and not allow us to retain the fuel as we should—there are outrageous stories of them not allowing the prices to be posted or the pumps to be put in. There are only 1,200 ethanol pumps in this country and 330 of them are in my State. The cost is $2,500 to $5,000. I will work to change that in the next Congress. Some of these pumps are going to move forward with biomass and with our own energy, we have to allow this industry to develop.

When I talk to farmers across our State, what they like most about the 2002 Farm Bill is the safety net and the way it worked. It worked well for the first time in a long time. What we did with this farm bill was basically allow that safety net to stay in place and also rebalance the commodity programs to be more equitable for some northern crops such as wheat, oats, barley, soybeans, and canola.

I met with our wheat and barley growers a few hours ago. They are one of the many groups that care a lot about this. Again, they revitalized a lot of the areas of our State that had been troubled because of the fact that we have a thriving rural economy.

Another top priority for Minnesota farmers was creating a permanent program for disaster assistance. I thank Senator BAUCUS and the Finance Committee for their work in this area. Farmers are tired of coming back to Congress every year with a tin cup. We have been hit by drought, flooding, and everything in between. They had to wait for 3 years for Congress to pass the ad hoc disaster relief bill, and the permanent program of disaster relief will give farmers the security they need to move forward.

I urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who are from farm States to think about the importance of this disaster program for their States.

The farm bill is not, as we know, just about the commodity programs and the safety net. It is also about energy. It is also, as I mentioned, about biofuels. I mentioned the catastrophic tax subsidies that are so important. It also includes bipartisan legislation Senator CRAPO and I introduced to double the mandatory funding for the Biodiesel Education Program. Spreading the word about biodiesel to drivers and gas stations is very important if we are going to help that industry. Again, I urge every Senator who wants less dependence on foreign oil to look at the energy portion of this farm bill.

One of the trends that has plagued our rural communities in the last decade or so is the inability for younger people to get involved in farming. The committee accepted my amendment to include mentorship and outreach for new farmers and training in business planning and credit building—the skills they need to succeed and to stay on the land. If you are concerned because you have seen fewer and fewer young people going into farming in your State, I urge you to move this bill forward.

As I said, there are a lot of good things for Minnesota and for our country in this farm bill. There is, however, one area that needs reform and that is the conservation Title. That was a problem called a take-it-or-leave-it at conservation, for the nutrition title, where we are finally promoting our fruits and vegetables and are doing new things to promote more healthy kids—these are all things that are different about this farm bill. If we rest on our laurels and don’t do anything new, we are not going to be able to move in the direction we want for the energy revolution in this country.

When my daughter did a project for sixth grade on biofuels last year, she actually drew a map of the State of Minnesota.

She had two little dots that said “Minneapolis” and “St. Paul,” then she had a big circle that said “Pine City,” the home of farmer Tom Pettersson, and I told her that is whom she had talked to about biofuels.

I tell you this story because the future for our economy in Minnesota and across the country, when you look at energy, the rural part of our country is going to have a big piece of this. It is necessary for that development.

If we do not pass this farm bill, we are not going to get there. I urge my colleagues, for that and many other reasons, to move forward with the 2007 farm bill.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 1429
Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 3:30 p.m. today, the Senate proceed to the consideration of the conference report to accompany H.R. 1429, Head Start Authorization; that it be considered under the following limitations: that there be 60 minutes of debate with respect to the conference report, with the time equally divided and controlled between the chair and ranking member of the HELP Committee, any other amendments that are offered or yielded back of time, the Senate proceed to vote on adoption of the conference report without further intervening action or debate.

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

RECESS
The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 3:30 p.m.

Thereupon, at 2:01 p.m., the Senate recessed until 3:30 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. SANDERS).

IMPROVING HEAD START FOR SCHOOL READINESS ACT OF 2007—CONFERENCE REPORT
The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now proceed to the consideration of the conference report to accompany H.R. 1429, which the clerk will report by title.
Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I thank my friend and colleague, the Senator from Wyoming, Mr. Enzi, for his strong advocacy and extremely effective work on this legislation. I also thank the staff of the HELP committee for the hard work on this important piece of legislation. This is an important moment in the Senate because this reauthorization of Head Start focuses on the most vulnerable members of society, the children, and it delivers a message of hope for these children and their families.

