

about finding the money within the farm bill, within the LDP and the countercyclical payment money that will not be used. The Congressional Budget Office indicates to us there is no such fund, there is no such \$5 billion lying around in the farm program waiting to be used, and we would not know what the scope of the funding for those programs would be until September of 2003 in any event.

Frankly, we have producers who needed help months ago who have to make wrenching decisions right now relative to whether they are going to make it through the winter. They will have to liquidate everything they have in order to survive in too many instances. Too many young producers are being chased out of the business altogether. Those most vulnerable, those least capitalized, tend to be among the youngest. We are at risk of losing an entire generation of farmers, ranchers, school board members, and church leaders in rural America if something is not done to provide meaningful and immediate relief.

There is great urgency to this, and I hope we can find the bipartisan support to pass the comprehensive drought relief bill in these coming days.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator has expired.

The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I rise today in support of S. 2800 to say that during the August break, when we all went home, what a pleasant experience it was to go home, except that some of what I saw during those days in August in Nebraska were not pleasant experiences. The message from our farmers and ranchers in Nebraska is that the drought is driving them out of their business and running them out of agriculture.

As a part of my trip back to Nebraska, I hosted a Senate Agriculture Committee hearing in Grand Island, and I thought it might be important to report back what I heard from many of our farmers and ranchers in Nebraska.

Al Davis, a rancher from Hyannis, NE, in the middle of the sand hills, told me his ranch has not had any measurable precipitation since July 6—a month and a half earlier.

For 60 days, Art Duvall's farm in Ord had no measurable rainfall, and the McCook Daily Gazette, my hometown paper which I delivered as a young boy, reported that as of the date of the hearing, that area had had only 8 inches of rain this year and that there will be 35 days this summer with temperatures of 100 degrees or more, approaching the record set during the Dust Bowl years.

I visited Randy Peters' farm, a farm that has been in the Peters family since 1921, where on many occasions as a young boy, with my father, I hunted pheasants. So I am familiar with the farm. Since 1921, they have had a crop every year—some good years, some bad years, but they had a crop. This year, there will be no crop. The corn will be

left standing, not even good for silage, not having any value except maybe if we get any kind of snowfall this winter, maybe to catch a little snow and keep it for moisture for the future.

When we had TV cameras to take a look at how bad the ears of corn were, we had to walk halfway through the field to find an ear of corn big enough to shuck so we could peel back the husks and have people take a look at the fact that there were no kernels of corn on that ear.

I also heard during the hearing the details regarding the sale of livestock. As the Senator from South Dakota stated about selling off herds and recognizing that next year may not be any better, farmers may need to sort of hedge their bet a bit and get rid of their herds in case the high cost of hay—if it is available—will drive up the cost of production to the point where they lose more on every head of cattle that they sell rather than recouping any losses.

Witnesses testified that much of the nonirrigated crop in large sections of the State would be a total loss this year, after 2 previous years that had been bad crop years in their own right. Witness after witness testified that they need the kind of assistance the Federal Government would not think twice about giving if Nebraska had been struck by a hurricane.

As Merlyn Carlson, the director of agriculture for the State of Nebraska, said, agricultural producers, farmers, need two things: Rain and money.

Well, we cannot do anything about the rain. Even if we could, the rain will come too late this year to protect against the problems that are currently being experienced. It will be great for next year but not for this year.

At this point, I am sure some of our colleagues would bring up the subject of offsets. That certainly has been raised by the administration and by many of our colleagues. There are those who believe that any disaster relief should be funded only by cuts in future farm bill programs. I disagree. There is no reason to treat disaster relief differently for rural areas struck by drought than we would in other areas struck by another kind of natural disaster. Moreover, if we wait for offsets, we will delay relief.

One thing I have learned during my short time in the Senate is that every program and every idea has a constituency, and if one Member of Congress attempts to defund a program for the benefit of another, there will be a fight. We cannot afford to waste time having a floor fight over offsets.

Throughout the hearing, witnesses asked for relief without delay. At one point, I asked a panel, consisting of representatives of the National Corn Growers Association, the American Corn Growers Association, the Nebraska Wheat Board, the National Grain Sorghum Producers, and the Nebraska Corn Growers Association, if

they favored a delay in relief if offsetting costs could be found. Without exception, they did not. They recognized that, in fact, if aid will be of any assistance, it must be delivered as soon as possible.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator has expired.

