

DEADLINES IGNORED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, one of the legendary Senators who recently retired from the Senate after many years in the House and the Senate, Tom Harkin, if he were here, would be on the floor taking issue with what the Republican leader just said.

Tom Harkin tried very hard to have a reauthorization of the elementary and secondary education bill. Why didn't he get it? Because Republicans blocked us from doing it. So it is nice that my friend the Republican leader comes and talks about all the great things being done in Congress now, but the fact is it could have been done many years ago had we had a little bit of cooperation from the Republicans.

The new Republican majority has ignored upcoming deadlines and neglected to address urgent problems facing our great country. I am saying that—and that is just an understatement. Instead, they have governed through a series of last-minute, manufactured crises that increase uncertainty and impose unnecessary and wasteful costs on our country. In just a few minutes, we are going to debate the education matter, as we should.

But as important as that is, it is extremely important we don't take our eye off the prize. And what is that? Because in just a few months, the government is going to run out of money. Unless we can reach a bipartisan budget agreement, our Nation will be faced with yet another ridiculous and damaging government shutdown.

Now, my Republican colleagues understand what I just said because they are the ones who created the last government shutdown. It was a crushing blow to our economy. Sadly, the only reason we were able to reopen the government is because Democrats voted almost unanimously to reopen the government. Sadly, to just take one example, well over half of the Republicans, about two-thirds of the Republicans in the House, voted to keep the government closed. How about that.

So another government shutdown would be unacceptable. But remember, it has been done before—with joy—by my Republican colleagues. Sequestration is another thing they seem to like.

So having had that as a historical background, we ought to be able to get together, compromise, and reach a bipartisan solution for our country in a timely, responsible way. You would think so.

As happened here before we left for the July 4th recess, there was an effort made to move to the Defense appropriations bill, and that was stopped because we believe that what we need to fund more than defense is we need to fund the whole government. We stand ready to work with Republicans to reach a bipartisan solution. Unfortunately, it seems as if Republican leadership shows no interest in compromise. Democrats have urged them to come to the table now, and they have refused.

Unless we act now, we will be faced with another Republican-imposed crisis at the end of this fiscal year. This should be avoided, and it can be avoided. Don't just take my word for it. There are Republicans in the House who believe the time for games and brinkmanship should be over. The New York Times today reports that high-ranking Republicans in the House are calling for negotiations again now:

Senior House Appropriations Committee members, including the panel's chairman, Representative Harold Rogers of Kentucky, have already told Republican leaders that the time to negotiate a way out of the impasse is now, not in the shadow of a papal visit or a government shutdown on October 1.

There is also in this same article, in the last paragraph, something that is quite important.

"The reality is we still live in a divided government," Mr. Cole said.

He is one of the senior Members of the House Republican caucus.

"It's not as if the Democrats can be shut out. . . ."

And we proved that with a vote on the Democratic response to the efforts to move to Defense appropriations. Continuing:

"It's not as if the Democrats can be shut out, but they can't dictate to us any more than we can dictate to them. It's time to sit down and see if we can make a deal."

We can reach a deal.

So I urge Republicans to follow the leadership of Chairman ROGERS and long-time Representative COLE and work to get this process going now. Let's not wait yet another week. Certainly we shouldn't wait any longer. Let's move forward. Let's not wait until the last minute. Let's not risk another shutdown. Let's sit down and talk to each other and reach a bipartisan budget agreement on behalf of the American people. The President and his people would be happy to be engaged any time on this.

I certainly hope we can move forward and not have another repeat of what the Republicans did to this country just a short time ago and close it down.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

EVERY CHILD ACHIEVES ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1177, which the clerk will now report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1177) to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to ensure that every child achieves.

Pending:

Alexander/Murray amendment No. 2089, in the nature of a substitute.

Alexander (for Fischer) amendment No. 2079 (to amendment No. 2089), to ensure local governance of education.

Murray (for Peters) amendment No. 2095 (to amendment No. 2089), to allow local educational agencies to use parent and family engagement funds for financial literacy activities.

Alexander (for Rounds/Udall) amendment No. 2078 (to amendment No. 2089), to require the Secretary of Education and the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study regarding elementary and secondary education in rural or poverty areas of Indian country.

Murray (for Reed/Cochran) amendment No. 2085 (to amendment No. 2089), to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 regarding school librarians and effective school library programs.

Murray (for Warner) amendment No. 2086 (to amendment No. 2089), to enable the use of certain State and local administrative funds for fiscal support teams.

Toomey amendment No. 2094 (to amendment No. 2089), to protect our children from convicted pedophiles, child molesters, and other sex offenders infiltrating our schools and from schools "passing the trash" helping pedophiles obtain jobs at other schools.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, as the Democratic leader leaves the floor, I thank him again for his cooperation and that of Senator MURRAY of Washington in creating an environment in which we can move ahead on this bill. I greatly appreciate that and so do other Senators. That is demonstrated with the fact that we have had dozens of Senators who have come forward with amendments. Dozens of amendments have been agreed to, and Senator MURRAY and I will be recommending to the full Senate that we adopt those amendments soon.

I wish to take a moment to reflect on what we are doing in the Senate today. We spent a lot of time on national defense issues. The distinguished Senator who is presiding today is a member of our Intelligence Committee. He hears a great deal about ISIS, Iran, and the nuclear deal we might have and about what is going on in Syria and Lebanon, and we want to do our best to be strong militarily so we can defend ourselves in the world. We also want to be strong at home. We want to make sure we have a strong country.

Almost all of us agree that the single most important thing we can do to ensure our future is to make sure our children and our adults continue to develop their educational skills, that they learn what they need to know and be able to do.

I know in my home State of Tennessee we are trying to compete with the whole world. We are making cars, guns, trucks, all sorts of computers, and all sorts of manufactured goods that we sell not only in the United States, but we sell them around the world. You walk into the Nissan plant in Tennessee, which has 7,000 or 8,000 employees today, it is the largest auto plant in North America, the most efficient, and very important to our State. It has helped to raise our family incomes more than almost anything that

has happened there. But 30 or 40 years ago, it would have had 20,000 or 25,000 employees; now it has 7,000 or 8,000. Every one of those employees has to have considerable skills. They have to learn statistics and algebra and to speak English well. They have to learn to work with one another. In other words, they have to do well in schools, and they have to do well in postsecondary education, which is a separate discussion.

So we are talking today on the Senate floor—and the House is talking tomorrow—about what we can do as the Congress to create an environment in which our children can succeed in schools. That is not always on the front pages in Washington, DC, but I can guarantee it is on the front pages at home. It is on the front pages in the rural areas of New Mexico, Indiana, and in the cities of New York and Tennessee because parents care about it, students care about it, and it is about our future.

The Federal Government has a limited role in elementary and secondary education. The bill we are debating today is called the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It funds only about 4 percent of what the Nation spends on kindergarten through 12th grade. The Federal Government funds another 4 or 5 percent through different programs, but States and local governments fund about 90 percent of what goes on in the schools.

Not only is most of the funding action local, but so is most of the real work—most of the real work. We have 100,000 public schools. We have 50 million children in those schools and 3.5 million teachers. No one is wise enough to know what to do about helping a third grader learn in a native village in Alaska, in the mountains of Tennessee, and in the center of Harlem at the same time. The ones who are closest to the children have the most chance to make a difference. Now, does that mean we have nothing to do here about it? No, I don't think it does. I think education is a national concern. But that doesn't mean it has to be a Federal concern run from Washington and the U.S. Department of Education.

The first President Bush, in 1989, called all the Governors together and established national education goals in math, science, English, history, and geography. But he didn't pass a law about that. He just created a consensus about that, and then he led the country in that direction, first through America 2000, which works State by State and community by community toward those goals. That was in the early 1990s.

That was when we worked together to create higher standards for States. If you are going to have goals, you have to have standards. Where do you get those? Well, Governors worked together to create them—voluntary national standards. Then tests were developed to see how you were doing on the standards—voluntary tests. Then

came more choices for parents and then more charter schools, which are public schools in which teachers have more freedom to serve the needs of children presented to them and parents have the opportunity to choose those. Those were the directions the States were going. The States were going in the direction of better teaching, higher standards, and real accountability.