HELP Committee members are extremely involved and active in all the matters that come before our committee, but never more than on issues of education and early childhood development. We have before us legislation that reflects a coming together of both parties and both chambers of Congress to address the needs of children in our society. Reflected in this legislation are the interest of some of those who aren’t with us physically, colleagues who are involved in the Presidential campaign. Senator Dodd, who has been a longtime leader in the Senate on children and children’s interests, has had a long history and involvement in this legislation. BARACK OBAMA has followed this process very closely and has been in frequent communication with us. Senator CLINTON has been very much involved in crafting this legislation, as well as a number of other pieces of legislation we approved in the committee earlier today.

We welcome an overwhelming vote this afternoon. There was an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote in the House of Representatives, 361 to 36. I am here tonight with a similar expression of support in the Senate.

We have an hour. I know I have several colleagues who want to talk. I will yield myself 12 minutes. I don’t know how much I have used so far.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has used 3½ minutes. Is that another 12 on top of the 3%?

Mr. KENNEDY. No, a total of 12. If the Chair will let me know when I have a minute and a half, I would appreciate that.

Planning for Head Start began in the early 1960s, before we knew all that we know today about how to best inter-
The current reauthorization applies the lessons learned from the past with the new knowledge of child development and early education to enable Head Start to be even more successful in the years ahead.

There is no question that Head Start is effective. Our own federally mandated study of Head Start found that it expands children’s vocabularies, and makes the greatest difference for those with the greatest needs. Head Start improves children’s writing skills, and helps children develop in their social skills and behavior.

By the time Head Start children complete their kindergarten year, their skills and developmental abilities are near the national average, with scores of 99 in early literacy, 98 in early writing, 95 in early math, and 95 in vocabulary.

We are talking about the most disadvantaged children in America. They are often well behind in terms of their abilities and need to succeed. Look at the results at the end of kindergarten. Head Start children catch up to their peers, to the national norm. It brings the children up so, hopefully, we will be, as a country and society, more equitable, more fair.

This reauthorization maintains high standards and comprehensive services in Head Start. It upgrades educational components of the program, and ensures that it delivers the skills and support children need to succeed in kindergarten and the early grades. It promotes greater partnerships between Head Start programs and local schools, and ensures that services continue to be framed by the highly effective Head Start Child Outcomes Framework. It also provides a needed bridge for parents to their local schools, to promote greater coordination and ease the transition of children from preschool to kindergarten.

We also terminate the flawed National Reporting System, and ensure that new educational standards and measures used in Head Start will be informed by the National Academy of Sciences. Two years ago, the Government Accountability Office confirmed many of our long-standing concerns with this assessment, concluding that the test is not valid to make determinations about programs and students. The study also confirmed that the test was inconsistent with nationally-recognized testing standards, and unclear in its purpose.

This reauthorization ensures that any assessments used in Head Start will be valid and reliable, fair to children from all backgrounds, and measured for the whole child. Head Start children and their families deserve nothing less.

Head Start teachers and staff are the heart and future of the program. They help children learn to identify letters and arrange the pieces of puzzles. They teach them to brush their teeth, wash their hands, make friends, and follow rules.

This reauthorization sets important and unprecedented goals for enhancing the skills and qualifications of Head Start teachers and staff. In this reauthorization, we are striving to help all teachers earn their associate’s degree over the next 6 years, help half of all teachers earn a bachelor’s degree, and help all assistant teachers work toward completing a CDA or another early education credential.

These are ambitious goals. But we know that learning and development of young children require good teachers and that there is a strong link between educational qualifications and the quality of programs.

The quality of a program does not just depend on the educational background of its teachers, which is why we are also calling for professional development and a career advancement plan for every Head Start employee including family service workers, assistant teachers, and teachers.

We have established new partnerships to increase staff in Head Start who are prepared to serve the diverse children enrolled in the programs.