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. I urge our colleagues to move forward on this legislation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JOHNSON). The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. How much time does Senator KENNEDY have remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Ten minutes, 20 seconds.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that Senator KENNEDY be recognized as in morning business for an additional 5 minutes and the minority also have an additional 5 minutes for morning business.

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

The Senator from Massachusetts.

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, for families across this country who have school-age children, they have been involved over the period of these recent days and weeks preparing their children to attend, by and large, the public schools of our country. Over 90 percent of the children in this country go to the public schools. A little less than 10 percent go to private schools.

Over these last several months, we have had, with President Bush, a bipartisan effort which resulted in what was called the "No Child Left Behind Act." That legislation recognized that what is really needed for the neediest children in this country is school reform. But we also need investment, school reform and increased resources.

For a long time, the Title I program was criticized because it provided resources without really providing the kind of accountability that is so important. So there was a bipartisan effort to provide for that kind of accountability.

Now as parents are seeing their children going back to school and they are asking whether the Congress and this administration are meeting their responsibility. Because in that legislation, we are holding accountable the children that were going through school. We are holding accountable the schools. We are holding accountable teachers.

I was asked over the recent month of August as I went around Massachusetts, is: What is going to be the administration's response to the children being left behind with the budget that the administration recommended to the Congress for funding of No Child Left Behind? Will politicians be accountable? There are 10.3 million children who fall into what we call the Title I category. Over 6 million of those children are going to be left behind under the administration's budget. We do not expect that money in and

of itself to be the answer to all of the problems, but it is a pretty good indication of the priorities of a nation and the priorities of an administration. And this chart is a pretty clear indication of the recent history of increased funding for education. We are talking her about the total education budget. In 1997, a 16 percent increase; 12 percent in 1998; 12 percent in 1999; 6 percent in the year 2000; 19 percent in 2001; and 16 percent in 2002. However, it is only 2.8 percent under this administration's budget, the lowest we have seen over the last 7 years.

Again, money is not everything, but we did make a commitment to the parents, to the families, to the schools. There is tough criteria for all of those groups.

We have seen, in the efforts made by Senator HARKIN in the Appropriations Committee, the recommendation that it will be higher than this program. It will be some \$4.2 billion, and it will raise this percentage up to about 6 percent. 2.8 percent is the recommendation that is being made by our Republican friends in the House of Representatives. By and large, the best judgment we have is that this will be the figure coming from the House, and we will be somewhat above, and the conference will come out lower, certainly, than what we have seen in recent years.

What has resulted from this—from the fact that we have not seen adequate funding of the program? We recognize in the No Child Left Behind Act that one of the most important necessities is a well-qualified teacher in every classroom in the country. There is virtually no increase in funding for teacher training. So the 18,000 teachers that would have been trained if there had been a cost of living increase will not receive the training.

Mr. President, 20,000 students will be cut from the college Work-Study Program; 25,000 limited-English-proficient children cut from the Federal bilingual program; 33,000 children cut from afterschool programs; there is virtually no increase in the Pell grants; and there is no increase in student loans.

What has the administration requested of the Congress? Why do I take a few moments of the Senate time today? I want to point out what is happening in this debate regarding funding of education because tomorrow in the House of Representatives, they will mark up a recommendation by this administration for \$4 billion in new funding for private school vouchers. We understand, this is for private schools, 10 percent of the education, \$4 billion. Yet just 2.8 percent increase for the public schools, where 90 percent of the children go.

There are a number of reasons we should be concerned. I think most of us believe that we should not be taking scarce funds from the public school children and putting them into private schools. That is in effect what this is doing. If we had the \$4 billion, we would be able to increase the total

number of poor children to be covered under the Title I program to about two-thirds of those that are being left behind this year. However, the administration said no; we will have \$4 billion over a 5-year period to be used for the private schools, for just 10 percent of the children.

The reason we raise this issue is in case we have these resources again, we will have an opportunity, hopefully, to debate this, and it ought to be directed toward the public school system.

But beyond that, some of the things that concern us is that with the \$4 billion, there is virtually no requirement that we have accountability. The administration made a great deal about accountability, to make sure that we know where the money is invested, what the results will be on the standardized systems to be able to tell if children are progressing. In my own State of Massachusetts, we have seen important progress where we have had accountability and support, including the recent announcement of the MCAS results in the past week, in which we have seen continued progress in math and continued progress made in English. Not all the problems are resolved, and there are still painful problems in terms of disparity, but we have seen progress made because of accountability.

The administration has talked about accountability. But for their \$4 billion, there is no accountability to any schools to ensure that they do what all the public schools do, and that is, to have the examinations.

