important our leadership and our commitment is to NATO.

Governor Bush is an internationalist who is committed to NATO and our European allies.

These attacks are just partisan politics designed, in my opinion, to turn attention from a growing scandal involving Vice President GORE.

Just this morning, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing to examine Vice President GORE's dealings with former Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin regarding weapons sales to Iran. It has been widely reported that the Vice President failed to fully and properly inform relevant congressional oversight committees regarding agreements reached with Russian officials. He has to be more forthcoming about what went on there.

The hearing was in response to new and critical information on this matter which surfaced in the New York Times report dated October 13. Governor Bush remains fully committed to NATO and American leadership in Europe. Repeating, he remains fully committed to NATO and American leadership in Europe.

He understands our unique role and is committed to maintaining that leadership. We know how important our leadership is to NATO. We certainly found that out during the Kosovo-Serbian war that we had. To suggest that he doesn't understand is just plain hogwash.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

THE FAILURES OF THIS CONGRESS

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, over the period of the past weeks and months, as the ranking member of our Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, I have tried to point out the failing of this Congress and the fact that we have not addressed reauthorization of the elementary and secondary education bill, which we are charged to do—we had 22 days of hearings and we had a markup and legislation was reported out of our committee.

It has been several months since that legislation was on the floor and then withdrawn by the majority leader. In spite of the efforts of many of us to bring that measure back on the floor of the Senate, we have been unable to do so. We think it is enormously important that we have an opportunity to do so.

We are now some 3 weeks after the date that was suggested that we move into the adjournment for this Congress, and we have seen days go by, quorum calls held, and still no action. Now pending before the committee, we have the bankruptcy legislation, which is going to benefit in a substantial way the credit card industry. But we are not having the opportunity to address the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which can benefit families all across this country, with support for State and local communities.

This issue, I think, is back before the Senate because, during the period of our national debate between the Vice President and Governor Bush, great attention has been given to the issues of education. Assurances were given to the American people representing the different positions of the candidates. We have pointed out—I did last week—some of the realities and some of the facts about what is happening in our public schools across this country. And also I pointed out the fact that Texas has not been keeping up with the rest of the country on objective tests. That was challenged by some colleagues on the other side of the aisle. Now we have the Rand Corporation—virtually a nonpartisan organization—which has done a very careful review of the Texas experience, and they agree with us and, in effect, agree with Vice President GORE on the issues of education.

I am glad we are getting some clarification. We only have 2 weeks left in this campaign, but I am glad we are beginning to get some clarification on this issue. First of all, I remind our colleagues about what assurances were given to the American people about the commitment of our majority leader on the issues of elementary and secondary education. We only provide some 7 cents out of every dollar that goes into the local communities. States have the primary responsibility. Nonetheless, we can give some focus and attention to programs that have demonstrated positive results in terms of academic achievement and accomplishment. That really is the purpose for which these resources are out there, and also to give special emphasis to the most economically disadvantaged children in this country so they are not going to be left out or left behind.

We come to this debate and discussion looking over the period of recent years. We wonder whether the positions that have been accepted by the Republican leadership are very much in conflict with the age-old positions of the Republican Party with regard to education, where they believe there should not be a role for any Federal aid to education. We had that debate in the early sixties. We have had it many times since then.

Nonetheless, we have seen in the early 1990s when the Republican leadership assumed control of the Senate the first order of business for them was a massive rescission of moneys that had been appropriated and were going to be allocated to school districts that would have provided help and assistance to needy schools across the country.

That money had been appropriated by the House and Senate and agreed to by the conference, signed by the President of the United States. One of the first orders of business by the Republican leadership was to rescind that money. We saw a rescission of about $2 billion. The initial request was considerably higher. It was reduced, but we had the rescission.

Then in the 1990s we faced the onslaught of our Republican leadership who wanted to abolish the Department of Education. I think most Members and most parents across the country believe that when the President of the United States sits down with the Members at the White House, we want someone sitting at the President's elbow when there is a discussion and debate about domestic priorities in the United States, someone who is always going to say: What about education? What about education, Mr. President?

Those voices are there, appropriately so, in terms of the security interests of the United States and defense, for the foreign policy of the United States, the Secretary of State. We have them there with regard to housing. We have them there in terms of the environment. We have them there in terms of commerce and transportation. Many Members believe we should have them there with regard to the issues of education.

That was not the position of the Republican leadership. They said: No, we don't want to have that there. They tried unsuccessfully to eliminate the Department of Education. Nonetheless, we find the Department is there. It is considerably downsized. It has had an extraordinary record, with great improvement over the previous Republican Secretaries of Education in collecting the debts that are owed to the Department. They have reduced the student loan default rate from 22.4% in 1992 to 6.9% in 2000. Both the guaranteed and student loan collections have been much more efficient.

Now there is a different attitude by the new Republican leadership. It is expressed by the Republican leader himself, going back to January of 1999:

> Education is going to be a central issue this year. . . . For starters, we must reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

January 29, 1999:

> But education is going to have a lot of attention, and it's not going to be just words. . . .

June 22, 1999:

> Education is number one on the agenda for the Republicans in Congress this year. . . .

Chamber of Commerce, February 1, 2000:

> We're going to work very hard on education. I have emphasized that every year I've been majority leader . . . and Republicans are committed to doing that.

February 3, 2000:

> We must reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. . . . Education will be a high priority in this Congress.

May 1, 2000:

> This is very important legislation. I hope we can debate it seriously and have amendments in the education area. Let's talk education.

May 2, 2000:

> Question: . . . have you scheduled a cloture vote on that?
>
> Senator LOTT: No, I haven't scheduled a cloture vote. . . . But education is number one in the minds of the American people all across this country and every State, including my own State.

