia, to end on a slightly different note, that I appreciated his effort. I said that a few days ago, that I think he is absolutely sincere in what he is doing, even though we disagree and that, most important of all, I look forward to a real debate. I hope we will have that real debate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

EDUCATION SAVINGS ACT FOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, first, I will respond to the Senator from Minnesota. I appreciate his courtesy, his reflection on my passion for this legislation. I will, at least for his benefit and others, put a slightly different view on the analysis the Senator has presented.

First, the Senator talked about a cost of \$1.6 billion. Now, that is a 10-year period. Of course, it is leaving \$1.6 billion in the checking accounts of 14 million American families. But what that fails to acknowledge is that that modest—modest—incentive generates over \$10 billion of assets, not tax dollars. These are volunteered assets of American families. So it becomes one of the largest single new sources of financial support for all education in recent times. It is a large, large number.

It is not \$1.6 billion, but we say, OK, we are not going to tax the interest buildup, so we will receive \$1.6 billion less here in Washington. They will keep it in savings accounts. That will generate over \$10 billion.

The Senator from Minnesota has not, I believe, acknowledged that this proposal is now a very bipartisan proposal, and it is far more expansive than the savings account which I just described.

The filibuster that we have been fighting since last July with the Presidential veto threat includes State prepaid tuition plans. It is about the same cost. Again, it is tax relief to families so they are not taxed when they come with prepaid tuition to a college. Twenty-one States now have it. And that was brought to us by Senator BREAU of Louisiana and Senator GRAHAM of Florida.

The Senator has not acknowledged the employer-provided educational assistance which expands tax exemptions for employers helping their employees continue to improve their education. This leaves almost \$2.7 billion of tax relief in these companies' checking accounts. But, of course, it affects over 1 million workers who would be able to have a better education because of it, and 250,000 graduate students, because they would be included for the first time. We owe Senator MOYNIHAN of New York the gratitude for having put this proposal in the package that is being filibustered.

There are a couple of minor provisions that I will not go into. But the other more significant one that has been brought forward is from Senator GRAHAM of Florida who has devised an expanded financing tool for public school systems which would enable the construction of about 500 new schools.

So you have a very broad range. You have savings accounts effecting 14 million families and 20 million children generating almost \$10 billion of new energy. You have \$5 billion in new resources supporting public and private schools; \$3 billion in new school construction; 1 million workers receiving tax-free employer-provided education assistance; 1 million students receiving tax relief on State prepaid tuition plans.

So, A, we have to look at it in a broader context—not just the savings account. And the other is that the vast majority of the proposal now has been proposed by the other side of the aisle.

The Senator from Minnesota inferred that it is for public education. This is not for public education. That is just not the case. The 500 new schools, public schools, 1 million workers, and 1 million students are all associated with public education. Half of all the proceeds coming out of the savings account, which in the first 5 years is \$5 billion, and then, as I said, \$10 billion over 10 years—half of it, if you accept the very bare bottom analysis of the Joint Tax Committee, supports students in public schools. That is billions of dollars. And half of it supports chil-

dren in private or home school. So it is a lot of money.

The thing that is not clear to anybody right now, and for which we do not have numbers—we can only imagine—is that one of the unique features of the savings account is that a sponsor can be a contributor, a grandparent, an uncle, an aunt, a sister, a neighbor, a church, an employer, a union, a benevolent association—you name it. Those resources coming into the savings account no one has estimated. My judgment is that in the second 5 years it will be equal to what the families are putting in because people's imaginations begin. And it is a limitless opportunity for people to help youngsters have sufficient resources for helping their education, whether it is the requirement to have a tutor, or a home computer, or transportation, or after-school programs, or whatever is perceived to be the problem associated with the child.

The majority leader has come. The Senator is trying to ask a question. Let us give the majority leader his time.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Madam President, will the Senator yield for 10 seconds?

Mr. COVERDELL. Yes.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I want to be clear. Since the Senator from Alaska sort of set the terms and was gracious enough to let me speak, I wanted to stay on the floor because I wanted to respond to the Senator's very eloquent viewpoint. I have not tried to debate using his time. Later on I will come back to the debate. But I did not want to leave in the middle of the Senator's remarks because I respect what he is trying to do. I don't understand how someone so nice can be so wrong. But we will come back to the debate.

Mr. COVERDELL. I thank the Senator.

Mr. LOTT addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, first, I want to congratulate the Senator from Georgia for the leadership he has provided on this issue and so many other issues, and for his persistence in coming to the floor and engaging in the discussion with the Senator from Minnesota and others.

One of the things that comes to my mind is: What are you afraid of? What is it about this that causes you great concern? I am a product of public education from day one all the way through college all the way through law school. I really care about public education. I daresay a lot of our colleagues here in the Chamber can't say that. They went to one private school or another; one special school or another. Not me. I went to public schools in Mississippi from the first grade—in fact, even a little pre-first grade program right on through law school. When I was in elementary and in high school, my family didn't have a lot of