Mainly because of the advantage of age, I happened to have been in the middle of all that. I was Governor when "A Nation at Risk" came out in 1983 and Terrel Bell, President Reagan's Secretary of Education, said if a foreign country had done to our schools what we had done, we would consider it an act of war. So Governors went to work on that.

In the mid-1980s, Governors worked together for a whole year to try to get better results, and then throughout the 1990s and then on into the last 10 or 15 years. Now, what has been different about the last 10 or 15 years is that the Federal Government has gotten more involved. In 2001, there was No Child Left Behind. The major contribution of No Child Left Behind was to say that we would like to know how the children are doing—all 50 million of them. So they each were to take a test, two in each year—third grade through the eighth grade, for example, and then again in high school—in reading and math, and then they would take three science tests. Through their career, there were 17 tests.

The testimony before our education committee says those tests should take about 2 hours each. It is not a lot of time. That should be publicly reported, and then you disaggregate those tests by various groups so we can see if we are leaving children behind. Are we leaving the African-American kids behind? Are we leaving the White mountain kids behind? That is information that we need to know as a society.

The bipartisan legislation we are debating on the floor keeps those tests because we need to know those measures of achievement. But what our legislation does that is different is it says we are going to do something different about what we do about the results of those tests. We are going to restore that responsibility to the States, the classroom teachers, the school boards, and to the parents. That is where that belongs, and that has produced a remarkable consensus.

Newsweek magazine said this week that No Child Left Behind is the education law that everybody wants to fix—a remarkable consensus about that. And that is true. We hear it from everyone. But what is even more remarkable is that there is also a consensus about how to fix it. That emerged during our hearings this year, as Senator MURRAY, the Senator from Washington and the senior Democrat on our Senate committee that deals with education, looked at the last two Congresses—as I did—and she said: Well, you know, we haven't done so

well. We have broken down the parts and differences. So why don't you and I write a bill—Senator MURRAY and I—and present it to our committee for consideration.

So we did that—a bipartisan bill. Now, our committee is not just any old committee, as the majority leader has said. It has on it some of the most liberal Democrats and some of the most conservative Republicans. So you would think we would have a hard time getting together, but we did pretty well. We listened to each other, and we adjusted our views. We considered a lot of amendments, and we adopted 29. When it came time to decide if we had done well enough to bring it to the floor, the vote was unanimous. Every single Senator voted for that.

So we are in a situation today where we have a chance to succeed. The House of Representatives, apparently, will vote tomorrow on No Child Left Behind—on their version of the bill. If things continue to proceed as they are today, we should finish our work next week. Senator MURRAY and I have stayed in touch with President Obama and Secretary Duncan, and we know that, in the end, if we get a result, we will need to have a Presidential signature. We want a result. We are not here to make a political statement. The lives of the children and the future of our country are too important for that. We are not here to play games. We can do that in other places. We are here to get a result and help move our country forward and do it together.

I see Senator MURRAY is here. So I will conclude my remarks and give her a chance to say whatever she might like to say. I will conclude with these thoughts. One of the questions we hear is: Are the States really prepared to accept this much responsibility?

Now, to a former Governor, such as I am, that is a strange question. I look up at Washington when I am home and I say: Are you prepared to accept all of this? I trust us. I trust the State much more than Washington. But it is a legitimate question. I would answer that, No. 1, States are better prepared today than they were 15 years ago.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD an op-ed from the Washington Post from last weekend written by Anne Holton, the Secretary of Education of Virginia.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Washington Post, July 3, 2015]
 REVISING—NOT ELIMINATING—TESTS TO MAKE
 VA. SCHOOLS BETTER
 (By Anne Holton)

As the 12-year-old daughter of then-Gov. Linwood Holton Jr., I helped integrate our formerly racially divided public schools here in Virginia. I have spent much of my working life focused on children and families at the margin, with full appreciation of the crucial role education can and must play in helping young people escape poverty and become successful adults.

As Virginia's education secretary, I oversee one of the strongest public education systems in the nation. Our graduation rates are

well above average, and we outperform most other states on the Nation's Report Card. A significant factor in our success has been the Standards of Learning (SOL) accountability system Virginia implemented in the 1990s. The rest of the nation followed in Virginia's footsteps when No Child Left Behind was signed into law in 2001. Virginia led again when we moved several years ago from assessing for minimum competency to our current college- and career-readiness standards, complete with rigorous, high-stakes testing.

Our successes have come with challenges. Parents, educators and students resoundingly tell us that our kids are over-tested and over-stressed. Eight- and 10-year-olds suffer through multi-hour tests that measure their endurance more than their learning. Barely verbal special education students whose individualized education plans are focused on independent living skills are instead drilled incessantly on a handful of facts for a modified SOL exam. Teachers are teaching to the tests. Students' and teachers' love of learning and teaching are sapped.

Most troublesome, Virginia's persistent achievement gaps for low-income students have barely budged. We have done a good job of identifying challenges but have been less successful in addressing them. An unintended consequence of our high-stakes approach is that it is now even harder to recruit and retain strong educators in our high-poverty communities. Many of the best opt instead for schools where demographics guarantee better test scores; too often fine teachers leave the profession.

In Virginia, we are ready to lead the nation again. Last year, Gov. Terry McAuliffe (D) and our General Assembly took bipartisan action to reform the SOLs. We eliminated five end-of-course tests and created an SOL Innovation Committee to recommend further changes. This year—again with strong bipartisan support—we are moving to credit progress and growth more when we evaluate our schools.

The parents, educators, school board members, legislators and business leaders on the Innovation Committee are looking more broadly at what our graduates need for success as citizens and workers in the 21st century and at how we can best guide our schools toward those outcomes. Business leaders tell us they need students with skills such as oral communication, teamwork and problem-solving as much as substantive knowledge. As we work to grow and diversify our economy, our Innovation Committee is looking at how our schools can better meet those needs.

This approach will probably generate even bolder proposals. Strong accountability will continue to be a hallmark of our system, but we have faith that, as has been said, "Responsibility and delight can coexist."

Students need congressional leaders to follow Virginia's example of bipartisanship to enact common-sense changes to federal education laws now. Those changes should focus on enabling local and state educators to prepare every child for success as adults and inspire and encourage states. But they also should leave us sufficient flexibility to improve our accountability systems, reintroduce creativity into the classroom and better address persistent achievement gaps.

Thankfully, leaders on Capitol Hill are also hearing calls for reform. Sens. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and Patty Murray (D-Wash.) have co-sponsored legislation to reauthorize No Child Left Behind. Republicans and Democrats on the Senate Education Committee voted—unanimously—to send it to the full Senate for consideration; it is expected to be taken up soon. The same spirit of bipartisanship was demonstrated in the House recently when Reps. Bobby Scott (D-

Va.) and Richard Hanna (R-N.Y.) introduced legislation to improve early learning. I encourage every member of Congress to set aside partisan concerns, find commonalities and take action this year to fix No Child Left Behind so that we can move all our children forward on the road to success.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Ms. Holton started out in a very prominent Republican family in Virginia, and she ended up in a very prominent Democratic family in Virginia. But as she points out in her remarks, their work in education is bipartisan. She makes the point about how much progress Virginia has made in terms of goals, standards, accountability, and testing. It is very impressive, and most States can say the same.

What has happened in the last 15 years is that Governors, school leaders, educators, and parents have worked together and created standards, tests, and now accountability systems. In other words, what do you do if things aren't working out the way they should?

Second, we have seen the limits of the Federal Government trying to do it. I think President George W. Bush and President Obama deserve credit for looking at our Nation and seeing this is an urgent problem and wanting to do more from here. That is an understandable impulse. But there are limits to what you can do from here. We have seen that in the backlash to common core—the academic standard which was incentivized or mandated from Washington. We have seen that in the backlash to teacher evaluation defined in Washington.