July 10:

I, too, would very much like to see us complete the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

July 25, 2000:

We will keep trying to find a way to go back to this legislation this year and get it completed.

The fact is, for the first time in 35 years we do not have a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. That is against the background, Mr. President, of what is happening out there across this country and what young children are doing.

We have challenges in our education system. Here is a chart: ''More Students are Taking the SAT.'' That test, by and large, is necessary to gain entrance into the colleges; not virtually unanimous, but by and large it is required. Look at what has happened since 1980, when 33 percent of the children took it: 36 percent in 1985; 40 percent in 1990; 42 percent in 1995; and now in 2000, it is 44 percent.

This is a reflection of the attitude of children in our high schools. The percentage of children taking the SATs is going up significantly. The children want to take those tests. They understand the significance of the SAT and the importance of a college education. The SAT test is demanding. It is hard. It is difficult. Children have to work extremely long hours to prepare for these SATs. The increasing numbers of students taking the SAT is a clear indication from the children of this country that they are serious about education and they want to be able to try to improve their academic achievement.

Not only do we see their willingness to take the most strenuous of tests, which are the SATs, but they are also willing to take the advanced courses in math and science, probably the most difficult courses in our high school.

We see what has been happening in precalculus: In 1990, 31 percent of students enrolled in precalculus; in 2000, 44 percent did. In calculus, the rate increased from 19 percent to 24 percent. In physics, 44 percent to 49 percent. These are the percentage increases of students who are taking the advanced courses in these subject matters—all on the rise. The number of children who are taking the SAT tests is on the rise.

Let's take a look at the results. We have now more children taking the SAT tests. They are taking more demanding courses. What have been the results? We see across the board, going back from 1972 and 1975, 1980, the constant downward movement in terms of results. What we have been seeing since 1990 is the gradual, slow—and I admit it has been slow, but it is going in one direction, and that is up. There has been an improvement in SAT math scores and they are now the highest in 30 years. More kids are taking them, more kids are doing better. That is true across the board in terms of males as well as females.

We have challenges in our education system. This is a reflection on what is happening generally across the country. These are the matters the Vice President has talked about, how he wants to strengthen those.

Now we see what has been happening in the State of Texas. We saw what is happening generally across the country, that all the indicators are going up. Here we have Texas, falling far below the national average on the SAT scores from 1997 to the year 2000.

I brought this up to the Senate floor last week, and a lot of my colleagues were dismissive. But let's look at this. This is the national test, the SAT. These are not homegrown tests in Texas and homegrown tests in Massachusetts, homegrown in other States. The SAT is a national standardized test. I will come back to that in a minute.

These are the national averages for the SAT test. Notice the national average total scores since 1997 has gone up. That, I think, is a clear indication that the children, working harder, taking more challenging courses, have a greater desire, more of them, to go on to the schools and colleges. It is a very definite upward swing, although not great in terms of the total numbers. All of us want these higher. However, the fact remains that progress has been made and the national average is going up.

But not, Mr. President, in the State of Texas. From 1999 to the year 2000, we have seen it flatten out. Going back to 1997, scores have declined; Texas scores have gone down. It is also interesting that Texas scores are well below the national average in the SATs.

I think this is a pretty fair indication about the facts in the State of Texas. With all respect, I am not getting into criticizing the Governor or commenting on his desire to try to do better. But I do think that when he talks about it and he claims how well Texas is doing, it is fair enough to look at the facts and examine whether this is so. We have this as a result of these Scholastic Aptitude Tests that show Texas is well below the national average, and under Governor Bush it hasn't improved on the national average in the last several years, at least while he has been Governor.

These are the earlier facts. Then we have the blockbuster report, the Rand Commission report, which basically sustains that argument that the schools may not have been making as large of improvements as claimed. It has been an important indictment of what has been happening on education in the State of Texas.

Mr. REID. Could I ask the Senator from Massachusetts to yield while we do a unanimous consent request, and the Senator as part of the request would retain the floor?

Mr. KENNEDY. I am glad to.

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

The Senator from Alaska.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 4811

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask consent that following statements by Senator KENNEDY and Senator BAUCUS ongoing now, the Senate proceed to the conference report to accompany the foreign operations appropriations bill, that it be considered as having been read, and time be limited to the following: 1 hour equally divided between Senators MCCONNELL and LEAHY or their designees, 10 minutes equally divided between myself and Senator BYRD or our designees, and 30 minutes under the control of Senator GRAHAM of Florida. I further ask unanimous consent that following the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote on the adoption of the conference report without any intervening action.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, it is my understanding there is already scheduled a 4:30 vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mr. REID. If this debate is not completed prior to that time, we will have to complete it after that vote is taken?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mr. STEVENS. That is my understanding, too.

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

Mr. STEVENS. I thank Senator KENNEDY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

EDUCATION TEST SCORES

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I was just pointing out that we have this extraordinary report. I have it in my hand. It is the October 24, 2000 Rand Commission report: What do test scores in Texas tell us? It is an excellent report. I will have excerpts of it printed in the RECORD. But I hope those who are interested in this issue, trying to make up your minds over the period of these last 10 days, will have a good opportunity to examine that report.

Let me just mention a few of the highlights of the report. First of all, the study was released, as I mentioned, on October 24. It raises serious questions about the validity of gains in Texas math and reading stores. The study compares the results of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, the test taken by Texas students, with the results achieved by those same students on the National Assessment of Education Progress tests. There were large discrepancies between the results of the Texas TAAS test and the national NAEP test. The student gains on the TAAS, the Texas test, are far greater than what has been found with the same group of students on the NAEP or other standardized national tests.

Do we understand what we are saying? Significant improvement on the