

Floor Statement
Amendment to Increase Education Funding
January 16, 2003

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, prior to laying down my amendment, I did want to respond to a number of the representations made over the last hour or so on the issue of the President's commitment to No Child Left Behind and the Republican Party's commitment to it and how we will make this law work well.

First, let's remember, when this law was passed, it really was a bipartisan effort to try to accomplish something special for our kids, especially low-income kids on whom we had just an inordinate amount of data and, unfortunately, real-life examples of the fact that they were not being educated at a level that made them competitive in America, that low-income kids were being left behind and that, as a result, we were turning out generations of children who were not able to participate in the American dream because they were not able to read and write and to add and subtract and do math at a level competitive with their peers.

All these numbers get thrown out here, but this bill, No Child Left Behind, has at its core the simple purpose of making sure that American children, children in our public school system, which is the essence of the strength of our Nation--we all understand that; the ability to get an education in America and the public school system has and always will be the essence of our strength--learn what they need to learn, that they are able, when they finish their elementary and secondary school experience, to participate in American society, to find a good job, and take part in the American dream. That was the purpose.

You have to thank the President for leading the Nation in this direction. He feels it with great emotion and purpose, as does the Senator from Massachusetts, as do many people who worked on this bill. We want to do something that gives those kids an extra shot at the American dream, make sure they do not get left behind.

No Child Left Behind was passed, and it had four basic purposes. I will just quickly recite them so we are all working off the same page. The first purpose was to give local school districts more flexibility over how they managed their dollars, Federal dollars specifically.

The second purpose was to make sure there was an accountability system where, when a child goes through the system, how a child is doing at different grade levels could be compared to other grade levels.

The third purpose, of course, was to fund adequately this bill, which I believe was done, and which I think we can defend. On that point of funding, I want to start with a little bit of a comparison. When the President came into office, we, of course, had the experience of a prior administration in the area of title I, low-income programs. The Clinton administration--in the 7 years leading up to President Bush's undertaking of this effort--had put approximately \$2 billion into title I.

Within the first 2 years of President Bush's administration, he added \$2.5 billion to title I. The single largest increase ever experienced by title I occurred in his first year, the second largest increase was in his second year, and probably the third largest will occur in the third year--if he gets the billion dollars he asked for. That is title I.

The practical implications of this are that increases under President Bush represented about a 27-percent jump in title I over what the prior administration did. If you look at it in cumulative years, you see it is rather startling. Over 7 years, the Clinton administration did \$2 billion. Over 2 years, President Bush did \$2.5 billion. Massive increases. To put it into real dollar terms, the difference in new education funding--total--between the last year of the Clinton administration and the first year of the Bush administration is, again, \$20 billion--\$42 billion versus \$60 billion. These are massive increases of funding into the educational system in order to try to make sure we meet the requirements and needs of No Child Left Behind.

In addition to this type of funding, which was direct cash into the school systems type of funding on the discretionary side, the President also made a huge and dramatic commitment in the area of giving parents more dollars in their pockets, through a tax cut, which was directed specifically at the issue of helping parents educate their children--a \$30 billion tax cut, which created new deductions for qualified high education expenditures, increased the amount individuals could contribute to their educational savings accounts, and dramatically expanded the availability of tax-free distributions for qualified tuition plans--a very significant effort, which has basically been overlooked and never even mentioned in the debate on the other side.

This tax cut the President put in place, which benefits moderate-income Americans as they attempt to educate their children with cash in their pockets, which they can then put into the savings vehicles and other vehicles that assist them as their children get ready for college--and also assist in the elementary and secondary school area--also helped teachers by giving them some deductions that they didn't have before as they spend money in doing things relative to their classrooms, such as buying books, maps, and things such as that.

In addition to the huge increases, the \$20 billion actual increase--a huge increase in title I funding--the President made a dramatic commitment to IDEA, special education, the biggest single commitment to special education in the history of the country. Again, this dwarfs the effort made by the Clinton administration in special education. During the run-up years before President Bush came into office, President Clinton actually proposed virtually no increase in special education. In fact, in 1992-93 when he came into office, you would see virtually no green bar. The only year the Clinton administration asked for a significant increase was in his last year in office when they asked for \$300 million, I think. There were dramatic increases made in this period--in 1999, 2000, 2001--and they came as a result of the Republican Congress and the leadership. I would like to think I played a role in that, along with Senator Lott and Senator Specter. We were able to dramatically increase special education funding during this period.