The truth is that too much Washington involvement in setting standards in States and evaluating teachers in cities sets back teacher evaluation and higher standards, which to me are the holy grail of K-through-12 education. The path to higher standards, the path to better teaching, the path to real accountability is not through Washington, DC. It is through the States.

We can create an environment, we can make sure there is not discrimination, and we can send some money that will help low-income children. All those things we can do. But then we need to show some humility and recognize, as Carol Burris, Principal of the Year from New York, said: Moms and pops, teachers, and school board members cherish their children in their own communities, and you don't really get that much wiser and smarter by flying to Washington and passing a law.

So this bill shows that humility. It shows a consensus. It is a good example of how the Senate can work together on an important issue. As I said, I am grateful to the majority leader for putting it on the floor. He had many choices, but he saw the importance of it. I am grateful to the Democratic leader for some work he has done behind the scenes to make it easier for us to succeed. I thank Senator REID for that. And I am especially grateful to Senator MURRAY for caring about chil-

dren and her prestigious leadership on this.

We are moving well on amendments. I would encourage any Senator with another amendment to come to the floor quickly and let us know about it, because other Senators have—and Senator MURRAY and I have agreed on—a large number of amendments already that we are going to recommend the Senate adopt by consent. We will have a vote probably around noon. We will vote again this afternoon and again tomorrow morning. We want to finish as quickly as possible.

Hopefully, the House will succeed, and we will put our bills together and present the President with a bill he can sign, and we will fix No Child Left Behind, which is the bill *Newsweek* magazine said is the education law that everybody wants to fix.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, again, I really want to thank my colleague, the senior Senator from Tennessee, for working with me on this bipartisan bill. Senator ALEXANDER and I are both committed to fixing the current law known as No Child Left Behind.

I am glad we are having this very important debate on the Senate Floor. Nearly everyone agrees that No Child Left Behind is badly broken. As I have traveled around my home State of Washington over the past decade, I have heard from so many of my constituents—from teachers in the classroom to moms in the grocery store to tech company CEOs—that we have to fix this law.

Our bipartisan bill, the Every Child Achieves Act, is a good step in the right direction. It gives our States more flexibility while also including Federal guardrails to make sure all students do have access to a quality public education. I am looking forward to improving and strengthening this bill throughout the process on the Senate floor and beyond. I am going to continue working on helping our struggling schools get the resources they need, and I will be focused on making sure all our kids, especially our most vulnerable students, are able to learn and grow and thrive in the classroom.

This bill could not be more important for students across the country, and it is critical for the future of our Nation. When all students have the chance to learn, we strengthen our future workforce, our country grows stronger, and we empower the next generation of Americans to lead the world. So I am looking forward to getting to work and hopefully moving forward on fixing No Child Left Behind and making sure all of our students can learn regardless of where they live or how they learn or how much money their parents earn.

I join with Senator ALEXANDER in encouraging our colleagues to file their amendments so that we can continue making progress on this very important piece of legislation.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, I rise today to urge my colleagues to support the Hirono-Heller amendment No. 2109, which deals with Asian American and Pacific Islander, or AAPI, student data.

AAPIs are the fastest growing population in the United States, but it is important to highlight that we are not all the same. I know this from my personal experience.

Just a few months ago, I attended the White House state dinner for Japanese Prime Minister Abe. The next day, there was a nice photo in the Washington Post with a caption that said, "Senator MAZIE HIRONO and her guest"—except it wasn't me. It was actually my good friend Congresswoman DORIS MATSUI of California.

In my time in Congress, I have often been mistaken for other AAPI members. Just a few months ago, during the budget debate, when I was on the floor of the Senate, C-SPAN identified me as Senator Daniel K. Inouye. I have been mistaken for JUDY CHU, who is Chinese, and others. I may be the only AAPI in the Senate right now, but we are not all the same. We come from different places and have vastly different backgrounds that make us who we are today.

The same is true in education. Our current law and the Every Child Achieves Act use the broad "Asian Americans/Pacific Islander" category to cover all AAPIs. This AAPI group includes Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Asian Indian, Filipino, Korean, Native Hawaiian, Samoan, and others.

When we look at averages, the AAPI group does very well overall, but in fact there is a model minority myth. The current AAPI category hides big achievement gaps between subgroups. For example, 72 percent of Asian Indian adults have a bachelor's degree or higher, but only 26 percent of Vietnamese adults do, and only 14 percent of Hmong adults do. This adult data comes from the 2010 census. But we don't have data on how AAPI children are doing.

The Hirono-Heller amendment is simple. Today, we already have public report cards on how students in different groups are doing. Parents can look up a school district online and see what percentage of its White or Hispanic students are scoring well in reading or math. With our amendment, districts with large populations of AAPI students will simply add a piece onto their report cards to show how AAPI subgroups are doing. Our amendment

uses the same 11 categories as the census. Parents are familiar with it because they filled out the census information just a few years ago.

The Hirono-Heller amendment is a bipartisan compromise. Our amendment would only apply to large school districts with over 1,000 AAPI students. Let me be clear—not districts with 1,000 students total but districts with 1,000 AAPI students. Currently, that is only about 400 school districts out of more than 16,000 school districts nationwide. Less than 3 percent of school districts would have to do anything at all. These districts should want to know how their students are doing so they can help all students succeed.

Currently, the following States would not be affected at all by our amendment: Delaware, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

I have heard concerns that adding this AAPI data would be overly burdensome. The bill we are considering today already adds new reporting on military-connected student achievement. Districts can update their data systems to add checkboxes for military-connected children and AAPI children at the same time. This is not overly burdensome. Just as we are adding a new field to cover military-connected students, adding new fields that include AAPI subgroups will be just upgrading the software schools use.

In fact, the Hawaii Department of Education, DOE, is a national leader in using AAPI data. Hawaii DOE collects AAPI data on student registration forms. They easily put the data in their computer systems, which all staff can access. Having AAPI subgroup data is helpful for Hawaii's school administrators and policymakers, who analyze achievement gaps in college and career readiness, set statewide strategy, and then hire staff and target extra help to the highest need students. Hawaii DOE also shares the data with the University of Hawaii system to collaborate on student outcomes, such as credit completion and reducing remedial ed.

Principals who learn that a certain AAPI subgroup is doing poorly in their own school can choose to hire more staff for outreach to that community or can partner with community groups on afterschool programs, et cetera. Teachers can spend more time on parent outreach to help high-need students in their classroom. That is why the Hirono-Heller amendment has the support of the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, and the National Education Association.

Districts in North Carolina, California, Washington, and others are doing similar work. Other districts around the country can make the appropriate changes to their systems. There are automatic software updates for student data systems that can add new data fields.

It is important to share the data publicly. Community groups can highlight best practices among schools that serve their students well and encourage other schools to improve. Parents deserve to have this data, too.

In the coming days, we will be discussing traditional public schools, public charter schools, and private schools. No matter where you stand on these issues, parents deserve to know how their schools are serving the needs of their kids so they can best help their children succeed.

Our amendment is endorsed also by school choice advocates such as the National Association of Public Charter Schools.

Just like current law in the broader ESEA bill we are discussing, there is no reporting if a subgroup is too small to maintain student privacy.

Our amendment was carefully crafted with the support of the National Coalition of Asians and Pacific Americans, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, National Council of La Raza, the NAACP, and over 100 other civil rights, educators, and women's groups and the disability community. They worked together very closely on the language and agreed that data disaggregation for AAPI subgroups is a top priority.

AAPI groups across the country are making their choices heard by posting photos of why they are more than just a large Asian population. They are posting these pictures on Tumblr, Twitter, and Facebook. In fact, I saw one of those postings where students were holding up placards that say: I am AAPI, but I am also Japanese. I am AAPI, but I am also Korean.

Join them at hashtag "All Students Count."

