

unwavering support in working with me on this resolution.

It has been said that no nation can get ahead if it leaves half of its people behind, and in the 21st century, wherever women are respected and treated as equals, we excel, as the Presiding Officer knows, as legislators, as scientists, as entrepreneurs, artists, inventors, warriors, and in every other field. But the harsh reality remains that women make up some 51 percent of the world's population, yet we account for an estimated 70 percent of those living in poverty and two-thirds of those denied even a basic education.

So on this International Women's Day, we celebrate women's achievements, and we rededicate ourselves to achieving an equal voice, equal participation, and equal rights for all women. We also acknowledge that we still have much difficult work ahead of us.

Research tells us that women and girls' equality can be transformational for their communities and for entire countries, yet in some of the poorest parts of the world—and even in some wealthier countries—women and girls continue to be held back by injustices such as child marriage, sexual and domestic violence, denial of education, and lack of access to contraception and maternal healthcare.

In recent years, we have learned more about the intersection of so many of these issues that affect women. When girls are forced into early marriage, when women are denied contraception and have children at a very young age, this typically ends any chance to gain an education and income-earning employment. This lack of economic influence means that women remain powerless within their families and, too often, within their communities. And this, in turn, can lead to violence against women and the denial of women's most basic human and civil rights.

The good news is that this same interconnectedness can work to empower women and to lift up communities. When women and girls' rights are respected, when we have access to education and family planning services, this unleashes women's ability to participate equally in the community, in the workplace, and even in the political arena.

Indeed, we can now quantify so many of the positive ripple effects. For example, each additional year of education increases a woman's income by 25 percent. We know that children born to educated mothers are twice as likely to survive past the age of 5. By mobilizing the talents of the previously neglected half of the population—in too many places—we create more stable societies and more rapid economic development.

For decades, the United States has been a world leader in advancing and protecting the rights of women and girls around the world, including their access to contraception and family planning. In particular, I want to applaud the excellent work of the State

Department's Office of Global Women's Issues. I am sponsoring legislation in this session to give this office permanent authorization, with an ambassador leading it.

However, on this International Women's Day, we must also acknowledge actions to abdicate America's leadership role in advancing women's rights. Indeed, both at home and abroad, the Trump administration has exhibited a dangerous obsession with rolling back women's reproductive rights. President Trump has promised to nominate Supreme Court Justices who will overturn *Roe v. Wade*. He has joined with some of the Republican leaders in Congress in pledging to terminate funding for Planned Parenthood.

In one of his first official acts, the President signed an Executive order reinstating and expanding the Mexico City policy, also known as the global gag rule. This rule prohibits U.S. financial aid to many international organizations that offer contraception and comprehensive family planning services to women.

As if the reinstatement of this policy weren't bad enough, the administration's Executive order dramatically expanded the policy to apply to all U.S.-funded global health programs—so not just family planning and counseling programs. But we believe that this expansion will include our HIV/AIDS program, known as PEPFAR, which has been so positive in saving so many lives in Africa. It was started by George W. Bush. We also think it will affect initiatives that fund the fights against the Ebola and Zika outbreaks, and this puts at risk 15 times more funding and millions more women and their families around the world.

Taken together, all of these actions by the new administration I believe amount to an assault on the safety and well-being of women and girls across the globe.

I have joined with Senator SUSAN COLLINS, Senator LISA MURKOWSKI, and 45 other Senators in introducing bipartisan legislation to permanently repeal the global gag rule. I believe—and it is well documented—that this is a misguided policy that ignores decades of research.

We shouldn't allow extreme ideology to triumph over the urgent practical needs of women across the world. The facts make clear that when family planning services are accessible and contraceptives are affordable, rates of unplanned pregnancies and abortions go down.

According to the World Health Organization, there is an estimated 225 million women in the world who would like access to family planning services, and we know that makes a difference. Here in the United States, the abortion rate has dropped to the lowest level since 1943, a success that is directly attributable to the reduced cost sharing for contraception under the Affordable Care Act. I can attest to that because in New Hampshire, we have one of the

lowest incidences of teen pregnancy in the country.

In January, we saw millions of women, men, and children, turn out for marches in Washington, New York, London, Nairobi, Tokyo, in my home capital of Concord, NH, and in dozens of other cities across the country and around the world. I think we can look at that as an early celebration of International Women's Day because what we heard from those marching was that we were marching in defense of the rights of American women, of Muslim women, of women of color, and of all women and girls across the globe.

The world heard our message loudly and clearly. We will not allow our reproductive rights and our human rights to be taken away. We will not allow women to be targeted for discrimination. We will not be taken backward.

That was our message in January, and it is our message on this International Women's Day. We have fought long and hard for equal rights and equal treatment here in the United States.

We are also celebrating women here in the United States. We have many women who have taken the day off to recognize the role that women play that is so significant in our society, and many of us are also wearing red to demonstrate that. So on this day of celebration and solidarity, we are determined to go forward to build on the progress of recent decades, and we rededicate ourselves to achieving respect, equality, and justice for every woman in every community and every country across the globe.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 84) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 2017

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10 a.m., Thursday, March 9; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and that morning business be closed; finally, that 30 minutes of the majority time on H.J. Res. 57 be under the control of Senator BLUNT or his designee.