There is no accountability to ensure that private schools accept all the children. In the public school system there has to be acceptance of all of the children, but the private schools do not have to do that.

In private schools, there is no accountability to ensure teachers will be highly qualified teachers. We wrote in that legislation that in a 4-year period there will be highly qualified teachers in the classrooms. We fund a variety of programs regarding recruitment, training, and retention, and we give maximum flexibility to local communities to be able to do that. But there is no requirement with that \$4 billion that they use those funds for highly qualified teachers in the classrooms. And there is no requirement to give the parents the critical information they need and which we have insured under this legislation.

So we are puzzled. We heard both the President and our good friends on the other side saying accountability was the key element. We agree that was enormously important—we are going to have accountability and resources. However, now we have the administration coming back with \$4 billion more. Instead of allocating that to the 90 percent of the schools that will train the children of America, the public school systems which returned to school this past week—no, they will use that money, the \$4 billion, in the private

schools for vouchers. They have basically retreated on each and every one of these principles. It seems a very important mistake and one which we will have the opportunity, hopefully, to debate.

With those resources, if the Bush budget took that \$4 billion in new funding for private schools over 5 years along with the cut in public schools, had that \$4 billion been available for public schools, it would mean the upgrading of the skills of 1 million teachers across this country. It would upgrade the skills of 1 million teachers. You could provide 5.2 million more children with afterschool learning opportunities.

I just point out about the afterschool programs, because of all of the Federal programs that are out there that go through the process and are considered to be quality programs, when they get in line for the funding, the afterschool programs are No. 1. Do we understand that? There is a greater need, in terms of limited resources for these programs, than for any other Federal program. People understand that if you are going to provide afterschool programs and supplementary services for the children who need them, this is the way to try to do it. We are seeing the results of success academically as well as in terms of the social progress the children have made.

This is what you would be able to do. You could provide 5.2 million more children with afterschool learning opportunities. You could provide a Pell Grant to 500,000 more college students—those students who are able, gifted, talented, motivated young people whose parents have limited resources and income. They will not go on to college because they are not eligible for the Pell grants. With these resources, 5,000,000 more children would receive increased college aid.

As we continue this debate and discussion about funding education, it is enormously important that the American people understand whose side we are on. We on this side of the aisle believe very strongly that with scarce resources in our budget, these resources ought to be used to provide more highly qualified teachers in every classroom, smaller class sizes, afterschool programs, supplementary services, and information to parents so they know what is happening in those schools—all of those for the children in this country. We believe that is where the needs are. That is what we ought to be doing with scarce resources, not siphoning off \$4 billion for the 10 percent of children who are attending private schools.

We will have an opportunity, when this comes before the Senate, to debate it further. But we want the parents of children going to public schools, who are facing increasing pressure—as we have seen all across this country as States have cut back in support and help to local communities, increasing the size of their classes, reducing the afterschool programs, cutting out a

number of subjects such as music programs, and cutting back on the number of teachers' aides and teachers' assistants—to know that we understand this is not a time to abandon our public schools. This is a time to invest in our future.

One final point. We have had a great deal of discussion and debate about national security and national defense. I would like to make the point that ensuring that we are going to have well-qualified children in schools that are going to meet standards is an essential aspect of our national security and national defense. And we should not shortchange that investment any more than we do our Defense Department.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, for the last few moments I had the opportunity to listen to the Senator from Massachusetts. Of course, he is well known for his dedication to public education in this country. I applaud him for that.

I also want to recognize a President who has seen public education in its current condition to be an issue on which to speak out and on which to lead. And while the private school and the voucher may be criticized, we are creating a dynamic, now, in the marketplace of education, that means the public schools are going to have to compete a little more. In that competition, they will dramatically improve.

The condition for educating young people, in my opinion—and I think it is a growing opinion in America—will rapidly increase.

DROUGHT AND FIRE

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I did not come to the floor this afternoon to speak to education. I came to the floor today to talk about what I saw on the Weather Channel this morning across the Great Basin West, the Weather Channel that spoke of a hot weather pattern that permeates the Great Basin West, that continues to allow it to be dry, and, as a result of the drought conditions, we have a unique weakness in the West this summer that tragically has been played out for a good number of years and will be played out into the future.

The western skies are full of smoke today. They are full of smoke from forest fires that started burning in mid-June on the great Rocky Mountain front of the Colorado and down into the southwestern mountains of Arizona. To date, we have seen a fire scenario on our forested public lands that is almost unprecedented in the history of the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Forest Service management.

