

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

#### THE COST OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, every weekend that any of us go home, the families we run into are talking about the cost of higher education. We know that cost is going up. But this administration has just made an unconscionable recommendation for low- and middle-income families—to deny them the opportunity to consolidate the loans they have now at a fixed interest rate. That possibility is there for small business, it is there for big business, and this administration wants to foreclose that opportunity for families and new college graduates across this nation.

This is what it is going to mean for the average student loan borrower in America: It is going to mean an additional \$3,000 in costs on a \$10,000 student loan. At a difficult and challenging time when state budgets are cutting their aid to higher education, and tuition is on the rise, it is bad education policy, and it is not in our national interest. We should be doing everything in our power to make college more affordable.

I see the Senator from Vermont. I yield to him.

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I agree with the Senator from Massachusetts. I could not believe what I heard today with respect to what they are trying to do. This administration is taking a look at education from the bottom up. It is ridiculous what they are doing. This is a perfect example of doing something that is so against anybody's rational way of helping people; I could not believe it.

Mr. KENNEDY. I see the Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. I thank the Senator from Massachusetts for bringing up this issue. It is so critical in my home State of Washington, where the University of Washington is looking at increases of 11 to 12 percent. Students are spending between \$60,000 and \$70,000 for their education. We need to do everything we can in this information age economy, where education is going to determine success; we need to be increasing access. The elimination of a Federal fixed-rate student loan program is a big mistake. We should be increasing Pell grants. We should be increasing access to education. We should be making it more affordable.

As somebody who went to school on Pell grants and student loans, I think it is a difficult challenge. In this day and age, with our economy changing, access to education for low- and middle-income students at the most affordable rate must be a priority of this administration and this Congress.

Mr. KENNEDY. I yield to the Senator from New York.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Procedurally, Senators may seek recogni-

tion, but there is no standing order for the Senator to yield.

Mr. KENNEDY. Do I have 10 minutes?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 10 minutes. The Senator may yield to another Senator for a question.

Mrs. CLINTON. Will the Senator from Massachusetts yield for a question?

Mr. KENNEDY. I yield for a question.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mrs. CLINTON. Is the Senator aware of the amount of money that the average American family already pays for college tuition and education, which as my colleague from the State of Washington pointed out is actually increasing faster than the rate of inflation?

Mr. KENNEDY. I certainly am. Nationwide, college tuition have increased 35 percent over the last 10 years. Today, the average student leaves college with \$17,000 of debt. In my State, the average loan that was consolidated last year was \$27,000. Under the administration's proposal, students will lose the opportunity to consolidate their loans at a fixed rate and that would cost the average student thousands of dollars as the interest rate goes up from year to year.

Mrs. CLINTON. From the Senator's study of this proposal, which I have to confess, when I first saw it, I thought it was a misprint—I could not believe the administration was about to make the cost of going to college more expensive for middle-income families—is the Senator aware of the impact this alleged cost savings would have on the entire Federal budget? What is the amount of money the administration thinks they will save on the backs of young people going to college?

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, \$1.3 billion. This is a shell game. They will use the \$1.3 billion they will get from students for the tax break. And we are talking about 6 million students who would be facing higher interest rates over the next decade. In my own state last year 36,000 people consolidated their FFEL loans—with an average loan of \$30,000. That means that a variable interest rate could cost as much as half a million dollars to students in Massachusetts.

Mrs. CLINTON. In one State alone, is that the Senator's information?

Mr. KENNEDY. One State alone; that is right.

Mrs. CLINTON. I thank the Senator for bringing this very important issue to the attention of this body and to families throughout New York and America. Like so many, we were just amazed by this proposal. I certainly hope cooler and more compassionate heads will prevail on the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue.

Mr. KENNEDY. I see my friend and colleague from Massachusetts.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Massachusetts be permitted to control his time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized to speak in morning business for up to 10 minutes. The Senator may only yield for questions.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I simply ask my colleague from Massachusetts—and I thank him for bringing this issue before us—whether or not he believes, in a moment when people are being thrown out of work, in a moment when the economy is down, and at the same time we are talking about making education the most important issue for Americans, as Americans believe it is—if at that moment it makes any sense at all, when more people are trying to apply to schools, when more people realize the importance of education to get a high-value-added job to move the economy of this country—how can one justify, I ask my colleague, asking students in this country to pay the price of a large number of corporations getting a tax break, of a large number of wealthy people getting a tax break, and making it more difficult for people to secure the very education the President says and others agree is the most important ingredient in not only moving our economy but of good citizenship?