When President Bush came into office, he ratcheted up special education funding dramatically, putting a billion dollars of new money into special education in each of the first 2 years of his term in office, which translated to money going back into the school districts to assist them in

moving forward and addressing the requirements of special needs children.

So we have had increases in title I, which are historic under this administration, and which dwarfed the increases in title I put in by President Clinton's administration--a 27-percent increase just in year 1. We have increases in overall discretionary education funding of \$20 billion year to year. We have the increases in special education funding--again, dwarfing anything done in the prior administration--a billion-dollar annual increase each year. And we have the massive increase in availability of money to parents to save for their children's education through the tax cut.

So the effort here has not been anything but significant in the area of trying to make sure we have funding in education, and this administration has certainly made that commitment. This chart shows how that works in relationship to all the other funding going on in the Federal Government. Here we are in the midst of a war on terrorism. We have a health care concern. If you look at the education funding, it has gone up 132 percent. Health care funding has gone up 96 percent. Defense spending has gone up 48 percent. The fact is that education funding is outstripping every other element of the Federal budget by dramatic amounts as a percentage and, in real terms, in real dollars flowing back to the States.

No Child Left Behind specifically. I already mentioned that the title I money has jumped by 27 percent. Let's look behind that to some of the other accounts that are involved in the No Child Left Behind bill. One of the important things the No Child Left Behind bill did was to take all sorts of accounts, merge them together, and then say to the local communities: Here is the money, with no strings attached. You can do what you want with this money. But in the end, what we want is to make sure that every child at the third-grade, fourth-grade, fifth-grade, or sixth-grade level has learned enough so that their parents and the other people in the community can compare whether or not that child is learning at a level that is competitive with their peers and with other school districts: Accountability, to put it quite simply.

Instead of controlling input and having lots of strings running to the child and to the funding, as it came out of the Congress, we reversed that trend and said: We are not going to put a lot of strings on what comes out of the Congress, but we are going to expect results. We have had discussion of this before. One area where I think this has been most telling and constructive is that of teachers. This bill took a lot of the different teacher funds, such as the Eisenhower Fund and the classroom size fund, and moved them into a pool of money, and then it said to the local school district--principals especially because they are key here--you can take this new pool of money, and instead of having to spend it under the categorical terms you used to get it under so you could only spend it for the purpose of basically classroom size reduction or teaching math-science, you can use it however you want for your teachers, to improve your teacher situation. If you want to hire more teachers, you can do that. If you want to have your teachers better trained, you can do that. If you want your teachers to have better technical support, you can do that. If you have good teachers and you want to pay them more to keep them, you can do that with the money. All sorts of different options were given to the local school districts to make sure that teacher money was more effectively used. And then we increased the money flowing into that account, again dramatically--35 percent. That was up by \$742 million over the last year of the Clinton

administration.

So, once again, I think you can see that the game plan of No Child Left Behind was to fund aggressively, with flexibility, and then leave it to the local school districts to find out how to best use the dollars. That is exactly what has been accomplished. The number increases, as I have said, are rather dramatic in this area. In fact, the number increase in education has been so dramatic that we presently have here at the Federal Government approximately \$4.5 billion that has not been drawn down by the States and local communities because the money has been flowing in so fast that they cannot keep up with how to spend it. That is hard to believe, but it is true.

Here is a chart that reflects that \$4.5 billion. The majority of it is in the school improvement program, and in the special education grant program, and in the education for disadvantaged program. But it is there, and it is available, and it hasn't been spent yet.

When I hear colleagues on the other side saying there is a dearth of money available in the Federal Government, and just because we have increased it by 27 percent, that is not enough; and because we increased it by \$20 billion in a year, that is not enough; and just because we cut these taxes, that is not enough; and just because we have a 12-percent increase in educational funding, that is not enough, it does seem to me when we have \$4.5 billion sitting down there at the Department of Education waiting to be distributed, that might be a sign we are doing a pretty good job in putting money into the system and, hopefully, we are going to start getting it out the door, too, fairly soon.