I thank Senator HELLER and his staff for their support and hard work on this bipartisan compromise bill. I also thank Senator REID of Nevada, Senator BALDWIN, Senator BOXER, Senator CANTWELL, Senator CASEY, Senator FEINSTEIN, Senator FRANKEN, Senator MARKEY, and Senator SCHATZ for cosponsoring my stand-alone bill, the All Students Count Act, which goes further than this amendment we will be voting on today.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment because, in fact, all students count.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the time until 12 noon be equally divided between the two managers or their designees; further, that at 12 noon, the Senate vote on the following amendments, with no second-degree amendments in order to any of the amendments prior to the votes: Reed amendment No. 2085 on school libraries; Warner amendment No. 2086 on fiscal support teams; and Rounds amendment No. 2078 on education in Indian Country study.

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

Mr. ALEXANDER. For the information of all Senators, we expect to need a rollcall vote on the Reed amendment, and the Warner and Rounds amendments will be adopted by voice vote.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, the deadline for negotiators to strike a deal with Iran on its illicit nuclear program has been extended yet again. The deadline was June 30. It was postponed until Tuesday, and that was put off again for a few more days.

According to the Wall Street Journal, the chief negotiator said:

We are continuing to negotiate for the next couple of days. That does not mean we are extending our deadlines, we are interpreting [the deadline] in a flexible way.

What does that mean? You either have a deadline or you don't have a deadline.

By the end of the week, the White House could announce that it has struck a deal or it could say once again it needs more time. If there is a deal, Congress will need to look very closely and carefully at what it actually says.

There are some important things that I will be looking for in any agreement that is struck. First and foremost, any deal is going to have to dismantle Iran's nuclear weapons program. It is going to have to prevent Iran from ever developing a path to a nuclear weapon. It is going to have to ensure that Iran completely discloses its past work on nuclear weapons. Iran is also going to have to submit to an inspection and verification regime that is both extensive and long term—not just inspections when the Iranians want it, when they allow it, or where they say it can occur. That is the only way we can really confirm that Iran's promises are more than empty words.

America and other countries should not suspend sanctions until all of these conditions are met. So far, I have not seen much to indicate that our negotiators understand how important these goals are.

There appear to be a lot of questions that have not been resolved and a lot of foot-dragging by Iran to try to get additional concessions.

On Sunday, Secretary of State John Kerry said: "We're aiming to try to finish this in the timeframe that we've set out." Well, that timeframe was 7

months ago, in November of last year. The Obama administration said it had reached what it called an interim agreement in November of 2013, and it said that it had a deadline of 1 year to reach a final agreement. That would have been November of 2014. When November 2014 came along, Iran got 6 more months to bully this administration into giving up even more ground.

The deadline has been pushed back time and time again. According to news reports today, it may be pushed back even further.

The Obama administration started negotiating with Iran more than 5 years ago. In 2009, President Obama said that we "will not continue to negotiate indefinitely" with Iran specifically. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that same year that the window of opportunity for Iran would "not remain open indefinitely." I would love to know what their definition of the word "indefinitely" is.

I think these missed deadlines are embarrassing for the Obama administration. The administration's willingness to keep extending the talks make it look desperate. You know what. The Iranians know it. That is a big problem.

Iran is now demanding that the arms embargo be lifted as part of the negotiations. This recent last-minute demand shows that Iran knows how desperately eager President Obama is for a deal, any deal. This issue was supposed to have been settled already. In April, the White House said that "important restrictions on conventional arms and ballistic missiles" will be a part of any final agreement. Now Iran is seeing that the President and Secretary Kerry are desperate for an agreement to build their legacy, so it is bringing up the arms embargo again.

According to news reports, our negotiators have been willing to make a lot of concessions to get any deal. There was an article recently in the Washington Post about the negotiations. The headline was "In final hours, Kerry says Iran talks can go either way." The article said that negotiators have "a general feeling that they have come too far to fail."

I want to be clear. Walking away from these negotiations without a deal is not a failure. Failure would be signing a bad deal. Failure would be lifting sanctions before Iran has shown that it has begun dismantling its nuclear program. Failure would be a deal that does not automatically reinstate sanctions if it turns out Iran is not complying with the deal. Failure would be a deal that allows any money Iran gets from sanctions relief to end up continuing to support terrorism, which Iran does. Failure would be a world that is a much more dangerous place for all of us.

So far it seems as if this administration is willing to make a deal at any cost. We have seen one point after another where the administration has apparently agreed to give the Iranians ex-

actly whatever they want. The negotiations went from initially being about stopping Iran's nuclear program to now being an attempt to delay or to manage Iran's nuclear program.

Even before the June 30 deadline passed, Senator MENENDEZ said: "For me, the trend lines of the Iran talks are deeply worrying; our red lines have turned into green lights."

That is from a Democratic Senator. It was that kind of concern that led Congress—this Senate—to pass a law in May saying that Congress would be able to review any deal with Iran before the Obama administration could lift sanctions. Remember, the Obama administration fought that law—a law with a bipartisan, veto-proof majority in this body. The President didn't want Congress or the American people to have any say at all. Actually, the White House said they were planning to go directly to the Security Council of the United Nations before going to the elected representatives of the people of the United States.

Any deal with Iran on its nuclear program would have a huge effect on our security, and the American people do get a say. If somehow the administration manages to strike a deal and it sends over all the necessary materials, Congress—if it is done today—will get 30 days to review it. That is time we can use to make sure it really is in our country's best interest. If the administration can't get us the full text of an agreement before this Friday, the timeline jumps up to 60 days to review it. That is what we said in the law we passed in a bipartisan way this spring.

If our negotiators can reach a deal with Iran, whenever that happens, Congress will use the time to look very closely at every word. If our negotiators can reach a deal with Iran, whenever that happens, Congress will make sure that we look at every word and know what is in it. The goal—the entire reason we are having these negotiations—is not just to get Iran to say yes to something; the goal initially was and should remain to stop Iran's illicit nuclear program.

If the Obama administration allows Iran to continue with that program, the world will be less safe, less stable, and less secure. Any agreement our negotiators come up with must be accountable, must be enforceable, and must be verifiable. If that is not the case, then it is a bad deal, and the Obama administration must not strike a bad deal with Iran. This Nation and the world cannot afford that, and Congress cannot allow it.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the quorum call be equally divided.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BARRASSO. I thank the Presiding Officer, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, we are here today to consider the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the bill that has been known for years as No Child Left Behind. It is a bill the Congress was supposed to reauthorize more than 7 years ago.

When school kids come to visit me in my office here, I often ask them: What would happen if you showed up and were told that your homework was 7 or 8 years late? That is how long it has taken us to get to this place.

As the Presiding Officer may know, before I came to the Senate, I had the honor of being the superintendent of the Denver Public Schools district, which now has 95,000 children in it, 67 percent of whom qualify for free and reduced lunch.

I should note that we got some sad news in the last month or two. For the first time in our country's history—for the first time in the history of the United States—over half of the children attending public schools in our country qualify for free and reduced lunch. That is due to two decades of stagnant middle-class family incomes and the effect of the worst recession since the Great Depression.

What people in Washington need to understand is that when it comes to education in this country right now, our kids don't have a fair fight, especially our kids living in poverty. If you were born poor in the United States of America, you will have heard 30 million fewer words than your more affluent peers when you show up for kindergarten. Ask any kindergarten teacher in the country whether that makes a difference, and they will tell you it does.

What are we doing as a country to fill that gap? Not much. By the time kids get to elementary school—their early years—only one out of five is reading proficiently of the kids who were born poor and 20 percent are reading at grade level. Ask any middle or high school teacher whether that is going to make a difference when that child gets to middle school or high school.

Where does it end in the land of opportunity for kids who are born into poverty in this country? If you are born poor in the United States of America, your chances of getting a college degree, or the equivalent of a college degree, is 9 in 100, which means—in this global economy of ours—that every year becomes less and less forgiving to people who have less of an education. And 91 out of 100 of our kids are going to be constrained to the margin of the economy and the margin of the democracy from the very outset.