I ask my colleague, is there any possible way to justify that as a common-sense policy?

Mr. KENNEDY. The Senator has put his finger on it. This is a shell game. The moneys that effectively will be saved will be used for the tax break, the tax cut for the wealthiest individuals. It is wrong education policy. It is wrong national security policy.

American families need lower tuition rates rather than higher loan interest rates. That is what the Democrats stand for, and it is intolerable—intolerable—that the Bush administration would go through this subterfuge. The last time we faced it was in 1981 with the addition of an origination fee. That was a fee on all loan programs. That means that a student has to pay an additional 3 percent on what they have to borrow. Now students not only have to pay for tuition and fees, but the federal government added a 3 percent fee of their own to those already high costs.

This administration does not get it straight when it comes to educating the young people in this country.

I thank the Senator.

Mr. KERRY. I thank my colleague.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, how much time remains?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Three minutes 26 seconds.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I conclude by pointing out, once again, that 64 percent of all students borrow through the Federal student loan programs to finance an education; 74 percent of full-time students work 25 hours a week or more while attending school, and nearly half of all these students work at levels that are likely to have a negative impact on their academic achievement and the overall quality of their education.

There is tremendous pressure on students now. If we tolerate this and let

the administration's program go forward, it will mean additional pressure on these young people, and in the long run a deficit to the quality of education in this country.

I yield the remaining time to the Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, how much time do I have?

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

The Senator from Minnesota has 2½ minutes.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, does the Senator from New Jersey want to speak as well on this subject?

Mr. TORRICELLI. I will be happy to if the Senator has time.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I will yield to the Senator from New Jersey.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. WELLSTONE. I ask unanimous consent that I be able to follow Senator MCCAIN in the order, speaking later, for 10 minutes.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

#### DIGITAL BROADCASTING

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, today is the 1st of May. It is significant in U.S. history for major technological achievements. On this day in 1935, the Boulder Dam, later renamed for President Herbert Hoover, was completed. On May 1, 1947, radar for commercial and private aircraft was first demonstrated. On May 1, 1844, Samuel Morse sent the first telegraph message. All of these achievements represented significant technological milestones that have greatly benefited millions of Americans.

May 1, 2002, was supposed to be a wonderful day that represented another technological milestone for American television viewers. Today is the deadline for all commercial television stations in the United States to be broadcasting a digital signal. Theoretically, consumers should now be able to receive a digital signal from each and every commercial broadcaster in the country. Unfortunately for consumers, a vast majority of broadcasters have missed today's deadline, leaving consumers' digital TV tuners with little more than static. In fact, according to recent figures from the FCC and the National Association of Broadcasters, over 1,011, or 77 percent, of commercial broadcasters have failed to meet the May 1 deadline. Moreover, 834 commercial stations filed waiver requests with the FCC seeking an extension to complete the construction of their digital facilities.

The transition to digital television has been a grave disappointment for American consumers but not surprising to this Member. It is nothing short of a spectrum heist for American taxpayers. I will read a few headlines that recently appeared in newspapers across

the country: The Boston Globe, "Missed Signals: Many TV Stations Seen Lagging on Deadline to Offer High Definition." San Jose Mercury News: "Static Blurs HDTV Transition, Industries Squabbling Stalls Digital Television." USA Today: "Digital TV Revolution Yields Mostly White Noise." And finally, the most remarkable headline from Monday's New York Times: "Most Commercial Broadcasters Will Miss Deadline For Digital Television." This morning's USA Today states:

Today was supposed to be a milestone in the grand conversion to digital broadcast television. Instead it serves as a marker for how poorly the transition is going . . . At the current pace, broadcasters will be able to keep all of their spectrum, digital and analogue, in perpetuity. That means a substantial chunk will remain locked up in broadcasters' hands instead of being put to more valuable uses, such as for advanced cell phone services. Not only are those needed, the spectrum also could be sold for billions, aiding a deficit-laden U.S. Treasury.

I ask unanimous consent that the editorial and other news items be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From USA Today, May 1, 2002]

#### DIGITAL TV "REVOLUTION" YIELDS MOSTLY WHITE NOISE

Today was supposed to be a milestone in the grand conversion to digital broadcast television. Instead it serves as a marker for how poorly the transition is going.