Most of all, we have worked to ensure that Head Start programs have a dedicated stream of funds to provide needed training for teachers. The reauthorization dedicates $2 million this year to local training and improvement efforts, much of which will be used to improve and strengthen the Head Start workforce. We commit to confronting the persistent challenge of compensating Head Start teachers as the professionals that they are. Head Start teachers earn half the salary of kindergarten teachers, and turnover is about 11 percent per year.

This conference report commits 40 percent of new funds in Head Start to program quality and teacher salaries, to do more to attract and retain caring and committed leaders. It ensures that each Head Start Center will receive an annual cost-of-living increase to keep up with the rising costs of operation and overhead.

We grant additional flexibility in this reauthorization for Head Start to serve thousands of additional low-income children in need, by including families just above the Federal poverty level. It is essential for Head Start to prioritize its services to the neediest families. But this new flexibility enables those living near poverty and earning less than what they need to get by to receive assistance too. It is the right thing to do, and it is what Head Start is all about.

The reauthorization also makes a long-overdue commitment to expanding Head Start programs in Indian country, and programs for migrant and seasonal farmworkers. By reserving up to $20 million annually to expand services in these programs, we can hopefully serve an additional 5,500 migrant and seasonal farmworker children and an additional 5,100 Native American children living in poverty. New provisions are also included to enhance services for homeless children, children who are English language learners, and children with disabilities in order to ensure that these populations receive the care and attention they deserve.

Accountability is a cornerstone of excellence and should start early. Head Start should be accountable for its commitment to provide safe and healthy learning environments, to support each child’s individual pattern of development and learning, to build community partnerships in services to children, and to involve parents in their child’s growth.

This reauthorization makes significant progress in increasing accountability and investing in excellence in Head Start. It continues the comprehensive monitoring that has become a hallmark of Head Start, and ensures that reviews are fair and balanced in order to account for challenges and strengths in programs. It also establishes a new system of designation of Head Start grants, to be phased in over the next several years.

We know that the vast majority of Head Start programs provide outstanding services—fewer than 20 percent of programs are deficient each year. But where serious deficiencies exist, we must see that substantial problems do not languish at the expense of children. If a local program is unable to meet Head Start’s high standards of quality, timely action should be taken. This new system will facilitate accountability and funding decisions, and do so in a manner that is transparent, fair, and responsive to the local needs of families and children.

We have established greater accountability for enrollment in programs and delineated a clear system of governance in Head Start.

The reauthorization also takes important steps to expand Early Head Start. Since its inception, results have proven that Early Head Start is one of the most effective programs of the Department of Health and Human Services. In this legislation, we improve the training and assistance network serving Early Head Start and guarantee a dedicated expert in each State to work with programs to meet the needs of infants and toddlers. We also expand the screening available to infants exposed to trauma, violence, and other circumstances detrimental to child development. We commit to expanding Early Head Start to serve an additional 8,000 low-income infants and toddlers over the next 5 years.

As in elementary and secondary education, reform in early childhood education requires resources. Today, half of all children eligible for Head Start have no access to it. Early Head Start however, serves only 3 percent of eligible infants and toddlers—we leave behind 97 percent.

When Sargent Shriver discussed the war on poverty, he said “You have to put immense resources into winning a
war.” He was right, and he wasn’t talking about wars like Iraq. He was talking about the war on poverty. This conference report increases authorizations for Head Start to $7.3 billion in fiscal year 2008, $7.6 billion in fiscal year 2009, and $7.9 billion in fiscal year 2010. On a bipartisan basis, Congress has signaled a commitment to invest more in our youngest children, and to assist Head Start in responding to the changing and evolving needs of the communities it serves.

Research shows that the first 5 years of life make an immense difference for a child. Those who attend high-quality early education programs are more likely to do well when they reach elementary school, are less likely to be held back a grade, and are more likely to graduate from high school and go on to college.

Our Federal investment in early childhood education clearly pays off—for every dollar invested in high-quality early education, there is a 16 dollar return later in life.

All children—regardless of their background—deserve to learn and develop. We need to strengthen early childhood for young children, in order to help them succeed later in school and in life.

