

addressed this issue. But just now, when American agriculture is in crisis and this Congress, in a bipartisan way, is attempting to find solutions to that crisis, our President comes to town, finds his footing, and says, "I'll veto the effort."

Mr. President, that is fair if you had been part of the process, if you had been in here working with us, if there had been legitimate give-and-take and finally a breakdown. That is not the case at all.

The President was absent—traveling, fundraising—away from what is most important. So he seeks now to make up for his absence by having not just one position on agriculture but three positions. First of all, he asked for about \$2.3 billion in assistance on September 22. That was just 2 weeks ago. Congress then roughly doubled that amount. Yet now, to hide the fact that he had not been paying attention to American agriculture, President Clinton is demanding more, much more—nearly \$7 billion. And now he threatens to veto legislation that Congress will send to him—legislation that will give twice the money that he asked for less than a month ago.

For 2 years, he has failed to use the tools that could have addressed the agriculture problems in substantial ways. He has ignored the tools—tools that I have requested the President not let rust away in some storage shed down at USDA, tools of trade, tools of trade intervention, humanitarian aid. All of those kinds of things that would have moved our products into the market were not used and have gathered rust and sat idle. Why, then, is the President coming back almost in an effort to demand a scorched-Earth policy? Is it politics, or is it the wag factor that is now at work? I am not sure. But, Mr. President, I think you have little credibility in this area.

Let me discuss just one other area briefly. I know the Senator from West Virginia is waiting.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's 5 minutes have expired.

Mr. CRAIG. There is the issue of Social Security. So important was it that the President declared it in his State of the Union Address as an effort to save Social Security. Yet, the President has not bothered to make one step in that direction. The Congress waited a year, but no plan came from the White House. Just as with the farm crisis, he has only managed to use it—not address it, much less solve it. Like the farm crisis, he sought to use it to turn attention from himself. Instead of buckling down, this President has traveled around; over half of the days of this year the President has been out of town. He has found time to travel, he has found time to go overseas, he has found time to fundraise; but he has not found time to send any one plan to save Social Security to the Congress of the United States, or any one plan to alleviate a farm crisis that is now emerging.

Well, I suspect that if the solution to Social Security had been in Beijing, or Chile, or Ghana, or Uganda, or Rwanda, or South America, he might have found it there because that is where the President was. Why now, the last week that Congress plans to be in session, with a schedule that was established at the first of the year, did the President find his way back to the White House to sit and only threaten—threaten to veto here, threaten to veto there?

Mr. President, are you planning to shut down the Government? Is it a plan for diversion? Is it a plan to hide? Well, we have some problems and we are going to work to solve them. Those solutions should come in a bipartisan way. Mr. President, I hope you will be a part of the solution. The American people deserve nothing less than that.

I don't like coming to the floor to give these kinds of speeches, but sometimes I feel they are important. Sometimes I feel it is important for the American people to recognize, as we do, that there are times when we work together and not times when we simply find our footing to threaten or to change the subject or to divert attention.

Is the Presidency in crisis today? Yes, it is. We all know why it is. That is a constitutional tragedy. That will work its will. The House is underway in that process. Let us be allowed to work our will to solve the problem of financing our Government for the coming year.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BYRD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia is recognized.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I have some remarks, which may require 10 or 11 or 12 minutes.

I ask unanimous consent that I may be recognized for such time as I may consume, and that the previous order to proceed with the Agriculture conference report be delayed until I complete my statement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

SAFE SCHOOLS: A MUST FOR THE NATION

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, with the new school year now in full swing, our youngsters are brimming with the excitement of making new friends, radiating enthusiasm for new studies, and preparing for the challenges that lie ahead of them. Students are tackling new reading assignments and committing algebraic formulas to memory. During recess hour, they are frolicking in the school playground with new classmates and old friends, enjoying the waning days of shirt-sleeve weather. They feel safe and secure—free from threatening situations and out of harm's way.