That is where we stand today. A very important point is that if you want to do another comparison, which I think is fairly interesting, we have heard almost incessantly we have to fund the authorization level; we have to fund the authorization level; we have to fund the authorization level. The only problem with that argument is the Congress almost never funds the authorization level. Authorization is a goal, but it is hardly ever attained. The purpose of authorization and appropriations is sometimes quite different.

If we are to assume that is the purpose--that we must fund the authorization level--then I have to ask my colleagues on the other side of the aisle: What were they doing the last time they controlled the Congress and the Presidency? What were they doing? Because at that time there was a \$2.7 billion difference between the authorized level and the appropriated level, which represented a 21-percent difference.

If we look at the Bush administration's difference between authorized and appropriated levels, it is 15 percent. We are doing 50 percent better under this administration. It is pretty hard to defend this authorization argument, in my opinion.

That puts us at the point where we are now, and I hope I have adequately responded to some of the comments on the other side, although I suspect I might have engendered some other comments from the other side. But let me go on to the amendment which I intend to offer. I am still awaiting its arrival, so I will have to wait before I can send it to the desk.

The purpose of the amendment is to say: OK, I am willing to increase the funding for education , and I think people on our side are willing to increase the funding for education , but let's do it in a way that is responsible. The President has said--and it was agreed to at one point--that we will stay at a \$750 billion discretionary number. I think it is pretty important we start getting fiscal discipline around here or we are going to be in big trouble. I think that is obvious.

In order to accomplish this--I do think education is a priority, and I do think as we prioritize items within the Federal Government we have to put education right up there. In fact, if I were to prioritize, I would put fighting terrorism as No. 1, and that is in a class by itself because we have to defend ourselves. These people want to kill us because we are Americans, and we have to make sure we are ready to respond to them and defend ourselves. Fighting terrorism is No. 1.

Right behind fighting terrorism comes the issue of education . I believe a reasonable approach to this question of how we fund education is that if we are going to jump the number significantly--and under the proposal of the Senator from Massachusetts, he has about \$4.6 billion in here for No Child Left Behind, we are going to jump that amount dramatically, then we ought to do it in a way that is fiscally responsible.

I am offering an amendment which increases the funding by \$5 billion, but it says that we do an across-the-board cut to get to that number so that we are going to stay under the \$750 level.

In addition, I do not know about my colleagues, but I am hearing from my school systems again: We need more flexibility. I am saying we have \$5 billion you can fund No Child Left Behind, you can fund anything under the No Child Left Behind bill, but we are not going to put any strings on this. You are, basically, going to get this money to assist you at the local schools in undertaking and accomplishing the No Child Left Behind effort. In addition, you can use this money, if you feel you need to, for IDEA and for programs like TRIO.

Essentially, we are not going to put any strings on this. We are going to send it back to the States and say: All right, States, this is an add-on. You are concerned about unfunded mandates. If there is anything in this bill that is unfunded and is a mandate, these dollars will certainly take care of it.

I want to touch base on that because there was some representation out here that the testing regime in the bill is an unfunded mandate. It simply is not. It is fully funded under this bill, and the bill specifically says you do not have to pursue the testing regime if it is not paid for. That is a totally irresponsible statement.

In fact, and I know in my State, they are spending \$300,000 per test. Under this bill, they are going to get \$500,000 per test. So they are actually going to make money in their testing regime in New Hampshire, which I am sure they will put to good use in some other area of education .

This amendment is a fairly reasonable, straightforward amendment . It is \$5 billion more. It is actually a little higher than the proposal of the Senator from Massachusetts in the area of No Child Left Behind funding--\$5 billion more--but it is going to be done by an across-the-board cut

so it is fiscally responsible. The money will be available with no strings attached. Our local school districts and State school districts can see we mean it when we say there is no unfunded mandate in this bill.

Mr. President, I send my amendment to the desk