There are 100 desks in this room. There are 100 chairs in this room. If we

weren't the Senate but instead kids born into poverty in this country, not even those three rows of desks over there in that corner would represent people graduating from college. Everybody else in this room would not have the benefit of a college degree. We would never accept those odds for our own children. The people in the Senate would never ever accept those odds for our own children. If our kids faced the odds of showing up to kindergarten having heard 30 million fewer words than their peers and if you knew it was assured that your child had a 20-percent chance of reading at grade level when they got to elementary school, I guarantee you would leave this place. You would leave the Senate, and you would go home and address the problem.

But when it comes to public education—especially when it comes to our kids who are living in poverty in this country—we stop treating them as if they were our kids. We are treating them as if they were someone else's kids. We are leaving it to luck as to whether a kid can fill that 30-million-word gap.

I am sure the Presiding Officer knows this. There are entire cities in this country and rural areas in this country where school choice would be meaningless because there is not a good school to choose from. There is not a school in the neighborhood or in the city that anybody in this body would send their kid to. That is where we are.

Over the last decade or so, we made progress in many places across the country. The Denver Public Schools is one of those places. It is the fastest growing urban school district in the United States.

In 2005, the kids who attended Denver Public Schools were dead last in terms of student growth compared to any school district of any size in the State of Colorado. For the last 3 years Denver Public Schools has led the State in terms of its student growth, both for kids who receive free and reduced lunch and kids who do not receive free and reduced lunch. Thirty percent more kids graduated and went to college this year than in 2005.

Now, I am the first to say that we have a long, long way to go in Denver to make sure that the ZIP Code you are born into doesn't determine the educational outcome you get, but we are making substantial progress. And I say that if we could say as a country that every single urban school district since 2005 showed a 30-percent increase in kids going to college, we would be feeling a lot better about where we are headed.

There is a lot of debate in this body about what tax policy ought to be and whether we ought to think about redistributing wealth and who should pay what share of taxes. Some people view it as everything ought to be decided out there by the market. I understand that point of view. But if that is your point of view, you better be doing ev-

erything you can to be sure that every single kid in the country has an excellent shot at an education, because if you don't, then you are basically saying, if you have the bad luck to be born to a poor family in this country, you are on your own. You are on your own, and you have a 9-in-100 chance of getting a degree that is actually going to allow you to compete in the global economy.

One thing I know about kids who are born in this country, they don't get to pick who their parents are. They don't get to decide whether they are born into a ZIP Code that is going to fill that 30-million-word gap by the time they get to kindergarten or that is going to give them excellent school choices or that will allow them to go to college.

Today, while we are not talking about higher education, this is very much a part of this K-12 conundrum because college has become harder and harder to afford, even at a time when it is much more important for people to succeed.

I saw some data the other day that said that for the average cost of tuition in this country, the average cost of college, a family in the bottom quartile of income earners, after you account for student loans, grants, and student aid, would have to consume 85 percent of their income to afford 1 year of college; whereas, if you are in the top quartile, it will cost you 15 percent of your income. Is that fair? It didn't used to be this way. In the 1970s, it wasn't this way. In the 1970s, a Pell grant covered 76 percent of what it cost to go to the average college in this country. We are rolling up the carpet on the next generation of Americans, and I don't think it is fair. I don't think it is right.

We should be having a debate about the size and scope of government. I believe that. We should have that debate. But as we are having that debate, we should keep in mind that we have an obligation to fulfill to honor the obligation our parents and grandparents fulfilled for us, which is to make sure that if you were willing to work hard, if you were willing to study hard, that college was going to be something that was attainable and it wasn't going to strangle you in debt.

Too many families across Colorado are facing this challenge, and the saddest thing I hear in my town is when somebody comes and says: We can't afford to send our kids to the best college they got into. What a waste that is—what a waste for that student, what a waste for our society. So there is more for us to do on college affordability.

But today we are talking about the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. I think we actually make substantial progress in this bill. I want to say how pleased I am with the leadership of Chairman ALEXANDER and the ranking member PATTY MURRAY. They have done an exceptional job of managing this bill through our committee.

We have a very diverse committee. We have the junior Senator from

Vermont on the committee and we have the junior Senator from Kentucky on the committee, and because of Chairman ALEXANDER's leadership and the work and leadership of the ranking member Senator MURRAY, the bill actually passed out of the committee unanimously. Imagine that—around this place, where we can't even agree on how to publish a report or what time we should come to work, we have a committee in the U.S. Congress where Republicans and Democrats unanimously agreed on a bill. Let me tell you, it wasn't easy. If it were easy, we would have done it on time. We would have done it 8 years ago when we were supposed to do it—when our homework was due—but I suppose it is better late than never, and I am very pleased with the product.

There is more I would like to add, but I think—I know the teachers, principals, and school leaders across Colorado need us to fix No Child Left Behind, and I hope we can finally get it done this time.

This bill is a good starting point. It eliminates NCLB's one-size-fits-all approach to education, which we know will not work, and it re-empowers those who are closest to our kids to make the decisions that need to be made for their benefit. This bill includes many key elements. Importantly, it includes the requirement for annual assessment. I know testing is not popular. I have three kids in the Denver Public Schools. My three daughters go to those schools. I get an annual report on what the testing looks like. I believe we are overtesting our kids, but I don't think that is because of the Federal requirement.

I see the Senator from Tennessee.

Does the Senator want to speak?

Mr. ALEXANDER. Just listening.

Mr. BENNET. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think there is a lot we can do to streamline those tests, but it is not the Federal requirement that is causing it, it is the way the Federal requirement works with State assessments and district assessments, and we have to do a better job. I also think we ought to think differently about the testing we are doing for teaching and learning, which needs to be continuous, ongoing, and inform a teacher's instruction and inform the principal's leadership at the school.

The testing that is done for accountability should be a lot less. We heard testimony from the superintendent of the Denver Public Schools, Tom Boasberg, who told us he thought that for accountability purposes, probably all we need is 4 hours a year in reading and math. I know the Bennet girls would settle for that. They would agree with that. They would do that deal. But until somebody comes up with a better way of measuring where kids are, we need the annual assessments. We have to have them because it is the only way you can show growth.

When No Child Left Behind started, it asked and answered a completely ir-

relevant question—a question that was so frustrating to the teachers I knew in the Denver Public Schools and to our principals. It asked: How did this year's fourth graders do compared to last year's fourth graders? This is a completely irrelevant question.

Today, because of the work that has been done in Colorado leading the way, States all over the country now measure the growth of kids. What we ask is, How did this year's sixth graders do compared to how they did as fifth graders, compared to how they did as fourth graders, and compared to everybody else in the State who has a statistically similar test history? Why is that important? Because it allows you to establish growth or show growth. Then one can actually evaluate how well a school is doing, because it used to be in No Child Left Behind, under adequate yearly progress—which asked that long question of how did this year's fourth graders do compared to last year's fourth graders—it used to be we measured what was called status: How proficient were the kids, how lucky were those kids. You might have a school where kids were proficient but were actually losing ground in terms of academic proficiency, and we were rewarding those schools. We were calling those schools blue ribbon schools. There were also schools in poorer parts of town where teachers were killing themselves, students were killing themselves, and they weren't proficient because they started so far behind, but they were getting more than a grade level or two grade levels of increased proficiency during the course of the year. Do you know what those schools were called under No Child Left Behind? Those schools were called failing schools. We called those teachers failing teachers. We called those students failing students, those who were achieving 2 years of growth. Their more affluent peers might have been losing ground, and we were saying they were winners. We have moved past that. This bill now acknowledges that. I wish this bill required growth—which it doesn't—but I believe States and districts will use growth to measure data.

The bill also continues to require that States and districts disaggregate data so we can actually understand where kids are. That is really important. Before No Child Left Behind existed, we had absolutely no idea. Now we know. The hard truth is that kids of color in this country aren't doing nearly as well as Anglo kids in this country. Kids living in poverty aren't doing nearly as well as their middle-class or more affluent peers. We need to do better.