But as our children leave home each morning for the school day, we as parents, grandparents, educators, and leg-

islators, must regretfully remember that, just a few months ago, some of our nation's schools looked more like virtual war zones with bloodshed and the tragic loss of life. From Paducah, KY, to Springfield, OR, the notion of schools as a safe haven was shattered by the sound of gunfire, and we must now begin to face the formidable challenge of rebuilding that serene and tranquil school environment that each and every student deserves.

Today, responding to my concerns about this trend, I am unveiling a new branch of my web site which contains the most up-to-date and accurate information available from authoritative sources on school safety. I have designed this web site to be an electronic resource book, complete with descriptions of school safety initiatives underway in West Virginia, updates on federal funding available for violence prevention efforts, and the latest information on legislation moving through the Congress. I hope that this addition to my web site will serve as an important tool for parents, students, educators, and lawmakers in addressing the issue of school safety in West Virginia and in other States.

In concert with the release of my school safety resources web site, I am also introducing companion legislation in the Senate today to Representative BOB WISE's recently introduced legislation, H.R. 4515, to provide for the establishment of school violence prevention hotlines. Often, a potentially harmful student confides in his closest friend about his intentions to launch a violent attack on school premises. Or perhaps, teachers notice a change in a student's demeanor or an action completely uncharacteristic of a happy, well-balanced child. Occasionally, the parents of an otherwise cheerful, amicable son or daughter detect hostility in their child's voice when talking about a particular group of students. All of these scenarios may be just a bad day on the surface or semantics misinterpreted, but they also may be the first signs of a potentially threatening student.

My legislation would provide funds to local education agencies and schools that have established or proposed to establish school violence prevention hotlines. It is essential that parents, students, and teachers have an outlet where they can report threatening situations to authorities who will watch over the student's behavior and alert school officials. School violence hotlines can prevent a disturbed student in need of help from taking that next, sometimes fatal, step.

I have long been concerned about the increasing incidence of violence in the classroom and have supported numerous efforts to combat this kind of outrageous behavior and strengthen discipline for all students. After receiving a disturbing report in 1990 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention which stated that nearly twenty-four percent of West Virginia's students between grades nine and twelve

carried a gun, knife, or other weapon to school at least once during that year for self-protection or use in a fight, I began looking for ways to better address the problem of school violence. In 1994, when Congress passed the Improving America's Schools Act in an effort to reauthorize and improve the existing Elementary and Secondary Education Act, I offered two amendments aimed at reducing the level of school violence.

First, the Congress adopted my proposal directing local school districts to refer to the criminal justice system any student who brings a weapon to school. Possession of a weapon on school property is a crime, and when a crime occurs, the police should be notified. While school discipline is an appropriate and essential first step in reprimanding a student for such a violation, it is simply not enough. Possession of a firearm on school grounds is an outrage and a true impediment to the environment that teachers are striving to foster.

The second amendment that I authored in 1994, which was approved by Congress, required the U.S. Secretary of Education to conduct the first major study of violence in schools since 1978. In July of this year, the National Center for Education Statistics, in concert with the Department of Education, released the results of this study, which was conducted with a nationally representative sample of 1,234 regular public, elementary, middle, and secondary schools in all 50 States and the District of Columbia.

In a snapshot of the 1996-1997 school year, the study revealed that, with more than half of U.S. public schools reporting at least one crime incident, and one in ten schools reporting at least one serious violent crime during that school year, violence continues to beset schools across this country, all too often resulting in fatal situations.

Back in my day, no student would have considered such lawless and unruly behavior. We knew right from wrong, as it was instilled in us from our parents, sometimes with the aid of a switch that we were made to fetch ourselves. We were told that the classroom was a sacred precinct. I was told that if I got a whipping at school I would get a thrashing at home.

The classroom was a place where quiet prevailed and where students cherished the opportunity they had to learn, and that was the attitude we adopted. Unfortunately, today, students, many of them it seems, must be threatened by an impending obligation before the criminal justice system to make them behave and, often, even that has proven inadequate in keeping guns out of the hands of children and off school properties. Mr. President, what is it going to take to keep our students safe—metal detectors in every elementary and secondary school in the nation? Is that the direction in which our country is headed?

