

phrase. Our remarks are awash in "you knows." And they are uttered all around us by people who are unaware of how they are filling the time between words when the mind is still struggling to complete the thought. They are filling the time with that inanity of inanities—"you know."

Speaking now as a listener, I contend there is almost nothing more irritating and distracting than suffering through countless "you knows" while trying desperately to discern what message the speaker is attempting—vainly—to convey.

If I were teaching a class, that would be one of the things I would come down very hard on. I know that most people have no idea that their speech is packed chock-full of "you knows," and it just becomes a habit. And if one listens to it very much, he will fall victim to the same bad habit. For the first thing he knows, he will find that his remarks are being filled with "you knows." And these are sometimes strung together in staccato multiples: "you know, you know, you know?" It is simply filler—meaningless—sound to fill dead air while the speaker's unprepared brain hunts down the sentence's conclusion.

Perhaps it is because Americans are such creatures of the television age, used to actors, or those who think they are actors, news broadcasters, even politicians, reading seamlessly from scripts, cue cards, and teleprompters. We are not used to hearing pauses of any length so we unconsciously try not to allow even a few seconds of quietude to fill the air.

We have become unused to true public speaking and debate in which informed individuals prepared their minds with facts and arguments, listened to each other, and retorted and rebutted extemporaneously. Such debate demands close attention and even, shockingly, moments of silent, deliberate thought while a rejoinder is mentally composed.

I never hear the senior Senator from New York, Mr. MOYNIHAN, using that phrase. I have noticed that he pauses from time to time, but he does not use the phrase "you know." I think of him as a fine example of a teacher at whose feet I would be honored to sit.

These small pauses, like the quick closing and opening of the stage curtains between acts, allow the speaker to savor the argument he has laid out, while his opponent prepares a clever and pointed rebuttal. Few can do that anymore, even those so-called professional debaters—the talking heads of media and politicians. If the response is quick, it is quite likely to be a prepared, canned, one-liner sound bite which sells the sender's message regardless of whether or not it is completely pertinent.

It is possible to expunge "you knows" from public discourse. I have seen it done by conscientious individuals, as I indicated a little earlier, but it is no easy task. Like poison ivy,

"you knows" are pernicious and persistent. It takes strong medicine to kill back that lush growth, and diligent weeding to keep opportunistic tendrils from creeping back into common use. To rid one's speech of "you know," one must first learn to listen to himself or to herself. One must learn to train himself to recognize that he uses "you know" or other distracting filler words. As a test, ask someone to tape you or to count the "you knows."

Various members of my staff, as and when and if they hear another staff person saying "you know," they point their finger immediately at that person. And in that way they help to break the habit. I think many people will be unpleasantly surprised at the results of such a test. Then enlist these same friends to alert you when an unconscious "you know" pops out. They will enjoy that part of the task. And then work at it, work at it, work at it. The more you do, the more you will notice just how often you use such needless and asinine fill-ins. Weed them out of your speech, and you will increase your reputation as a good speaker and a thoughtful person. There is a common saying to the effect that "I would rather be silent and be thought a fool, than to open my mouth and prove it." Speech peppered with "you knows" has much the same effect.

As I have observed already, Alcibiades was noted for his practice of simply pausing silently when the chosen word momentarily escaped his mind's ability to marshal and bring it safely to his lips. Then, when he could continue, he simply resumed speaking. And he was the finest orator of his time. Clearly, a moment of silence is preferable to "you know." Think of it: "Four score and, like, seven years ago, you know, our Forefathers, uh, brought forth, you know, upon this continent, you know, a new nation, you know, conceived in, uh, liberty, and, you know, you know, dedicated to the proposition that, uh, uh, like, all men are created, like, equal." With that kind of delivery, President ABRAHAM Lincoln could not have stoked the nation's determination to see the Civil War through to its conclusion. Or let's imagine Martin Luther King: "I, uh, have a dream, you know." Not a very stirring message when it is lost in the verbal litter.

Ridding your speech of such verbal trash may not make an individual a leader of nations or of men—that requires great thoughts as well as a clear and stirring delivery—but leaving them in can surely blight the path to greatness, you know.

