

With accountability and oversight, we created that school. I am proud to say those children are extremely happy. And some of them were able to go to Greece because of the generosity of the Greek Ambassador. Nothing could thrill me more than to see real progress being made in opening up new educational opportunities for children.

The charter school movement is healthy and underway, and it doesn't need our criticism and it doesn't need our undermining; it needs our support.

The other leg of that is the investment in public schools. The progress is slower but it is still substantial, as is true of all major cities struggling with this issue throughout the country. But any number of improvements have been made. Later on in the debate, that information will be spread on the RECORD. But those two legs of the investment are universally supported.

There are additional investments. Leave No Child Behind does not meet the full requirements to which the District is entitled, but at least it is a \$13 million increase to help the public school system meet the new accountability requirements and excellence that we seek in all of our schools when we are using public funds, and to help support charter schools.

The piece on the scholarship program sector, as I said, needs improvement. But because it is a three-sector approach and not just vouchers and take it or leave it, it is far superior to the House provision. With some adjustment, it could potentially receive votes of some Members on the Democratic side and have universal support on the Republican side. We will get to that later in the day.

Let me say in closing that the last 2 years have been unprecedented in the amount of discretionary Federal dollars that have gone to this city. Just this year alone, this budget reflects \$124 million over the President's request for the District of Columbia. That is a substantial amount. That reflects the confidence that is being built in this Congress in the leadership of this city and the willingness to step out on issues that can help this city be the great city it was intended to be, and it is well on its way to being—across the board, whether it is in health care, transportation, public services, education, et cetera.

Nobody deserves more credit as a group than the city leadership collectively. They have done a very good job working together in that regard.

I close, however, with a challenge that Senator DEWINE and I are faced with this year; that is, the landmark report that this city faces a structural deficit of \$400 billion to \$401 billion between their revenue capacity and their cost of providing services. This report was done by an objective agency. It was conducted by the GAO at the request of Congresswoman NORTON and myself and others to really look at the structural deficit, if there were such a thing as a structural deficit, even

though the city is in surplus, even though they are moving in the right direction by streamlining their operations. If you look at the path for the next year or two, there are dark clouds on the horizon. We want to basically know what the reason is for those dark clouds. Is it something that is under the control of the city or the Congress to fix?

I will paraphrase the study and will submit it for the RECORD.

While the city could continue to adjust and streamline its practices and make sure that fraud and abuse are taken out of the system, there is in fact a structural imbalance. Even if they did that perfectly—and no city does—they still would have a structural imbalance because their tax base is strained to almost a breaking point. That means their sales taxes are high, their property taxes are high, their fees are high. To continue to go back to the residents of the District and ask them to contribute more would be detrimental to the economic growth and vitality of this city.

We have in this bill a marker—basically a \$3 million Federal share to contribute to the infrastructure, which is a small but I think substantial marker that the chairman and I are willing to lay down to say we understand there is a structural deficit, that we don't have the money right now to fix it, and that we are not even sure how to fix it nor have the answer but recognize there is one. Hopefully, that will be the subject of future hearings to help the city of Washington be the best city and the symbol for the Nation.

Finally, let me summarize. As the chairman said, this bill also includes \$172 million for the operation of the DC courts, an \$8 million increase over the President's request. We talked about that. There are certain things for which we are directly responsible. One of them is the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency. I am very proud that the chairman has gotten that ratio down from 40 to 1 to 25 to 1, which will help. I again commend the Washington Post for their excellent series that helped to call our attention to this glaring and terrible problem. It is a tragedy that exists in the District. More work needs to be done.

But this bill and what it represents I think is a significant compliment to the city and its leadership. The considerable investment in the future for the residents of the District is something of which our people around the Nation can be proud.

I urge our colleagues as we move into the afternoon and the debate regarding education that we attempt to fill this Chamber with light and heat because this issue, the children who depend on our deliberations, their families, and the taxpayers deserve no less.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DEWINE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. MURKOWSKI). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECESS

Mr. DEWINE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess until 1 p.m.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:10 p.m., recessed until 1:01 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. HAGEL).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2004—Continued

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, as we proceed with the District of Columbia appropriations bill, I again thank Senator LANDRIEU for her great work on this bill. We will be proceeding later on today on the issue of the District of Columbia vouchers. I thank Senator LANDRIEU for her contribution to this discussion.

We are working on some possible amendments, but I wish to take this moment, if I can, to also thank Senator FEINSTEIN for her contribution to that section of the bill. As I have stated publicly in the past—I said it yesterday in a press conference—that section of the bill which has to do with vouchers, the scholarship section was significantly improved because of what my colleague from California, Senator FEINSTEIN, contributed to the bill.

She came to me and Senator GREGG and said: I have some suggestions; I have some changes; I have some ideas that I think need to be in this bill to improve the bill, to bring more accountability; to ensure the bill's constitutionality; and also to make sure that the Mayor of the city of Washington is much more directly involved in running this scholarship program.

We took those suggestions from Senator FEINSTEIN. She drafted sections of the bill, and we incorporated them in the bill. Those changes are now in the bill that is now before the Senate. I appreciate very much her work.

I yield, without losing my right to the floor, for a question from Senator LANDRIEU.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I thank the Senator for his comments. He is correct that there have been some improvements made to this section of the bill, but it remains a work still in progress. There are many Members on the Democratic side and some Members on the Republican side who are still not comfortable with the language. There are some who are absolutely opposed to the underlying concept of private school vouchers or scholarships.

I thank the chairman for remaining open and working on some amendments and language. That is taking