A comprehensive curriculum and a stable and well-qualified workforce are cornerstones of a good early education. I am especially pleased that this reauthorization of Head Start provides a blueprint to strengthen the array of early childhood programs and services for young children.

The bill establishes an Early Childhood Advisory Council to examine needs of early childhood programs, develop a plan to improve professional development, upgrade standards, enhance collaboration among programs, and improve data collection.

More than 40 States have early learning standards or under development. States such as Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Illinois have developed the systems needed to improve program quality and expand access to programs in the early years. We need to build on that progress. States that are ready to take on the challenge of implementing needed improvements in their early education programs will qualify for incentive grants to get such improvements under way.

One of the priorities in Congress is to expand educational opportunities for every American. In this age of globalization, every city deserves a chance to acquire the skills needed to compete in the modern economy. That challenge begins at birth, and accelerates in the early years of life besides before children even begin kindergarten.

This reauthorization helps us reach this essential goal. It keeps Head Start on its successful path, and enables it to continue to thrive and improve.

War than it has won the war on poverty in America. But thanks to Head Start, we are getting closer. Day by day, and one child at a time. This conference report continues that indispensable progress, and I urge my colleagues to approve it.

Mr. President, we have others who desire to speak at this time. I will have a chance with the remaining time, perhaps, to get into some of the additional items.

Mr. President, I reserve the remainder of my time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore, The Senator from Wyoming, MR. ENZI. Mr. President, I thank Senator KENNEDY for that excellent recap of what has taken us months, in fact, years to get done.

I am pleased after many years of false starts, we have finally reached agreement on Head Start reauthorization. This conference agreement is a bipartisan, bicameral effort that focuses on improving the lives of low-income children and their families. We need to ensure that children, regardless of their circumstances, have the opportunity to get the preparation they need to enter school ready to learn and be successful.

The Head Start Program was established in 1965 as part of the war on poverty to provide services for low-income children. The purpose of the program was, and remains, to provide educational and other developmental services to children in very low income families. It recognizes that children do not start school with the same set of experiences and challenges that Head Start programs provide low-income children with a solid base of experiences and knowledge that enables them to start their elementary school experience on par with their more affluent peers.

Since its creation, Head Start has been a comprehensive, early childhood development program that provides educational, health, nutritional, social, and other services to low-income, preschool-aged children and their families. Head Start currently provides services to over 900,000 children and their families through a network of over 1,600 public and private agencies. This program also recognizes the important role that families play in a child’s development and encourages their regular participation in the program.

I do thank Senator KENNEDY and Congressman MILLER for their commitment to working together on a bipartisan basis. That commitment has resulted in a report that meets the needs of children and families who participate in Head Start programs throughout our Nation. I also thank my other colleagues, particularly Senators ALEXANDER and DODD, and Congressmen McKEON, KILDEE, and CASTLE, for their fine work and dedication to this important legislation.

The conference agreement before us today builds off legislation we developed last Congress when I was chair of the HSLP Committee, Senator KENNEDY agreed to use that legislation as the basis for this year’s bill to build on the bipartisan support it had received. Senator KENNEDY and I understand that to get anything done, especially in the Senate, you have to have bipartisan support.

Years ago, I established an “80-percent rule” to help guide my work in committee and on the Senate floor. It means that 80 percent of what Congress works on we agree to. The other 20 percent is the stuff we may never agree on. But that is what always seems to get the attention. I do think we do our best work when we focus on the 80 percent, and we argue more quickly when we work together in a bipartisan way.

I am pretty certain people in Massachusetts are cringing, and people in Wyoming are cringing and saying: Oh, no. KENNEDY and ENZI are doing it again. But that is the way things get done, and we have quite a track record of doing things that wind up pretty unanimously on both sides of the Capitol because they figure with our two backbones this is work Congress can and must do to improve the lives of children and families across America.

Today, with the passage of the Head Start conference report, we begin to fulfill this obligation. But our work is far from done. This is just the first in a number of education and training bills we have to complete this Congress.