I run into people periodically who say to me that you can't fix it unless you fix poverty. You can't fix the education system unless you fix poverty. Don't tell kids in my city who are living in poverty that that is true. Outside of every one of our schools it says "school." It doesn't say "orphanage." It says "school." We need to make sure

every one of those schools is delivering for every kid in our community, no matter where they come from. Otherwise, what is left of us? What is left of this land of opportunity?

Before No Child Left Behind existed, we had an impression, a vague sense of the inequities in our educational system. Now we understand how deep they are, how rooted they are, and we have to continue to build on the successes we have seen in high-quality schools working in poor neighborhoods that have actually delivered for kids all over the country.

This new bill—and I see the Senator from Texas is here and I will yield to him as soon as he is ready.

The new version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act importantly empowers States to design their accountability systems, giving them more flexibility while ensuring that essential information is included. I think that is an important recognition, led by Chairman ALEXANDER, that there was a real overreach in No Child Left Behind.

As a former school superintendent, I can say I used to wonder all the time why Washington was so mean to our teachers and to our kids. What I have realized since coming here is that it is not that everybody here is mean. They mean well. But this place is the farthest place in the universe—I mean that literally, I don't mean that figuratively—this is the farthest place in the universe from a classroom in the Denver Public Schools or a classroom anywhere in this country, and I think No Child Left Behind in many ways was an overreach. The last thing I want to be told as a superintendent is how to do my work in Denver. I want to insist that we do the work. I want to insist that children all over this country have a chance, no matter what State they are born into, no matter what neighborhood they are born into, but I don't want people here telling people how to do that work. There is a distinction.

I have more to say about this, but I see my friend from Texas is here, so I will yield to him. Before I do, I just congratulate the chairman of the committee who is here on the floor, Senator ALEXANDER from Tennessee, for his extraordinary leadership on this bill.

Again, I remind my colleagues who are listening to this, what a rare—rare—occurrence this is. This is a bill that passed unanimously out of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, and that would not have happened without the leadership of Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER and Senator MURRAY, the Senator from Washington.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Colorado for his graciousness. I come to the floor to speak about this important topic of early elementary education.

I recall that when President George W. Bush was Governor of Texas—of course, education was one of his biggest priorities both at the State and the national level when he became President. He had an interesting observation. He said the more you talk about education, the more people realize you actually care about it. So I actually think it is important to talk about it, that we think our way through this legislation and figure out what we can do to equip our children who are increasingly in a competitive environment, not only locally in our States and Nation but globally.

One of the real joys of the job of a U.S. Senator is getting to visit with students in our State, and I did so last week when I was back home. I met with a group of middle-school students in Amarillo, way up in the Texas Panhandle, at the tail end of a camp teaching students valuable skills in science, technology, engineering, and math, the so-called STEM fields. I was very impressed with what I saw. First of all, the instructors found out how to make this fun, which is an important element in this education because some of this stuff can be pretty dry and boring, if my memory serves me correctly. They were literally building robots, and then they presented their final projects to parents and teachers in a friendly competition. Needless to say, I wish I had that kind of instruction. Maybe I wouldn't have veered into the legal profession. I would have done something more productive in a field of science. I am saying that with a tongue planted firmly in cheek, of course. But I wish I had instructors who would have inspired me to learn more about those important topics by using these sorts of tools.

I also previously visited, for example, United High School in Laredo, where I was able to meet with high school students who were taking part in a first-of-its-kind program that teaches curriculum specific to the oil and gas industry in the region. Why is that? Well, because the shale plays in Texas are the source—the reservoirs really—this huge volume of oil and natural gas is being produced from. Lo and behold, it is not just producing income for the people who are drilling those wells and completing them, it is creating a lot of jobs. What these students and the school districts, such as United High School in Laredo, have discovered is that this is really an opportunity for these students in high school to begin to learn some of the basics of petroleum engineering and other things that will prepare them for good, well-paying jobs later in life.

This program included internships, training, and dual-credit courses at a local community college. These students were going to high school, but they were actually getting college credit at the same time at the local community college. Of course, they were getting real-world skills that they need to succeed in a burgeoning indus-

try once they graduate. Importantly, graduates from the program will have, as I said, access to high-paying, good jobs right out of high school, which, unfortunately, the history has been in Laredo, TX, in South Texas, that that hasn't always been the case.

So this is a very hopeful development, thanks to the innovation in the oil and gas industry and thanks to the foresight and the genius, really, of the local school district there in Laredo, TX.

This is a great example of how local communities and the economy can work to shape education and provide a win-win opportunity for students, local industries, and the greater community. United High School was able to create this program because it had the freedom and flexibility to develop its own curriculum with tailored input from local leaders, teachers, parents, and industry leaders—the people who create jobs and who are looking for people with discrete skills that they would then bring to the table to provide the workforce they need.

This groundbreaking program in Laredo was not thought up here in Washington, DC. It is a product of local ingenuity and a community response to the educational needs specific to its students. I think this type of mindset is very important in education because, as we have learned over the years, the bureaucracy in Washington can't tailor programs that will suit the needs of children in a wide variety of school districts across our States and across the country—not in Laredo, not in Amarillo, and not anywhere else in the country.

That is why I am happy this week that the Senate is considering legislation that will help return a large measure of the responsibility for our children's education to those closest to them—their parents, their teachers, the local school boards—and not so much the Federal Government. The Federal Government does have an interest and we as Americans all have an interest in being able to compete in a global environment and in high standards, those that will cause our students to strive to attain skills that they can use to compete anywhere in the world. But in terms of its actual implementation, I am pleased that this legislation will push more of those decisions out of Washington and back home to local school districts and parents.

This legislation is, of course, called the Every Child Achieves Act. It provides a roadmap to ensure that our children receive and retain a quality education. By giving the responsibility for actually implementing programs that will help students achieve these high standards—it will give each State and the districts the flexibility they need to design and implement their education programs and systems.

This is really sort of another application of what Louis Brandeis called the "laboratories of democracy" when he was referring to the State government.

I think he was referring to that important principle of our Constitution known as federalism, as ensconced in the 10th amendment in particular.

There is an irreplaceable role that the Federal Government plays in some aspects of our life. National security is perhaps the preeminent one. But there is a lot of benefit to getting some experiments at the State level, and then we can learn without imposing a one-size-fits-all approach from Washington, DC. What works best? Then we can then learn and be informed by those practices in a way that improves the result. I am thinking of criminal justice reform as another example in my State, where we were an early participant in prison reform, which now has formed some of the basis for bipartisan legislation that we are considering here in the Senate.

Because of the successful laboratory experiments back in Texas and Rhode Island and other States, we are now taking those best practices and those results and figuring out how we apply those to the benefit of other parts of the country.

Under this legislation, States such as Texas can decide how to use federally mandated test results to assess performance of students, schools, and teachers. This gives the States much needed relief from pressure to teach to the test—something I hear over and over again back home, that teachers are finding that rather than a program where they teach STEM subjects using robots and inspire young, creative minds to engage and learn the science they need in order to play these sorts of games in a competition with robots, teachers are finding themselves in a position of teaching to the test in sort of a mind-numbing process that nobody would find particularly inspiring. So this takes some pressure from that teach-to-the-test mentality and also gives States additional freedom to provide students with a well-rounded education.

Put simply, with this legislation, States can decide for themselves what standards they need to adopt, and, importantly, this legislation limits the power of the Secretary of Education to ensure that the Federal Government cannot dictate, direct, or control State curriculum or standards.

How insulting is it to have the States come on bended knee to the Secretary of Education and ask: Will you please let us have a waiver so we can try this creative or innovative way of delivering an education to our students back home? How insulting is that and how contrary to the original scheme of our government as created by our Founders.

So this bill, which was unanimously passed out of committee—and I congratulate the chairman, Senator ALEXANDER, and the ranking member, Senator MURRAY, and all members of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee for voting out this bill unanimously. This is a great bipartisan

process which has produced a very good product. It is also just one of more than 150 bills reported out of Senate committees so far this year—another sign that the Senate is back to work for the American people.