In the wake of reports of violence and tragedy at schools across the country,

Congress is, once again, honing in on the issue of school safety. In more recent efforts, as part of the Fiscal Year 1999 Commerce/Justice/State Appropriations Bill, the Senate approved \$210 million for a new national safe schools initiative to assist community-level efforts. Of that funding, \$175 million is to increase community policing in and around schools.

Just a few weeks ago, as part of the Fiscal Year 1999 Labor/Health and Human Services/Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, the Senate Appropriations Committee reported out legislation which contains more than \$150 million for a comprehensive school safety initiative to support activities that promote safe learning environments for students. Such activities may include targeted assistance, training for teachers and school security officers, and enhancing the capacity of schools to provide mental health services to troubled youth.

Since the release of the 1990 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, my home state of West Virginia has made great strides in addressing school violence, and is setting a true precedent for communities around the country in helping to establish safe schools which support learning for all children and the professionals who teach them. According to the West Virginia Department of Education, incidents involving a weapon have decreased by sixty-nine percent during the years 1994 through 1997, perhaps, in large part, due to short- and long-term initiatives underway in the State of West Virginia.

Mr. President, our nation has been grappling with the issue of improved school safety for years, and I am frankly alarmed that American school children continue to face increasing crime and violence. It is time to stop wringing our hands over this issue and take action.

We have a school system today run in many instances by hoodlums who are converting sacred temples for learning into terror camps with innocent children becoming casualties in scholastic "free fire" zones. We have teachers working in fear, too anxious even to teach their students properly. We must get guns out of the schools and put an end to this sense of panic which is pervading our nation's elementary and secondary education system. I am hopeful that these initiatives we have promulgated in the Senate this year will begin the mission of setting our nation back on track.

One of the most important things that we can provide to our children is the opportunity for a good education. I was afforded the opportunity to obtain a good, solid education back when I was a student attending class in a two-room schoolhouse. Today, we have mammoth schools, with all kinds of high-tech equipment, computers, and amenities that I never had or had never even heard of, or couldn't even imagine in those years. Yet our students are

not learning. We owe our young people today the chance to learn and excel in an environment free from guns, knives, and other weapons.

One of the National Education Goals, as included in the Goals 2000 legislation enacted in 1994, states "all schools in America will be free of drugs and violence and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol, and offer a disciplined environment that is conducive to learning by the year 2000." To accomplish that goal—it is almost going to be impossible—we must send a message loud and clear that we will not tolerate weapons in our schools.

Protecting our children is not simply a matter of public policy. It is a matter of basic values, of teaching children right from wrong and punishing those who insist on doing wrong, of instilling them with respect for the law and providing them with limitations. Students must know that they will be punished for doing the wrong thing, or for choosing the bad route.

Mr. President, in the blink of an eye, we have lost the lives of precious young children to school violence—children who may have grown to be teachers, doctors, businessmen and women, and perhaps even future Senators. We in Congress have a responsibility to stop this deadly trend from striking other innocent families. The time has long since come and gone for decency and sanity to re-enter the schoolhouse door—let's get moving.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

AGRICULTURAL, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1999—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now proceed to the conference report on H.R. 4101 until 1:30 with the time equally divided.

The Senate resumed consideration of the conference report.

Mr. FEINGOLD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin is recognized.

Who yields time?

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the full hour be accorded that was intended for the agriculture appropriations bill.

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

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I yield myself such time as I require.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Senator from Wisconsin is recognized.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I intend to vote against the Conference Report on Fiscal Year 1999 Agriculture Appropriations bill for a number of reasons. In the final version, the congressional majority has added a \$3.6 billion unfunded emergency spending provision, while simultaneously stripping out consumer and farmer protections.

However, today I will focus on the worst provision in the conference report. I am extremely disappointed that