With the reauthorization of the Head Start Act, the first bookend is in place. I hope we can continue to work together on legislation to reauthorize No Child Left Behind, the Higher Education Act, and the Workforce Investment Act. These four bills represent the continuum of education and workforce training legislation supported by the Federal Government—with Head Start as one bookend and the Workforce Investment Act as the other.

These acts support programs from preschool, through elementary and high school, into postsecondary education and the workforce, and are critical to maintaining our global competitiveness. We cannot afford to let those programs fall victim to election year politics.

I am pleased the House Education and Labor Committee has moved forward with the markup of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. It is my hope we can continue this momentum and move into a conference on that important legislation in the very near future.

Head Start provides the building blocks children need for success later in life. The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 before us today helps ensure that children in Head Start programs will be better prepared to enter school with the skills necessary to succeed. We have always worked hard to improve and strengthen this act because we believe in the future success of all children.
November 14, 2007

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE

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I am particularly pleased with the accountability provisions in this conference report. The conference agreement includes important changes related to the evaluation and review of grantees. We have taken steps to increase the quality of Head Start, and there is a clear policy direction as to what constitutes a program deficiency.

The roles of governing body and policy councils have been clarified and strengthened. It is also particularly important that parents be the role parents play in Head Start programs. This conference agreement increases the presence of parents in Head Start programs. It strengthens services for families, and it provides training and development opportunities for parents who serve on policy councils and governing boards.

Today we are taking the final legislative step toward a comprehensive and bipartisan reauthorization of the Head Start Program. As we take this step to reauthorize Head Start, it is important we review the effectiveness and need for the 57 other early childhood and preschool programs currently receiving Federal support. Many of those programs are programs in name only. Others are ineffective and fail to provide the services children need to be ready for school. We have to direct funds to programs that have been shown to be effective at preparing children for success in elementary school. Head Start is a successful program that deserves our continued support. This support should not be diluted by competing programs or the creation of new programs.

I again wish to thank all the members of both committees, in particular Senators KENEDDY, ALEXANDER, ISAACS and DODD, and Congressmen MILLER, McKOWN, KILDEE, and CASTLE, for getting this done.

I also thank all of the staff who worked to complete this reauthorization. Many of them have been working toward this day since early January. In particular, I would like to thank the following staff for Congressmen MILLER: Ruth Friedman, Lamont Ivey, Denise Forte, and Stephanie Moore; for Congressman McKOWN: Kirsten Duncan, James Bergeron, and Susan Ross; for Congressman KILDEE: Lloyd Horwich; for Congressman CASTLE: Jessicole Gross; for Senator KENEDDY: Roberto Rodriguez, Carmel Martin, and David Johns—I would like to mention how well Senator KENEDDY’s staff and my staff have been able to work together on all of the issues—for Senator ISAACS: Glee Smith; for Senator ALEXANDER: David Cleary and Sarah Rittling; and for Senator DODD: Catharine Hildum, and former staffer Shar- on Lewis.

For my staff, I want to be sure to thank Lindsay Hunsicker, who has done a marvelous job of working and understanding and providing some creativity to the bill that had to be made to get here; Beth Buehlmann, who oversees all of these education issues and is making sure they are moving forward in a bipartisan way; and Ilse Schuman, who is the legal brains behind the drafting and decisions for my team; Katherine McGuire, who heads up the team as staff director; and, of course, Kelly Hastings.

Passage of this conference report will ensure that low-income children are only fully prepared not in school but, most importantly, for later success in life.

I look forward to getting this conference report to President Bush for his signature as quickly as possible so we can put these new tools to work for our kids.

As the Senator from Massachusetts and the Chair of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, I have a very important and critical role of parents. It is absolutely necessary and vital that a single entity, the governing body, has fiscal and legal control of the Federal grant dollars. That said, we maintain the equally vital and necessary role of the policy councils in setting program priorities, classroom activities, and classroom personnel changes. We believe this will help ensure the continued integrity of the Head Start Program for years to come.

Parents are their children’s first teachers. It is vital we continue to encourage and strengthen the role parents play in Head Start programs. This conference agreement increases the presence of parents in Head Start programs. It strengthens services for families, and it provides training and development opportunities for parents who serve on policy councils and governing boards.