By now, every commercial broadcast station should have been sending its signal digitally. With just a regular TV antenna and a digital tuner, families were supposed to be getting their favorite TV shows in crystal-clear pictures and theater-quality sound.

So far, though, the revolution is a dud. Only about 25% of commercial stations offer a digital version of their broadcast signal, according to a report from Congress' General Accounting Office. And few programs are produced in the highest-quality HDTV format. Little wonder that just 200,000 digital over-the-air tuners were sold last year, compared with more than 22 million analog sets.

This is all a far cry from the revolution the broadcast industry promised six years ago. That's when Eddie Fritts, president of the National Association of Broadcasters, proclaimed that "America will embrace digital TV quickly and enthusiastically."

The hype, plus a heavy dose of big-money lobbying, persuaded Congress to give \$70-billion worth of extra spectrum to the broadcast industry for free so it could transmit digital and old-fashioned analog signals during the transition. By 2006, 85% or more homes were to have made the switch to digital. Then the old analog signal was to be turned off, and broadcasters were to return the analog spectrum to the taxpayers who financed their gift.

At the current pace, though, broadcasters will be able to keep all of their spectrum, digital and analog, in perpetuity. That means a substantial chunk will remain locked up in broadcasters' hands, instead of being put to more valuable uses, such as for advanced cell phone services. Not only are those needed, the spectrum also could be sold for billions, aiding a deficit-laden U.S. Treasury.

Confronted with this faltering transition, broadcasters are casting blame in all direc-

tions: Cable companies don't carry their digital offerings, which means a big chunk of potential viewers can't get high-definition broadcasts. Only a tiny fraction of TVs have digital tuners. Hollywood doesn't produce enough digital content. The Federal Communications Commission isn't issuing enough mandates.

These complications have hampered the move to digital. But at bottom, they are distractions designed to hide broadcasters' unwillingness to fulfill the promise they made in exchange for all of that free spectrum.

Outside the broadcast industry, in fact, the conversion to digital TV is moving along pretty smoothly. More than 15 million consumers subscribe to digital cable, and 17.5 million homes get digital TV via small home-satellite dishes. HBO produces more high-definition digital content in any given week than all of the broadcast networks combined. This summer, the Discovery Channel will offer an all-high-definition service.

Viewers snapped up 12 million DVD players last year alone so they could watch digital movies. And digital TV monitors—which don't come with digital over-the-air tuners—are selling briskly.

Broadcasters were right. Consumers want the benefits of digital TV. Now it's time for broadcasters to live up to their bargain.

[From the Boston Globe, Apr. 26, 2002]

#### MISSED SIGNALS MANY TV STATIONS SEEN LAGGING ON DEADLINE TO OFFER HIGH DEFINITION

(By Peter J. Howe)

Roughly three-quarters of second-tier television stations in the United States are likely to miss next Wednesday's deadline to begin transmitting at least some programming in crystal-clear "high-definition" format, according to a survey being released today by the General Accounting Office, Congress's watchdog agency.

Among the more than 800 US TV stations involved are Boston's channels 38 and 56, which said yesterday they have been given federal waivers to miss the May 1 deadline set by Congress six years ago. Station executives said because of technical challenges, it will probably be early summer at the soonest before they start carrying programs in the high-definition format.

US Representative Edward J. Markey of Malden, who is the ranking Democrat on the House telecommunications subcommittee and commissioned the GAO study, said last evening the fitful progress shows the need for federal regulators to impose "clear deadlines and real punishments" for HDTV laggards. "Some combination of the Federal Communications Commission and Congress has to force a resolution of the conflicts which exist amongst industries which have paralyzed the development of digital TV," Markey said. "We can no longer just stand on the sidelines and allow the consumer to be deprived of the benefits of this remarkable technology."

Six years ago, hoping to accelerate a shift many advocates said would be even more radical than moving from black-and-white to color TV two generations ago, Congress enacted legislation calling for all 1,600 US public and commercial TV stations to move by 2006 to a format that provides much clearer, all digital, wide-screen images more like a cinema than TV.

Images in HDTV are made up of nearly six times as many pixels, or dots, as standard analog transmissions enabling viewers to see details like individual blades of grass in a baseball close-up or faces in a stadium crowd.

The law called for 119 large-market TV stations affiliated with ABC, CBS, NBC, and