Today, as I speak, as a result of public policy and as a result of the drought conditions in the West, we have seen over 6.3 million acres of public land burned. That 6.3 million acres is not a record, but it is without question a his-

toric record when you compare it with the averages of the kinds of public lands we have seen burned over the last good number of decades.

We watched what happened in Arizona earlier this year when nearly 700,000 acres were burned and thousands of homes were lost and lives were lost. Then, during the August recess while all of us were back in our States, we watched the firestorm that struck the eastern slopes of the Cascade Mountains in Oregon. In the State of Oregon, almost a million acres of land have burned.

In the State of California, as I speak, 3 fires are burning and over 12,000 acres have been burned.

In the State of Colorado, over a half-million acres have been burned.

That is a tragedy, without question. Wildlife habitat, watershed, has been destroyed at almost an unprecedented rate. Watershed for urban areas, habitat for endangered species—gone, up in smoke. There is nothing but a pile of ashes today because those fires were so hot, so penetrating, so intense, that they were unlike almost any other kind of fire we have seen on our public lands.

Why has that happened? What am I talking about? Is this unprecedented? Or is fire simply natural in our forest systems? Fire is a natural element in our forest systems. But what we are seeing today—because largely we took fire out of the ecosystems of our forests 70 years ago—is that these are very much abnormal fires, burning hotter than ever, burning entire stands, burning the ground to such an extent that we are caramelizing the soil and burning the humus out of it. By so doing, we are disallowing the ability of those forests to rejuvenate as they would under a reasonably normal scenario.

Why is this happening? It is happening because of public policy, because of an attitude that was held right here in this Senate that has crafted public policy over the last several decades that not only took fire out of the forests but didn't allow active management in the forest to replace what fire would have otherwise accomplished.

As you know, in the Black Hills of South Dakota you have had this kind of situation. In fact, the Presiding Officer and his colleague, Senator DASCHLE, have felt the situation so intense and so risky of ecosystems, of timber, of wildlife habitat, of human dwellings and all of that, that you chose to act. I think you acted in a relatively appropriate way to recognize the need for immediate action that would not deny the thinning and the cleaning and the fuel reduction that needed to go on in those forests.

I chaired the forest subcommittee for 5 or 6 years here in the Senate. We have spent a lot of time looking at this issue, trying to deal with this issue—largely to no avail.

In the early 1980s, a group of forest scientists met in Sun Valley, ID, for a

national review of the health of our forested lands. At that time, 1981 or 1982, I believe, those forest scientists, with no bias, simply made the statement that the public forests of the Great Basin West were sick, dead, and dying, and if there was not active management involved to change the character of the forest health, that within a decade or so these forests could be swept by devastating wildfires.

Those scientists were not prophets. They didn't have a crystal ball. They simply looked at the facts that were available in the early 1980s and made a determination that, without active management, we could lose these forests in an unprecedented way.

During the decade of the 1980s that followed and the decade of the 1990s, we did just exactly the opposite of what those forest scientists proposed. We progressively became inactive on our forests, largely because many thought, and public policy allowed the argument, that no management and no activity would improve the environment. What we failed to recognize was that the environment had deteriorated so that simply could not be the case and that these kinds of fires would be stand altering, stand destructive, and destroying wildlife habitat and watersheds that we see in the West today.

The fire seasons in the West are not over. Today, literally thousands of acres are still burning. My guess is that before the fire season is over, we will see over 7 million acres of land burned.

Before we left for the August recess, a group of us gathered at a press conference to speak in a bipartisan way to this issue. At that time, we had not yet quite determined what we needed to do, but we believed the American public was becoming increasingly aware that something had to be done, that we needed to lean on this issue to save our forests, to save wildlife habitat, to have a watershed, and to protect homes in that urban wildland interface.

I said at that press conference—the last of July or early August, and at that time—that less than 4 million acres had burned. I said that probably by the time we returned over 67 million acres would have burned. I was no prophet. I simply had studied fires and the way they were burning in the West over the last several years to recognize that was probably a reality. And it became a reality practically enough. Today, 6.3 million acres have burned. Thousands of acres are currently burning, with fires in almost all of the Western States—at this moment actively burning and out of control.

We said at that press conference that when we returned, we would try to resolve a bipartisan approach we could bring to the floor so that we might offer it as an amendment to the Interior appropriations bill or some similar vehicle. We are in the final hours of trying to craft that kind of an amendment that would bring us together in a bipartisan way, and in a collaborative way, to solve this problem.