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Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I yield 7 minutes to the former Secretary of Education.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask the Chair to please let me know when I have 1 minute remaining.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, it is not easy to say that this vote on this piece of legislation on Head Start is about whose century this century will be. Some say it will be China’s century. Some say it will be India’s century. I think the jury is still out, but I do believe it can be the American century, and I believe it is up to us to make sure it is.

We have the advantages in our country. One of them, of course, is our brain power advantage. We don’t have better brains than others, but since World War II, we have spent a great deal of time building our education system, our universities, our research laboratories. We worked together this year to pass the America COMPETES Act, authorizing $34 billion over the next 3 years to step that up. A second advantage we have is the e pluribus unum. We are one country. Where different countries are fractured, we are working here to help our children and our new arrivals learn English, our common language, and to learn our American history so we can stay as one country. That is an advantage we have. The third advantage we have is that we are the only country in the world that believes that anything is possible. We do not say leave just a few children behind, but we say every child in the world can get to the front of the line. The other thing we do is to make sure that all Americans have a chance to get to the starting line ready. Some people need some help, and that is what Head Start is about.

I was very pleased to come to this floor in the earlier part of this year with Senator KENNEDY, Senator ENZI, and Senator DODD, introducing a piece of legislation that we hoped would get to the point this one has today. I thank them for the way they have worked on this for the last 3 or 4 years. It didn’t matter whether it was a Republican or a Democratic Senate; we all worked together and we are here now with this result.

A lot has changed, and there are four major advantages to this bill, in my opinion. No. 1, I call special attention to the 200 new centers of excellence that are created. These are opportunities for Governors to look, say, at the state of Arkansas and create some place in their State and designate a center of excellence. These would be shining examples of all of the best efforts that are being made for early childhood education. The centers would get up to $200,000 a year for 5 years and would hopefully try to coordinate all early childhood education and development efforts.

When I was a child, my mother’s preschool class in the garage in our backyard was the only preschool education program in town. In the 1970s, Tennessee adopted public kindergarten for the first time, a few years after Head Start. Well, today, Head Start is a $7 billion program. It has 1,700 agencies, 20,000 teachers, and 800,000 children. It is the dream is that anything is possible, that you can go from the back of the line to the front. We will keep our markets free. We will try to keep our taxes down. We will get rid of unnecessary regulations so people can get ahead. But this bill is a commitment that says we will also make certain that we will do our best to make sure every single child has an opportunity to get to the starting line ready to succeed.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I am proud to rise in support of the conference report for the Head Start for School Readiness Act. Since 1965, Head Start has been one of the most successful Federal programs for helping low-income children and their families. This long overdue reauthorization is good news for over a million Americans who rely on Head Start’s comprehensive services.

Head Start is for the poorest children. About 75 percent of Head Start families are at or below the poverty level. For a family of four, that is just $20,600 per year. These children are often the furthest behind in learning to read and learning the alphabet. Yet they are full of potential. In 1 year, these students see huge improvements in their vocabulary, increasing from the 16th percentile to the 32nd percentile, which is almost the national norm.

But Head Start does so much more. It brings children to the doctor to get immunizations and hearing checks. It helps parents get on the right track. Many parents become Head Start teachers and go back to school to get their degrees. It provides nutritious meals for children who might otherwise go hungry. I am a social worker. I have seen first hand children whose lives were changed by a simple hearing
aid or a good breakfast. Believe me: it can make all the difference.

Head Start is also a smart investment. Research shows that society accrues $9 in benefits for every $1 invested in Head Start children. Head Start graduates are more likely to have increased earnings and employment than non-Head Start participants. Head Start graduates are also less likely to be dependent on welfare or to have been charged with a crime when compared to their siblings who did not participate in the program.

Unfortunately, only 60 percent of eligible preschool children are in Head Start, and less than 5 percent of eligible infants and toddlers are in Early Head Start. In Maryland, about 25 percent of eligible children age zero to five years are in Head Start and Early Head Start. The Bush administration has underfunded this critical federal program for the past 7 years. Now is the time to renew the Federal investment in Head Start.

