

we need to feel the commitment to protect it. To be able to be part of a freedom of expression that allows us to tell stories of our choice in the uniqueness of our own voices as citizens and as artists is not to be taken lightly. To be able to freely voice dissent in our hearts or in our art is something to protect at all costs. But then, the glory of art is that it can, not only survive change, it can inspire change.

It is for all these reasons that it behooves government to sustain an environment that enables, supports and nurtures the free and creative expression of its citizenry.

I have great hope for the future of art and thus civil society as I look out over this room, and imagine the collective power, the collective voice that will not cower in the face of budget slashing critics, and will not surrender its advocacy for art and free expression.

My hope comes from not only those gathered here tonight, but from the efforts of grassroots, state and national organizations; young artists I meet at Sundance film labs; inner-city elementary school kids who are learning to play music and write poetry; the literary and theater programs in prisons; and traveling exhibitions to rural communities all across the country.

Thank you to the co-sponsors of this evening. To Americans for the Arts my gratitude for your tireless and effective advocacy on behalf of art and all that comes with that. You truly make a difference and we're all the better for it. And to the Film Foundation a recognition and respect for the important work you do to inspire young artists through education and for protecting and restoring some of the greatest films of all time and thus enabling the diverse perspective of it all to live on.

Lastly, it is an honor to pay tribute to the memory and the contribution of Nancy Hanks whom I knew and remember fondly. Nancy Hanks had a profoundly gifted perspective on cultural policy in the United States, that being access to the arts. Her legacy is the success of many of your programs; the creative mastery of many of the artists here tonight; and the commitment to freedom of expression that we collectively embrace. The life she lived really meant something.

So we go forth here tonight to continue to try to enlighten those who dismiss the arts as unnecessary, irrelevant or dangerous. And we do so not only in the memory of Nancy Hanks, but in the name of the active and deserving imagination of every American child.

REMEMBERING THE HEROES OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I wish to recognize a small group of heroes who are gathering this Saturday at the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery to honor their fallen comrades and to ensure that future generations of Americans remember the tremendous sacrifices of those who served in the Pacific theater during the Second World War.

These former heroes—prisoners of war all—will dedicate a plaque that marks a humble grave within the sea of headstones of those who made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of a grateful nation. The inscription of the plaque reads:

VICTIMS OF THE JAPANESE MASSACRE, PUERTO PRINCESA, PALAWAN, P.I., DECEMBER 14, 1944

These U.S. prisoners of war of the Japanese were on the island of Palawan, P.I., as slave

laborers building an airfield for the Japanese military. Believing that an invasion by the U.S. forces was imminent, the prisoners were forced into three tunnel air raid shelters, thus following orders from the Japanese High Command to dispose of prisoners by any means available. Buckets of gasoline were thrown inside the shelters followed by flaming torches. Those not instantly killed by the explosions ran burning from the tunnels and were machine gunned and bayoneted to death.

Only a few survived this horror. Amongst those who did was Mr. Dan Crowley of Simsbury, CT. I thank Mr. Crowley for sharing his experiences with my staff and I, and educating all of us about an important event in U.S. history.

Few words can truly express the horror that those 123 soldiers, sailors, and marines must have suffered as they were cut down in their service to their country. I stand today and offer my respects to the memories of these valiant men and their families. Their story serves to remind all of us of the price of freedom and the sometimes tragic fate of those who have paid its ransom for us all.

DC VOUCHERS

Mr. CORZINE. Mr. President, I would like to take a few moments to discuss my opposition to the voucher provision in the D.C. appropriations bill.

Our government promises every child in the United States a free and appropriate public education. The very idea that Federal funds that should be going to our Nation's public schools to fulfill that promise will instead be siphoned away to private schools is of great concern to me.

As a product of public schools, and the child of a public school teacher, I am a strong supporter of the public school system. I often say that while we cannot be a Nation of equal outcomes, we can and must be a Nation of equal opportunities. Our public schools are the key to equal opportunity for all American children.

Although the voucher program we are discussing today would only impact the District of Columbia, it clearly would have national implications. It is a calculated first step toward broader voucher programs, which would drain resources from our public schools—the very schools that are free and open to all children, and accountable to parents and taxpayers.

