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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, Your mercies endure forever. You continue to protect us with Your loving kindness, putting our enemies to shame. Be a shield for our Senators, preparing them for every challenge and fortifying them for every adversity. Lord, use them to show forth all Your marvelous works, continuing to be their high tower in troubled times. May they not forget to serve all the people, including the oppressed, the marginalized, the lost, the lonely, the last, and the least. Inspire them to live lives that show Your goodness to our Nation and world.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COATS). The majority leader is recognized.

EVERY CHILD ACHIEVES ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, Republicans and Democrats have long agreed that the No Child Left Behind law is broken and needs to be fixed, but the Senate didn't do anything about it for 7 long years, missing its deadlines repeatedly.

The new majority in Congress thought it was time to change that dy-

namic. We thought it was time for bipartisan action instead. That is why we are taking up the Every Child Achieves Act today. It is bipartisan legislation drafted by a Republican former Education Secretary, Senator ALEXANDER, and a Democratic former preschool teacher, Senator MURRAY. It passed through committee with the support of every single Democrat and every single Republican.

Just think about it. From third rail to unanimous bipartisan support, now that is an impressive achievement. It shows how a functioning committee process and a functioning Senate can, with hard work from Senators such as ALEXANDER and MURRAY, break through the gridlock. It is another encouraging sign for Americans who like what they are seeing from a new Congress that is back to work and back on their side.

The American people know education is an issue that touches almost every single person in our country. They know how critical it is to our children's future and many are upset with an education system in desperate need of reform.

Although No Child Left Behind was well intentioned and laid the ground work for important reform to our education system, it is now clear that some of its requirements have become unachievable. For instance, basically every school is now considered failing under the law, and because the law has become so broken, the administration has found ways to effectively dictate education policy from the executive branch. That is not the right approach for our kids. The White House shouldn't be trying to run your local school board.

The Every Child Achieves Act would put an end to that kind of control from thousands of miles away. It would do so by eliminating onerous Federal mandates and reining in the power of the executive branch so States cannot be coerced into adopting measures such as Common Core.

Instead of more Federal control, the bipartisan Every Child Achieves Act aims to empower teachers, parents, and students to improve education where they live. It would restore responsibility and accountability to States and local school districts. It would give them increased flexibility to design and implement their own education standards and programs. This bipartisan bill would also allow States to develop their own accountability models to include other measures beyond testing to determine student achievement and school quality and to determine the best ways to turn around underperforming schools.

Nothing out of Washington could ever solve all of our education challenges overnight, but the Every Child Achieves Act takes positive steps forward. It recognizes that your local school board shouldn't, in effect, be run from hundreds or even thousands of miles away. It recognizes that States and parents are going to know far more about the needs of their schools and their students than some detached bureaucrat in Washington. There are ideas both parties should support and, in fact, there are ideas both parties just did support unanimously in committee.

If Senators have changes they would like to see in the bill, now is the time for colleagues to work with the bill managers to get their amendments moving. We already have several lined up.

This is a good debate for the country, so let's continue working cooperatively across the aisle to empower States and parents, instead of Federal bureaucrats, to enact the education policies that actually work for their students.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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