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

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL
DISAPPROVAL OF A RULE SUB-
MITTED BY THE DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION—Continued

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of Senators LANKFORD and WARREN.

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

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, in December of 2015, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act after it passed this body with overwhelming bipartisan support—85 of 100 Senators supported the bill. The Wall Street Journal called the Every Student Succeeds Act “the largest devolution of federal control to the states in a quarter-century.” It also had the support of Governors, State legislators, chief State school officers, school district superintendents, local school boards, principals, and teachers unions, who all agreed on the need to replace No Child Left Behind.

The core of the education reform in the Every Student Succeeds Act was to restore local control to the States—not just control for them but that they would have the responsibility and the authority for things such as school accountability, teacher evaluation, student evaluation. It is very clear. In fact, the Every Student Succeeds Act says things very specifically. States are solely responsible for choosing which standards to adopt. The Secretary cannot mandate, direct, or control State standards. The Secretary of Education cannot require, coerce, or incentivize States to adopt common core State standards. States are responsible for choosing which assessments to adopt. The Secretary of Education cannot mandate, direct, or control State assessments for education. States design their own system for holding schools accountable and decide which schools to identify for school intervention and support. The Secretary cannot add new requirements or criteria on State accountability systems that are not in the law. States and local school districts decide what strategies they will implement to help fix identified schools without Federal interference. The Secretary of Education cannot prescribe how States and local school districts improve those schools.

Congress passed that clear education law to take power out of Washington, DC, and from the Department of Education and the Secretary of Education and hand it back to the States.

Five months after the bill was signed, the Obama administration changed their mind and released regulations to take back school decision-making and accountability, in direct violation of the law.

Eighty-five of one hundred of us agreed that our passion is for every

school district, every parent, every State to take care of every child; that no child would be left behind by switching to local control rather than Federal centralized control. But when this new rule was put out by the Obama administration, they reinterpreted that clear law. Let me tell you what they said in the rule.

In the rule, they dictate to States the consequences for schools that don't annually test at least 95 percent of their students.

They prescribe to the States and school districts how they would intervene and improve schools that don't exit from this identification process of being an underperforming school.

They limit how States may measure school quality or student success based on 4-year graduation rates.

They define how much weight States must afford to non-test-based indicators in their accountability systems.

This regulation prescribes the long-term goals and measurements of progress that States would use for their student subgroups.

This new regulation prescribes when schools may exit from comprehensive support based on improvement.

This new regulation mandates that States comply with specific Washington, DC, created requirements instead of letting the school districts or the States determine how best to proceed on those requirements.

This new regulation limits how States award school improvement funding to school districts and schools.

This new regulation adds a new and burdensome reporting requirement every 4 years on States and local school districts that will drive up compliance costs and will divert resources away from students in the classrooms, in direct violation of what we passed.

This new regulation requires States to establish a statewide definition for “ineffective teacher,” requiring a statewide system of evaluation controlled by DC.

This new regulation limits how students are scored when they have exited from special education.

This new regulation controls how the school report cards are created and how long they are.

This is what we were exiting from with No Child Left Behind. We said in that vote for Every Student Succeeds that Washington, DC, should not do this. This rule directly violated the spirit and the letter of the law and will put the new Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, in charge of school evaluation, teacher evaluation, and student success. That is not her role or the intent of this law when we passed it, regardless of who is the Secretary of Education. Our intent was to provide maximum flexibility for the States and the parents. The rule is central control from Washington, DC.

It is essential that we stop this rule right now. While some of my colleagues have said: Let's just wait, and we will do regulations, and we will unwind

some of this—they are basically admitting that the Trump administration will fix the Obama administration overreach. I understand that statement. I think there will be some unwinding of regulations, but here is why it must be done right now—two reasons. One is, when we do this right now with a Congressional Review Act, we settle this forever, that no administration ever, as long as this law is in place, can repromulgate a rule and turn right back around and say Washington, DC, is going to control teacher evaluation, student success evaluation, and school evaluation. This ends that forever.

The second thing is, right now schools in Oklahoma have already diverted resources in their administration, and they are filling out forms that are due to Washington, DC, in April to fulfill this new requirement that was put down by the administration. If we don't end this now, the districts in Oklahoma and in all of the States represented by this great Senate—their administrators will be working on forms for Washington, DC, rather than educating children at home. Let's get those folks back in the classroom, working on things that matter, not some form that no one in Washington, DC, will read anyway. Why don't we allow our schools to focus on educating kids instead of filling out forms for the Secretary of Education? That is the reason we passed the Every Student Succeeds Act.

I encourage this body to support H.J. Res. 57 when it comes up. This will fix this overreach and will put a permanent marker down to say we meant it when Congress said to the administration: Do not control local education. Let the States and the parents do it.

With that, I yield back.

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

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

The Senator from Massachusetts.

NOMINATION OF SEEMA VERMA AND THE
REPUBLICAN HEALTHCARE BILL

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I rise today to urge my colleagues to vote against the confirmation of Seema Verma to serve as Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

CMS oversees the administration of the Medicare and Medicaid Programs. These programs provide healthcare coverage to grandparents, people with disabilities, foster kids, seniors living in nursing homes, single mothers, and babies. CMS is also in charge of implementing many parts of the Affordable Care Act and making sure that the protections guaranteed in the law are enforced.