Simply put, vouchers are not the answer to our educational ills—they are bad education policy driven by ideological goals.

Wouldn't our energy be better focused on strengthening our public schools, which can and do succeed with adequate resources? To succeed, schools need high-quality teachers, a rigorous curriculum, high expectations, parental involvement, and effective management. All of these require adequate resources.

In 2001, Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act, which was intended to

reform public education by establishing high standards for every student, providing Federal incentives to boost low-performing schools, and creating accountability.

Unlike vouchers, which even supporters acknowledge would reach only a small fraction of children, No Child Left Behind was intended to implement proven, effective reforms in all schools not just for a few students, but for all students.

But the administration and this Congress are not living up to the promise of No Child Left Behind and are underfunding it by over \$8 billion. This leaves millions of children behind and places additional burdens on already burdened State and local education budgets.

And, on top of underfunding No Child Left Behind, we are now considering giving funds to schools that are not even subject to its provisions.

As we know, No Child Left Behind would ensure oversight and accountability, including testing standards and teacher qualification standards. But the voucher program we are considering today does not provide the same system of accountability or oversight of these private schools, nor does it set the same criteria for the very people that will be teaching our children.

In fact, this bill allows any private school to apply to participate in the program, but there is no evaluation process before they are accepted to participate. This leaves D.C. children vulnerable to poor-performing schools.

I ask proponents of the bill: How can we ask our public schools to fulfill the significant mandates of No Child Left Behind, when we are refusing those schools adequate funds and at the same time giving Federal money to schools that are not even required to abide by many of its mandates?

Proponents of the voucher program say that it provides parents with "choice" that they do not currently have. This is simply not true. The District of Columbia already offers three alternatives to traditional public schools. First, D.C. has the largest number of public charter schools per capita in the Nation. If we pass this voucher program, these charter schools will remain underfunded. Yet we still want to give private schools money.

Second, D.C. has established 15 public transformation schools that have, for the first time ever, succeeded in raising the scores of low-income children in low-performing schools. Again, however, the very programs in these transformation schools that have succeeded are now seeing cuts in funding. Yet we still want to give private schools money.

Finally, D.C. allows parents who are not content with their neighborhood school to send their child to out-of-boundary schools that are accountable to public education standards. Yet we still want to give private schools money.

If this is not school choice, then what is? Why can't we give these types of

schools a chance to succeed rather than undermining them and draining funds from their already successful programs?

Proponents of vouchers also claim that the program in this bill is a pilot program and should be given a chance. But Milwaukee and Cleveland both tried to implement a voucher program, and a GAO study of the programs in these two cities found no or little difference in voucher and public school students' performance.

Our cities have tried vouchers and have not succeeded. Our children should not be guinea pigs for programs that have simply not been proven effective at raising academic achievement.

I am not the only one opposed to this program. My friend and colleague in the House of Representatives, ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, along with the majority of the D.C. City Council and School Board, also oppose any voucher program. In addition, the residents of the District of Columbia are overwhelmingly opposed to private school vouchers.

Let's not turn D.C. into a laboratory for school vouchers. Vouchers are not the solution to improving educational opportunity in D.C. or anywhere else in America. Let's instead focus on fulfilling the promise of No Child Left Behind by fully funding it, and giving our public schools the resources they need to truly succeed.

MOTHER TERESA: A BELOVED SAINT FOR OUR TIME

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, on October 19, Mother Teresa of Calcutta will be officially beatified in Rome. I say "officially," because in the eyes of so many people around the world, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, she is already recognized as an extraordinary saint. She is, without question, one of the most beloved individuals of our time.

Why is this? By all means, her accomplishments are well known and respected. Mother Teresa founded the Missionaries of Charity and oversaw the organization's amazing growth. By the time of her death, the order had grown to include more than 5,000 sisters, brothers, and volunteers, operating some 500 centers around the world. Even here in Washington, DC, we witness Missionaries of Charity on the streets of this city, tending to the homeless and feeding the hungry.

But there is another reason why this woman is so beloved. It is because we live in a world of such extraordinary material abundance, a world that prizes youth and health. And yet here was a woman who willingly and lovingly embraced poverty, and devoted her life to the old, the sick, and the dying. And more than that, she inspired thousands of people all across the world to join her in that mission.