That is why I am proud to support this bill that makes low-income children and families a priority in the Federal checkbook. It increases the authorized spending level from $6.9 billion in fiscal year 2007 to $7.3 billion in fiscal year 2008. That is nearly a $450 million increase. This increased investment will allow tens of thousands more children to participate in the program who would be otherwise turned away because of inadequate funding.

This bill also expands Head Start by increasing the eligibility income level from $20,600 to $26,800. This means that a family of four who are scrimping and saving on an annual income of only $26,800 will no longer be denied the comprehensive services Head Start provides.

The Head Start for School Readiness Act makes a serious investment in our youngest children and their families. The Head Start of the 1960s served children, their families and society at large far outweighs the cost. I urge my Senate colleagues to vote in favor of this conference report. Our young children deserve nothing less.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I strongly support H.R. 1429, the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007. This important bipartisan legislation, which I helped craft as a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, increases Head Start funding and strengthens our commitment to ensuring that the nation’s neediest children receive high-quality early education and supports and services.

Since 1965, Head Start has provided comprehensive early childhood development, educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to low-income preschool children and their families, and this reauthorization builds on our long-standing investment in this essential initiative.

There are two provisions that I am particularly pleased are included in this legislation, and which are importantly to my State of Rhode Island. First, the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act builds on provisions I first authored in 2003 to provide Head Start programs with additional flexibility to serve children up to 130 percent of poverty. Current law limits Head Start eligibility to 100 percent of poverty or below. This increase in income eligibility will enhance the opportunity for struggling, low-income families to participate in Head Start while ensuring that programs prioritize children in the greatest need.

Second, this legislation for the first time establishes the Parent Policy Council as a decisionmaking authority within the governing structure of Head Start programs. Strong parent involvement in their children’s early education and development has been a key tenet of the Head Start program since its inception in 1965, and is one of the primary reasons for its program’s continuing success.

This reauthorization also includes a provision I authored to enhance coordination between Head Start programs and the school and public libraries to excite children about the world of books, assist in literacy training for Head Start teachers, and support parents and other caregivers in literacy efforts.

Additionally, I am pleased that this conference report does not permit employment discrimination based on religion despite the administration’s continuing advocacy for such a change. Faith-based organizations are an integral part of Head Start. However, there is no justification for the expansion of Head Start and Early Head Start in States, like Utah, serving fewer than 60 percent of eligible children.

This bill strengthens the accountability of Head Start programs and improves the overall quality of Head Start grants, as they will be reviewed every 5 years. It clarifies and strengthens the role of the governing board in the oversight of the program. It also respects the priority role of parents and family through the collaborative role of the policy councils and operations of the Head Start programs.

Through this legislation, the Head Start workforce is strengthened, as goals have been established for educational standards for Head Start teachers, curriculum specialists, and teacher assistants. It requires Head Start teachers to have in-service training every year and ensures professional development for all Head Start staff working directly with children.

The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 strengthens coordination and collaboration of the program by aligning services with

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The benefits of Head Start to the children served are clear. The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 provides and protects educational, health, nutrition, social and other services to low-income preschool children and their families. The reauthorization builds on provisions to strengthen the program for the first time. I strongly support this conference report.
Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, as I begin my remarks, let me be clear. I support the right of religious organizations to use religious criteria in hiring people to carry out their religious work. This excep-
tion to the Religious Freedom Restoration Act makes sense because it allows people of common faith to work together to further their religion's mission.

However, there is a fundamental dif-
fERENCE between religious orga-
nizations using their own funds for their reli-
gious work and religious organizations using government funds for that purpose. In 1972, Congress established the current, expanded religious exception under title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The same Congress established the nondiscrimination provisions in Head Start that continue with today's legislation. They understood the difference between permitting hiring based on religion for religious functions funded by the Federal Government, and allowing discrimination based on religion in hiring people to carry out activities funded by the Federal Government. I also want to address a memo released last month by the Department of Justice entitled “Effect of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act on Faith-Based Applicants for Grants.” This troubling memo concludes that the Religious Freedom Restoration Act allows faith-based organizations to receive Federal funds even when considering religion in employment. It fur-
ther asserts that RFRA “protects this right to prefer co-religionists for em-
ployees even if the statute that author-
izes the funding program generally for-
bids consideration of religion in em-
ployment decisions by grantees.”

