

We have seen these sophisticated networks built by cable companies right now. They are doing it when there is an absence of discrimination on the net. The reason I cited this is, it proves that if consumers demand it, the communications companies are going to build it because they can make a profit. The Bells, for example, would rather build a network with discrimination in it because they can make billions of dollars of extra profit. That is why they are threatening not to build networks and to try to hold hostage consumers and businesses across America. I don't think that is right. There is concrete evidence that this notion that we will not have sophisticated communications networks unless we allow discrimination on the net makes no sense at all.

I have tried to make a focus of my career in public service to keeping the Internet free from discrimination. It has paid real dividends already, particularly in regard to taxation. I was a Senate sponsor of the legislation that prohibited discrimination in taxes on line. When we started, it was a very simple proposition. We would see, for example, that if you bought a newspaper on line, you paid taxes. But if you bought the snail mail version of that newspaper, you didn't pay any taxes. So Congress came together on a bipartisan basis and said: We are not going to allow discrimination and taxation with respect to the Internet. We have done it. It has made sense.

For all those who claimed there were going to be dire consequences, that the States and localities wouldn't have any money, that it was going to kill the traditional retailer, the main street retailer, we haven't seen any of that. The Internet Nondiscrimination Act as it relates to taxation has made a huge difference. I worked with Senator ALLEN on the other side of the aisle on that. Our mutual friend, former Congressman Chris Cox, who now heads the Securities and Exchange Commission, he and I began this effort when he was serving in the other body. We have seen already, with respect to ensuring that the net is free from multiple and discriminatory taxes, why it makes sense to keep the Internet a discrimination free zone.

For the life of me, I can't figure out why we want to bring discrimination back to the telecommunications world, which is what this telecommunications overhaul will do, unless net neutrality is protected. The major cable and phone companies have spent more than \$40 million since January of this year to make the American people think that net neutrality is what they call a lose-lose proposition. I am here to say that the absence of net neutrality will be the lose-lose proposition. The American people will see discrimination in Internet content, higher prices for consumers, and that is why hundreds of organizations that span the political spectrum, who disagree with each other on virtually everything, have

come together to say: We are going to pull out all the stops to try to protect the Internet from discrimination.

I do not want to see the American consumer face the double barrel discrimination on the net of reduced choices in content, diminished services, and the additional prospect of higher prices. As a result, it is my intent to keep my hold on this major telecommunications rewrite until it ensures true net neutrality and an Internet free of discrimination.

AMERICA'S OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIPS FOR KIDS ACT

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, earlier this week, I introduced the America's Opportunity Scholarships for Kids Act, S. 3682, on behalf of President Bush. I was joined in introducing this legislation by Senators ENSIGN, GREGG, and SANTORUM. This bill provides meaning to the promise of the No Child Left Behind Act by giving low-income families whose children are stuck in low-performing schools the same opportunities other families already enjoy.

President Bush proposed the America's Opportunity Scholarships Program as part of his fiscal year 2007 budget. The bill authorizes \$100 million in competitive grants to State and local educational agencies or private nonprofit groups to provide low-income students in low-performing schools with scholarships to attend the school of their choice or receive tutoring. Thousands of eligible students would receive up to \$4,000 in scholarship funds to apply to tuition and costs at the school of their choice or up to \$3,000 worth of intensive tutoring to help them improve their academic achievement.

Eligible low-income students are those who attend schools in "restructuring," which means they have missed their student achievement goals under No Child Left Behind for 6 years in a row. The U.S. Department of Education reports that in the 2004-2005 school year, 1,065 schools were identified for restructuring. Preliminary estimates suggest that an additional 1,000 schools will be identified for restructuring in the 2005-2006 school year.

Parents want the best possible schools for their children. A recent survey by the Educational Testing Service showed that 62 percent of public school parents either transferred a child out of one school into a better school or have decided where to live based on the schools in that district. This bill offers a way out for students whose families don't have the money for tuition or the luxury of moving.

For those who think school choice is not important, I ask you to consider what you would do if the government or circumstances said you had no choice in the matter. Imagine what would happen if we passed a law that said that no American parent could choose a school for their child, and in-

stead the government assigned each child to a specific public or private school. There would be a revolution in this country by middle- and upper-income parents who want to preserve their right to choose what is best for their child's education.

Low-income parents are increasingly voicing a demand for the same quality educational options that wealthier families have. In Milwaukee, WI, low-income families' demand for better choices led to the creation of a city-wide private school choice program in 1990. Today, Milwaukee is one of the most vibrant education marketplaces in the Nation, and parents can choose from traditional public schools, charter schools, and private schools. Here in Washington, DC, frustrated low-income parents led an active campaign to establish the DC School Choice Incentive Program, which increases educational options for low-income students, including scholarships to attend private schools. Over 2,600 applications were received for 1,200 available scholarships in 2004, the first year of that program. This school year, 1,713 students are enrolled at the private school of their choice. Their parents report significant improvements in their children's academic performance, behavior, and prospects for the future.

Our Nation gives families choices in educational institutions nearly everywhere but in grade school and high school. After World War II, the GI bill enabled veterans to attend the educational institutions of their choice—public or private, secular or nonsecular. Today, Federal dollars for higher education still follow students to the school of their choice. It is this choice—along with autonomy and competition—that has made our system of higher education the best in the world. We also allow Federal funding to follow preschoolers to the childcare program of their choice.

Unfortunately, we have gotten in a rut with K-12 schools. We have created local monopolies where dollars flow directly to schools with little or no say from parents. The ones paying the highest price are the poor children of America.

America's opportunity scholarships are a way out for families who have waited too long. I hope my colleagues will support this important legislation so we can help our neediest children achieve a brighter future.

GUN SAFETY EDUCATION

Mr. President, high profile school shootings across this country in recent years have focused the Nation's attention on easy access to guns by children, especially in the home. Each day in the United States, an average of 80 people die as a result of homicide, suicide, and unintentional injuries that involve a firearm. Even more tragically ten of those who die everyday are children. The epidemic of firearm violence affects us all.