I remember hearing about a journalist who visited one of Mother Teresa's hospices in Calcutta. He watched

as one of the sisters bathed and dressed the terrible wounds of a leper who was near death. The journalist said to the sister, "You know, I wouldn't do that for all the money in the world." To which the sister answered, "Neither would I."

In 1979, when Mother Teresa accepted the Nobel Peace Prize, she said:

I chose the poverty of poor people. But I am grateful to receive the Nobel Prize in the name of the hungry, the naked, the homeless, the blind, the lepers, all the people who feel unwanted, unloved, uncared for throughout our society, people that have become a burden to society and shunned by everyone.

That is just an amazing statement, an amazing testament. Mother Teresa was powerfully motivated by the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, "As you did for the least of these your brethren, you did on to me." And just as Jesus inspired Mother Teresa, the soon-to-be Saint Teresa of Calcutta inspires all of us. She is a saint for all time, but she speaks with special urgency to us today.

NATIONAL SPINA BIFIDA AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I rise today to remind my colleagues that October is National Spina Bifida Awareness Month and to pay tribute to the more than 70,000 Americans and their family members who are currently affected by Spina Bifida—the Nation's most common, permanently disabling birth defect.

Spina bifida is a neural tube defect that occurs when the central nervous system does not properly close during the early stages of pregnancy. Spina bifida affects more than 4,000 pregnancies each year, with 1,500 babies born with spina bifida each year. There are three different forms of spina bifida with the most severe being myelomeningocele spina bifida, which causes nerve damage and severe disabilities. This severe form of spina bifida is diagnosed in 96 percent of children born with this condition. Between 70 and 90 percent of the children born with spina bifida are at risk of mental retardation when spinal fluid collects around the brain.

The exact cause of spina bifida is not known, but researchers have concluded that women of childbearing age who take daily folic acid supplements reduce their chances of having a spina bifida pregnancy by up to 75 percent. Progress has been made convincing women of the importance of consuming folic acid supplements and maintaining diets rich in folic acid. However, this public education campaign must be enhanced and broadened to reach segments of the population that have yet to heed this call.

Although folic acid consumption reduces the risk and incidence of spina bifida pregnancies, we will still have babies born with spina bifida who need intensive care and families that need guidance and support in caring for and

raising these children. The result of this neural tube defect is that most babies suffer from a host of physical, psychological, and educational challenges, including paralysis, developmental delay, numerous surgeries, and living with a shunt in their skulls in an attempt to ameliorate their condition. Today, approximately 90 percent of all babies diagnosed with this birth defect live into adulthood, approximately 80 percent have normal IQs, and approximately 75 percent participate in sports and other recreational activities. With proper medical care, people who suffer from spina bifida can lead full and productive lives. However, they must learn how to move around using braces, crutches or wheelchairs, and how to function independently. They also must be careful to avoid a host of secondary health problems ranging from depression and learning disabilities to skin problems and latex allergies.

After decades of poor prognosis and short life expectancy, breakthroughs in research combined with improvements in health care and treatment children with spina bifida are now living long enough to become adults with this condition. Yet, with this extended life expectancy people with spina bifida now face new challenges in the fields of education, job training, independent living, health care for secondary conditions, aging concerns, and other related issues.

I am grateful for my colleague from Missouri, Senator BOND who, along with myself, sponsored the Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities Prevention Act of 2003, S. 286. This important legislation helps prevent spina bifida as well as meets the current and growing needs of individuals with spina bifida live active, productive, and meaningful lives. Our legislation helps those with spina bifida and their families learn how to treat and prevent secondary health problems which range from learning disabilities and depression to severe allergies, and respiratory and skin problems that make life difficult and at times, fraught with danger that make life difficult for these patients by authorizing the National Spina Bifida Program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC. All of these problems can be treated or prevented, but only if those with spina bifida are properly educated and taught what they need to do to keep themselves healthy. The national program focuses and coordinates the agency's efforts to educate health care providers about the range of spina bifida issues—including the availability of in utero surgery—as well as help promote the dissemination of information regarding how to prevent the myriad complications of the condition.

Last year, I chaired a hearing of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pension's Subcommittee on Children and Families on birth defects, in which Connecticut resident Fred Liguori's testimony provided a parent's