

a suspected terrorist, or someone who has recently been under investigation for terrorism, from buying a gun. It is also common sense that assault weapons designed for the battlefield have no place on our streets, in our schools, in our churches, or in our communities. I have moved and supported an assault weapons ban for this simple reason.

These changes make sense, and they fix glaring vulnerabilities in our system. This is not about politics. This is about keeping Americans safe. This is about stepping up and taking action and not just resigning ourselves to the repeated call for moments of silence, tragedy after tragedy. I am a responsible gun owner, and I do not take this issue lightly. I have fought for years to pass these commonsense measures, and I will continue to do so.

Americans have shown throughout the course of history that we can live up to the principles of freedom, equality, and liberty that have guided us for so long. Now is the time to stand defiantly against the petty politics of fear. Despite what others may say, we are a great nation. Now is the time for Congress to act to pass commonsense measures that have languished for too long and could save American lives.

BUDGET COMMITTEE COST ESTIMATE—S. 2837

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I wish to offer for the RECORD the Budget Committee's cost estimate of S. 2837, the Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2017.

The reported measure provides \$56.3 billion in discretionary budget authority for fiscal year 2017, which will result in discretionary outlays of \$64.4 billion.

The reported bill matches its section 302(b) allocation set forth in S. Rept. 114-273 for budget authority for both the security and nonsecurity categories, and matches the 302(b) allocation for outlays.

The bill is not subject to any budget-related points of order.

I ask unanimous consent that the table displaying the Budget Committee scoring of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 2837, 2017 COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS—SPENDING COMPARISONS—SENATE-REPORTED BILL

(Fiscal Year 2017, \$ millions)

	Budget Authority		Outlays	
	Security	Nonsecurity	Total	Total
Senate-reported bill:	5,117	51,168	56,285	64,409
Senate 302(b) allocation:	5,117	51,168	56,285	64,409
2016 Enacted:	5,101	50,621	55,722	63,872
President's request:	5,102	49,522	54,624	64,468
SENATE-REPORTED BILL COMPARED TO:				
Senate 302(b) allocation:	0	0	0	0
2016 Enacted:	16	547	563	537
President's request:	15	1,646	1,661	-59

NOTE: Details may not add to totals due to rounding.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, Senator MURRAY and I rise today to speak about our shared concerns with language included in this year's National Defense Authorization Act, NDAA.

Section 578 of this year's National Defense Authorization Act, NDAA, is an inappropriate place from which to impose mandates on nearly 20,000 public elementary and secondary schools in 1,225 public school districts across the country.

Legislative language is included in the NDAA this year that dictates disruptive policies on public schools that would create a complicated and confusing system where one school system follows established background checks under State or local law, while a neighboring county must now comply with a new unfunded Federal mandate. This language should not be included in the final version of this bill.

The U.S. Senate takes seriously the goal of ensuring the safety of the more than 50 million children in our 100,000 public schools, including federally connected children. These issues have been and should be discussed, debated, and legislated within the appropriate committees of jurisdiction. Measures related to education are within the jurisdiction of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee under Rule XXV of the Standing Rules of the Senate, as well as within the jurisdiction of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce under Rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives for the 114th Congress.

So while it may be appropriate for the Armed Services Committee to dictate background check policies for the 172 schools operated by the Department of Defense, it is not appropriate to use the authorization bill for the Department of Defense to impose mandates on nearly 20,000 public elementary and secondary schools in 1,225 public school districts across the country.

These 20,000 public schools, out of 100,000 total, are being singled out because they receive "Impact Aid" funds from the Federal Government under title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, ESEA, of 1965. The purpose of the program is to "fulfill the Federal responsibility to assist with the provision of educational services to federally connected children in a manner that promotes control by local educational agencies with little or no Federal or State involvement."

According to the Government Accountability Office, 46 States already require background checks of some kind for all public school employees, and 42 States have established professional standards or codes of conduct for school personnel. Section 578 of the NDAA would create confusion for all those States and localities, as they are forced to navigate two sets of potentially conflicting background checks policies.

As chairman and ranking members of the Senate HELP Committee, Senator MURRAY and I worked tirelessly last year to pass a long-overdue reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Our law, called the Every Student Succeeds Act, addressed the issue of background checks.

I now want to yield to my colleague, Mrs. MURRAY, to speak on this issue.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I thank the Chairman of the HELP Committee, Senator ALEXANDER, for his comments.

I share his concerns that section 578 of the National Defense Authorization Act bill is not the right way to ensure students can learn in safe and secure school environments, and will impose unfair and unreasonable requirements on more than 1,200 schools districts across the country. Criminal background checks are a critically important means to ensure that students are safe in our schools, and that is why they are required in 46 States. But the language of section 578 will force the 1,225 school districts that receive Impact Aid funds—and which are in almost every State—to have two separate criminal background check systems for different schools and different employees within a single school district. It is costly, duplicative, poorly conceived, and should not be part of a Defense authorization bill.

In my State of Washington 628 schools, about a quarter of our public schools, receive Impact Aid funds and would be subject to a separate expensive set of background checks that differs from the background checks already conducted. In the chairman's State, 571 schools receive Impact Aid funds and would be subject to this different standard. It is fundamentally unfair and not beneficial to students to ask our schools and our school districts to assume the costs of these checks, which are similar to but not exactly the same as those already conducted in our States.