I look forward to continuing the great progress we have made in this Senate by getting real education reform passed soon.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

AMENDMENT NO. 2085

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to urge all of my colleagues to support the Reed-Cochran amendment to encourage States and school districts to integrate school library programs into their plans for improving student academic achievement.

I would first like to thank Senator COCHRAN for his longstanding partnership in supporting school libraries. He has been a steadfast champion for ensuring that students have access to these vital resources.

Fifty years ago, when President Lyndon Johnson urged Congress to enact what would become the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, he specifically called for an investment in school libraries, saying that school libraries were simply “limping along” and insisting that we do better. Sadly, this “limping along” is still true for too many communities in our United States.

This spring, the Washington Post ran articles on the inequitable access to school libraries in public schools in our Nation’s Capital, reporting that one school library in a wealthy part of town had 28,000 books in a library that spanned two floors, while 12 miles away, in a school in a poorer part of the town, the school library had only 300 books along two walls. If that is not a stark example of one of the things we hope we can fix through this act, I cannot think of anything more direct and to the point.

Recently, noted author James Patterson made a pledge to help school libraries. More than 28,000 applications came in.

One librarian reported that school libraries in her State had not received any funding for three-quarters of a decade and that their collections and equipment were out of date and in disrepair. I suspect she is not alone in making such a report. We see this neglect despite the fact that evidence shows that effective school library programs, staffed by a certified school librarian, have a positive impact on student achievement.

While I would like to see a much more robust school library-focused initiative included in the reauthorization, along the lines of the bill I introduced with Senator COCHRAN, I am very pleased that the underlying bill includes an authorization for competitive grants to help high-need school districts strengthen and enhance effective

library programs. However, we need to do more to encourage States and school districts to integrate school library programs into their overall instructional programs.

Effective school library programs are essential supports to educational success. If you understand how to use the library in school, that is not a skill that goes away; in fact, it will be a skill for the rest of your life that you will use time and time again, not only for your pleasure but for your progress and the progress of your family. Knowing how to find and use information is an essential skill for college, careers, and life in general. A good school librarian, staffed by a trained school librarian, is where students develop and hone those skills.

The Reed-Cochran amendment will encourage States and school districts to ensure that students have access to effective school library programs.

Once again, I thank my colleague, Senator COCHRAN.

I urge my colleagues to vote yes on this bipartisan amendment.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

AMENDMENT NO. 2078

Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, I rise today to speak on my amendment to the Every Child Achieves Act, which is amendment No. 2078. I would like to thank Senator UDALL for joining me in supporting this important amendment.

Since my time working in the South Dakota State Legislature and also as Governor of South Dakota, education in Indian Country has faced incredible obstacles, especially in rural and high-poverty areas. This is true not only in my State but across the entire Nation. Because of these barriers, 10 out of 13 Bureau of Indian Education high schools in South Dakota have graduation rates below 67 percent, and 6 of those schools have graduation rates at or below 40 percent. Meanwhile, the national high school graduation rate is 80 percent. These graduation rates must be changed, and my amendment will help lay a foundation to fix the systemic problems Indian Country faces.

To address these concerns as well as other States’ concerns, an analysis needs to be conducted to more closely examine these educational downfalls. So today we are proposing an amendment to the Every Child Achieves Act that would direct the Departments of Interior and Education to both study and create strategies to address these challenges. This amendment is being supported by the National Indian Education Association, the Great Plains Tribal Chairman’s Association, and the National Education Association.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, amendment No. 2078 will have no impact on Federal spending.

This amendment would require the Departments of Interior and Education to conduct a study in rural and poverty-stricken areas of Indian Country in order to identify Federal barriers

that restrict tribes from implementing commonsense regional policies instead of a one-size-fits-all policy directed from Washington. It requires that they identify recruitment and retention options for teachers and school administrators and identify the limitations in the funding source and flexibility for schools that receive these funds. It would study and provide a strategy on how to increase high school graduation rates.

It is critical that we identify the limitations and barriers which tribal schools face and lay out a strategy to fix those problems. I hope my colleagues will join Senator UDALL and me in supporting this straightforward amendment to help our students in Indian Country.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, while we wait on another colleague, I thought I would talk about another aspect of this bill that I think is very important.

For the first time in this country’s history, finally, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is going to require districts to report actual per-pupil expenditures, which will shed light on extraordinary funding inequities in this country.

We are one of three countries in the OECD, because of the way we fund our public schools in the United States, that actually spends more money on more affluent kids than we do on kids living in poverty. That is not well understood, but that is a fact. That is the truth.

We need to be concerned with closing the achievement gap in the United States, because if we look at the academic outcomes for kids in this country and extrapolate those outcomes against the changing demographics in the United States, we are not going to like what we see in the middle of the 21st century if we don’t make these changes. One would think, if anything, that we would be spending more money on kids living in poverty, coming from disadvantaged backgrounds than we do on kids coming from advantaged backgrounds. But we do the opposite in the United States, and the Congress, for decades, has looked the other way.

I believe we need to close this loophole. It is called the comparability loophole. We don’t do that in this legislation, but at least the requirement where we move to reporting based on actual rather than average expenditures is an important step in the right direction.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, it is my understanding the Senate is still considering remarks with respect to the education legislation that is pending before the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

AMENDMENT NO. 2085

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I am coming at this issue from a unique perspective. Both of my parents were schoolteachers. As I was growing up in Mississippi, my father was county superintendent of education of the largest public school system in Mississippi for several years. My mother was a mathematics educator, teacher. They had both earned graduate degrees as well as undergraduate degrees from colleges and universities in our State of Mississippi. My brother and I had the good fortune of growing up in this environment of learning and reading.

So I have to confess I am biased in support of legislation that helps to strengthen the capability of our Nation's teachers and school administrators in providing opportunities for not only reading but complex learning at early ages, which would have been surprising to those of that generation to look around and observe the great strides we are making in education throughout America.

Growing up with this perspective and my appreciation of the importance of good teachers in our schools makes me understand perhaps more than most the importance that education serves in the lives of students, their teachers, and their communities where they grow up.

When I was a student, I went to the library to check out a book. Now, there are all kinds of ways to get in touch with the written words. Today, our school librarians are more often specialists with education and specific training that help students learn how to access educational material in every manner in which education is available in an increasingly digital society. Children who know how to read and are comfortable using information technology are more likely to grow up with a capacity to learn throughout their lifetimes.

The amendment I have offered with my good friend, the senior Senator from Rhode Island, seeks to help equip school librarians to do an even better job. Our amendment would allow schools throughout the country to use Federal funds in the way they see fit to strengthen their libraries. My hope is that the use of these additional funds will improve education and literacy among children throughout America.

It is my understanding the bill managers support this amendment. I appreciate very much not only the good assistance and friendship of Senator REED but his help specifically with this legislation.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I come here today to speak about the bill pending before us, the Every Child Achieves Act. This is the successor to the No Child Left Behind Act, which is the successor to the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Fifty years ago, in 1965, as part of Lyndon Johnson's wanting to end poverty in the United States of America and to lift people up, he asked Congress to pass the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It was the first legislative act where the Federal Government was involved in education. Up until that time, education was thought of as the purview of the States and local districts. President Johnson agreed with that, as did the Congress, but at the same time they knew there were children living in the abysmal situation of poverty, and at a time of national prosperity he wanted to lift those children up.

Great legislation passed during the next 50 years ago, such as Head Start, which continues to be a hallmark of early intervention to help our children. Of course, programs such as Medicare were also passed at that time. But it was the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and particularly title I, that would bring additional Federal resources to our local communities. Again, this was focused on helping poor children close the achievement gap and giving them the ability to fully participate in our society.

Well, that bill went on until 2001, when President Bush said he wanted to make sure that children were out of poverty. President George Bush said: I am a compassionate conservative. I am concerned about the soft bigotry of low expectations of poor children, particularly poor children of color, and we have to do something about it. That brought about the experiments that occurred in the States relating to metrics and so on for highly qualified teachers, using words such as "evidence-based," and we passed No Child Left Behind.