Mr. President, I have some remarks on another matter, but I see the distinguished senior Senator from Massachusetts, my friend, my true friend, Senator KENNEDY is on the floor. I am going to ask if he wishes to speak at this time?

Mr. KENNEDY. I thank the Senator for his typical kindness. I would be glad to make my remarks after my good friend from West Virginia. It is al-

ways a pleasure to listen to him at any time, but particularly on a Friday when I can give full attention to his eloquence.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I thank Senator KENNEDY. As I have remarked before, and I shall say again, he is one who would have appropriately graced a seat at the Constitutional Convention in 1787. I can see him working in that audience on the floor and off the floor, arguing forcefully and passionately, and advocating his position on a matter and doing it well.

So I will proceed. I will try to be brief, more so this time than other occasions.

#### BRIGHT SPOTS BRING HOPE TO EDUCATION

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I have recently drawn much attention to the results of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study, released in February of this year. My visceral, my visceral reaction to the poor scores of high school seniors on the mathematics and science portions of this exam was one of great dismay and disbelief. How could United States students be performing so poorly given the massive amounts of money invested each year in our nation's education system?

My spirits have since been lifted in the past month when hearing about the progress that my own home state of West Virginia is making on the education front. In my years as a United States Senator, my state has been scoffed at more times than I can remember, or want to remember. Well, today, I come to the floor to boast a little bit about what we are accomplishing back in the mountains and foothills of West Virginia.

For the second time in a row, West Virginia has posted the highest education marks of any state in the "Quality Counts" report released annually by Education Week magazine. West Virginia has tied only with Connecticut for top honors in the study, which grades states on standards and assessments, quality of teaching, school climate, and adequacy, equity, and allocation of resources. In achievement, no grades were granted but states were ranked by the percentage of students who scored at or above the proficient level in mathematics and science on the 1996 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Seven states, including West Virginia, made significant gains in the percentage of fourth graders who scored at the proficient level or above on the 1996 mathematics test. What is even more striking about these scores is the fact that West Virginia ranks forty-ninth in per capita income and family income, an economic statistic which is often correlated with lower student achievement.

Earlier this year, West Virginia was recognized as a national model in geography education by the National Geographic Society. National Geographic

Chairman Gilbert Grosvenor commended the state as "one of the best examples in the country of putting essential geography into a statewide system." The Fordham Foundation, a private organization committed to quality-based reform of elementary and secondary education, conducted a recent study evaluating different geography standards used by states in setting their academic curricula. West Virginia was one of only six states that received honor grades for adopting excellent standards for geography that are clear, specific, comprehensive, and rigorous.

Good students and teachers are an integral component of getting ahead in education.

West Virginia could not have made the progress in education that it has made in the past few years without solid homes, ambitious students, and good teachers. The whole process depends, in great measure, on quality teachers, since even the most driven and ambitious students can falter at the hands of an unqualified, incompetent teacher. Just recently, Susan Lee Barrett of Nicholas County, WV, was named as the West Virginia Teacher of the Year. Ms. Barrett is a teacher at the Cherry River Elementary School. She was selected based on her leadership in education reform. I hope that many other teachers in West Virginia and around the Nation will emulate the ambition and dedication to her chosen field that Ms. Barrett has so evidently displayed.

I also take great pleasure in learning of the headway West Virginia is making as a leader in education. Over the past few months, my office has been inundated with positive news about many West Virginia schools and students. These bright spots deserve recognition for their efforts and innovation. As Plato wrote in his day, "Excellent things are rare." How true that is. Excellence is something that we all can recognize—the Nobel Prize or a play by Shakespeare or Aeschylus or Euripides or Sophocles; however, it is not something that most of us see or experience on an everyday basis. For that reason, excellence should be acknowledged and it ought to be rewarded.

The Department of Education recently announced the selection of the 1998 national blue ribbon schools, which are recognized for strong leadership, high-quality teaching, up-to-date curriculum, policies, and practices. In West Virginia, Weir High School, which is in the northern panhandle of West Virginia, and Weir Middle School, both of Weirton, WV, were named for this award. Weir High School is unique for its active role in preparing students to meet the demands of today's high-tech society. With increased global competition and industry downsizing, Weir High School provides its students with many important resources, including a computerized library resource directory, Internet accessibility, satellite

television access, computer-assisted drafting, laser disc technology, and electronic research. Weir High School students are making great strides as a result of such unprecedented use of technology, and I commend the school and its able faculty for its leadership in that area. When I went to school, we never heard of such things. We not only didn't have access to it, we never even heard of it.