What happened, though, instead of helping poor children—we had many successes. We did face the fact that we did have low expectations. There was a soft bigotry. We agreed with the wonderful comments of Secretary Condoleezza Rice that were spoken at the Republican National Convention when she said that education is the civil rights issue of this time.

Now, what do we have here? We have a bipartisan effort led by Senators ALEXANDER and MURRAY to come up with yet one more reform of this historic legislative framework. I support their efforts. I want to salute their efforts. What they were able to do in this bill was to focus again on helping poor

children achieve and supporting State and local governments not with intervention but with assistance in order to help.

We do know that one of the legacies of having metrics was that we so regulated our teachers to make teaching almost inflexible, and we started to race for the tests instead of racing for the top. I believe the efforts of Senators ALEXANDER and MURRAY deal with the mistakes of No Child Left Behind and move ahead to close that achievement gap.

I support the general framework of this legislation. I am proud of the additions I have made to this bill, one of which was to really make sure there were allowable uses for something called wraparound or integrated services. While we insisted there be highly qualified teachers in the classroom, the teachers cannot deal with poverty. They cannot deal with the fact that 30 percent of our children who come to school every day are homeless. They have no home. The school is their educational home. They need a social worker. They need a school nurse. The mental health challenges of many of our children are astounding. So we were able to add that in.

The other thing is we were overlooking a national treasure. I was a big supporter of something called the Javits bill. Senator Javits of New York many years ago realized we had an overlooked treasure in our communities, and it was the gifted and talented children, children who are of exceptional educational capacity.

Again, coming back to the words of George Bush, there is that soft bigotry of low expectations. We often come with a latent bias that we don't believe poor children are smart. We don't believe—many times because of latent bias or overt bias—that they are capable of achieving. What I moved in this bill was, under title II, once again, acknowledgment that in poor schools with poor children, there are gifted and talented kids, many of whom have been identified by outstanding programs—in my own State, the Johns Hopkins school for gifted and talented children. We were able to put that in the bill.

I look forward to moving this bill forward because I believe we support our teachers, we once again deal with low-performing schools, and at the same time we provide administrative and local flexibility so that we minimize national mandates and maximize local achievement.

I salute Senators MURRAY and ALEXANDER. I know there are some amendments which will be pending, such as Burr to title I, which I will oppose because every county in my State loses money and will lose up to \$40 million.

I note that the hour of noon is arriving and that a vote will soon be underway. I look forward to supporting the bill, provided that the Burr amendment is not included.

I salute Senator ALEXANDER for his leadership and for encouraging bipartisan participation. I thank Senator

MURRAY for her leadership and for including so many of these important reforms in our bill.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Maryland for her remarks, her contributions to our committee, her bipartisan leadership, and her effective leadership both in higher education and in elementary and secondary education.

I enjoyed listening to the remarks of the Senator from Colorado, the former Denver school superintendent, who has added so much to our committee.

I congratulate the Senator from Mississippi for his contribution to the amendment on which we are about to vote.

We will have one rollcall vote on the Reed-Cochran amendment, and then we will have two votes following that, which will be voice votes.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 2085

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). Under the previous order, the question now occurs on amendment No. 2085, offered by the Senator from Washington, Mrs. MURRAY, for Mr. REED.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 98, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 222 Leg.]

YEAS—98

Alexander	Durbin	McCaskill
Ayotte	Enzi	McConnell
Baldwin	Ernst	Menendez
Barrasso	Feinstein	Merkley
Bennet	Fischer	Mikulski
Blumenthal	Flake	Moran
Blunt	Franken	Murkowski
Booker	Gardner	Murphy
Boozman	Gillibrand	Murray
Boxer	Graham	Nelson
Brown	Grassley	Paul
Burr	Hatch	Perdue
Cantwell	Heinrich	Peters
Capito	Heitkamp	Portman
Cardin	Heller	Reed
Carper	Hirono	Reid
Casey	Hoeven	Risch
Cassidy	Inhofe	Roberts
Coats	Isakson	Rounds
Cochran	Johnson	Sanders
Collins	Kaine	Sasse
Coons	Kirk	Schatz
Corker	Klobuchar	Schumer
Cornyn	Lankford	Scott
Cotton	Leahy	Sessions
Crapo	Lee	Shaheen
Cruz	Manchin	Shelby
Daines	Markey	Stabenow
Donnelly	McCain	Sullivan

Tester	Udall	Whitehouse
Thune	Vitter	Wicker
Tillis	Warner	Wyden
Toomey	Warren	

NOT VOTING—2

King Rubio

The amendment (No. 2085) was agreed to.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 2086

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question now occurs on agreeing to amendment No. 2086, offered by the Senator from Washington, Mrs. MURRAY, for Mr. WARNER.

The amendment (No. 2086) was agreed to.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 2078

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question now occurs on agreeing to amendment No. 2078, offered by the Senator from Tennessee, Mr. ALEXANDER, for Mr. ROUNDS.

The amendment (No. 2078) was agreed to.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:48 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. SCOTT).

EVERY CHILD ACHIEVES ACT OF 2015—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the distinguished Senator from the State of Ohio, Mr. BROWN, be recognized at the conclusion of my remarks.

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

TRAGEDY IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, before I make my remarks, I would like to commend the Presiding Officer and Senator GRAHAM and the people of the great State of South Carolina on the way they have handled the terrible tragedy that took place in their State.

I know time and again we have all heard on the floor of the Senate and in conversations we have had in private the amazing mercy and grace shown by the families of the victims of the terrible tragedy that took place, but equally as well the great way in which the elected officials in the State of South Carolina, led by the Presiding Officer and Senator GRAHAM, have caused a terrible event to be a learning experience for all of America and an example for the way in which tragedy should be dealt with. I want the Presiding Officer to know how much I personally appreciate it, but I know I speak on behalf of all of the people of Georgia as well.

Mr. President, I will speak briefly about two subjects.

Mr. President, I am one of the two people left in the Congress who had

something to do with No Child Left Behind. The other one is JOHN BOEHNER, the Speaker of the House. I will never forget that night in 2001, in the basement of the Capitol, after the conference committee finally came to an agreement on No Child Left Behind—us talking about how proud we were of what we had done but more how we knew that if we did not get it fixed by the end of the sixth year, it would go from being a positive change in education to a negative.

It is now 13 years later. We have gone 7 years without a reauthorization. What became a good goal of meeting adequate yearly progress, setting standards for schools, and remediating schools that were in trouble has become a bill where 80 percent of the school systems in America have to ask for waivers to even operate. It is a bill that no longer is doing what it was intended to do for the education of our children.

I commend Senator ALEXANDER and Senator MURRAY for the unbelievably good work they have done to bring the new reform of the ESEA to the floor of the Senate today. I participated in all the hearings, as did the Presiding Officer. The Presiding Officer knows what I know: that we brought about compromise and common sense. We created a bill that is good for children, good for educators, and good for America.

First and foremost, it gets us out of the national school board business, which is Chairman ALEXANDER's favorite statement for the Department of Education.

People forget that the U.S. Department of Education is not mentioned anywhere in the Constitution of the United States. It is mentioned in two places. One is in title I in the Civil Rights Act of the 1960s when we provided funds for free and reduced-price lunches for poor students to give them a leg up and second in 1978 when, in the Carter administration, we passed what was known as Public Law 94-192, which created special needs children benefits or what is known as the Individuals with Disabilities Act. Those are the only two places in statute that the Federal Government has a role. Senator MURRAY and Senator ALEXANDER have seen to it that we recognize that fact.

We enhance education where we are supposed to, but we turn it back over to the States, where it belongs and where it should be.

Secondly, one of the big buzzwords in bad brand labels that have taken place in education is Common Core. Common Core is a lot of things to a lot of people, but most importantly for many people it is a Federal mandate of standards, it is a homogenization of standards, and it is a mandate the American people do not like.

This bill ensures there will be no Common Core mandate by the Federal Government to the States and ensures local control of curriculum from beginning to end.