In addition to an educational technology focus, Weir High School should be extremely proud of its veteran teaching staff—a staff that demonstrates an unparalleled level of commitment and dedication. That is what it requires: dedication and commitment. Among its faculty members, the school boasts of a Tandy finalist, Ashland Teacher of the Year, West Virginia Math Teacher of the Year, West Virginia Biology Teacher of the Year—think of that—several Hancock County Teachers of the Year, Who's Who Among American High School Teachers, and West Virginia Governor's Honor Academy Favorite Educators.

Following in the footsteps of its neighboring high school, Weir Middle School has made great progress in technology, curriculum, National and State test scores, community involvement, student environment, and meeting State and National education goals for all students. The school motto, "An Open Door to New Beginnings," is observed and followed daily. Accordingly, Weir Middle School recently introduced a new program, WEIR, We Encourage Individual Responsibility, to encompass total staff and student involvement in promoting learning and the teaching of standards.

West Virginia, with stars shining across its educational firmament, is home to many other schools producing excellent students. To name a few, Kiley Anne Berry, a sophomore at East Fairmont State College, in the northern portion of the State, is 1 of 20 distinguished students selected from across the Nation—not just across West Virginia, but across the Nation—to participate in an international Youth Science Festival in Seoul, Korea. Heather Wilson, an eight-year-old from Jefferson County, in West Virginia's eastern panhandle, was selected earlier this year as a National Runner-Up in the Reading is Fundamental 1998 National Reading Celebration, an annual reading program challenging students to meet or exceed an age-based reading goal. Several students at Clay County High School of Clay, WV, were distinguished in the "We the People . . . the Citizen and the Constitution" national finals. More than 250 other West Virginia students in grades five through eight were honored for their exceptional academic talents as part of the Johns Hopkins University Talent Search. And the list goes on.

I could spend several more minutes, or even hours, talking about distinguished West Virginia students and West Virginia schools, and education in

general. I will, however, conclude now. But I urge all schools, teachers, and students, nationwide and in my State of West Virginia, to follow these pacesetters—pacesetters. Our education system in the United States is ailing and we need to get back on track. These schools and students that I have talked about today are succeeding, and I encourage others to keep pace and emulate this progress.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. ENZI addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

#### HEALTH CARE QUALITY LEGISLATION

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the popular issue of health care quality. You can't mention health care without pulling on everyone's heartstrings. While several of the measures in both the House and the Senate have been pitched as being essential to enhancing the quality of care Americans receive, I hope that my colleagues will carefully evaluate the impact that any Federal one-size-fits-all mandate would have on our Nation's health care system.

Health care is as personal as it gets. More importantly, though, our decisions must not be tainted by simple anecdotes. This is not a one-line sound bite issue. Like any Member of this body, I believe that America's health care providers are the best in the world, and I believe that our health care system is the most technologically advanced in the world—the most technologically advanced in the world. Perhaps we don't hear that enough. The reason for that could be that this issue is being used by some folks as a political ad campaign, dwelling entirely on the negatives and failing to illustrate any positives. That is not rational, that is not fair. People are prone to believe something if they hear it enough, even if it isn't true. Repetition doesn't right a wrong, although repetition may lead a person to think a wrong is right.

While watching this debate unfold, I have seen people wield surveys and polls around this body like they were weapons of mass destruction. It stands to reason that if you want to make a bill popular, back it up with a survey or a poll. Why? Because you can always get the answer you want by the way you word the questions.

Legislating our Nation's health care system in such a fashion is like trying to cross a chasm in two jumps. It is detrimental to everyone's health.

I will, however, illustrate how unreliable survey and poll results have been in relation to various health care quality provisions. For instance, in May, a Democratic polling firm showed that 86 percent of those questioned supported the Patient Access to Responsible Care Act or PARCA bill. In the same month, a Republican poll found that more than 90 percent of those questioned favored