I strongly disagree with these conclu-
sions in general, and especially with re-
spect to the legislation before us today. The law and the history regarding Head Start is clear with respect to non-
discrimination in employment, and this explicit civil rights protection must be followed.

In closing, I want to affirm my strong support for the participation of religious organizations in the Head Start program. These organizations provide critical support for our Nation's children in 5 percent of Head Start centers and greatly improve our pre-schoolers' education. It is not sur-
prising that Head Start is the second-
largest source of federal funding for faith-based organizations. This program truly is a model for how the government can successfully partner with faith-based organizations, while complying with nondiscrimina-
tion requirements.

I thank Senators KENNEDY and ENZI for their bipartisan work on this im-
portant legislation, and I urge my col-
leagues to support this conference re-
port.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, as I understand, we have 9 minutes left. Am I correct?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tem-po. The Senator is correct.
Mr. KENNEDY. I yield 3 minutes to the Senator from Ohio and 3 minutes to the Senator from Vermont, and I will take the last 3 minutes, and we will alternate with our Republican colleagues.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Ohio is recognized.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I thank Chairman KENNEDY and Ranking Member ENZI for their leadership, as well as the tireless work on the Head Start reauthorization bill. It is long overdue. It will help prepare thousands of low-income children for their transition into school and for their success later in life.

There is no greater investment, of course, that we can make than investing in our children. This legislation means an additional 8,000 low-income infants and toddlers younger than those who have traditionally been enrolled in Head Start will be eligible for the program in the first year. Workers who will receive more training, the critical training they need and the cost-of-living increases that they deserve. This legislation means expansion of the program to children whose families earn just above the poverty line. For tens of thousands of children in this country, this legislation gives them hope. It is a step forward, a major step forward.

Yesterday, unfortunately, the President vetoed the funding for Head Start. That is why we take a step forward today with this Head Start reauthorization, as the President took a step backward in vetoing the funding for Head Start. Budgets, we know, are about priorities. Whether it is a family budget, it speaks to your values; whether it is a Federal budget, it speaks to our values. Vetoing funding for Head Start, for medical research, and for job training as the President did yesterday, tells us something about his priorities.

I am pleased that on a bipartisan basis, by passing legislation that expands Head Start to reach more low-income children, this Senate is saying our priorities are different. I hope that together we can override the President’s veto and fulfill the promise inherent in the Head Start Program.

I thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their good work on this Head Start reauthorization. We should move forward.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, how much time do I have remaining?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Almost 14 minutes.

Mr. ENZI. I yield 7 minutes to the Senator from Georgia, who has always played a tremendous role in this piece of work with his staff person Glee Smith, and he brings with him a world of knowledge from Georgia where he served as the chief school official there. They set some precedent-setting things in the area of education. He was doing that, and he did it in conjunction with former Senator Zell Miller, who was Governor at that time. I yield 7 minutes to the Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I wish to thank Ranking Member ENZI for his kind remarks and his tremendous dedication and commitment to bringing this bill to the floor. I particularly want to thank Senator KENNEDY from Massachussets, who is a consummate legislator by anybody’s definition and a very committed individual in the development of our youth and the betterment of our nation.

As Senator ENZI said, about a decade ago I served as chairman of the State Board of Education in the administration of my predecessor in this seat who was then Governor Zell Miller. Those were the years that the breakthrough brain research came forward and illustrated conclusively that there is a direct correlation between early childhood development and the potential development of a person as an adult. We worked very hard together in Georgia reaching out for Georgians and did everything we could to develop new programs. One of them that we developed was none other than the 4-year-old prekindergarten program which now is available to every child in the state of Georgia. If you are standing on the fact that the earlier you can begin instruction, the earlier you can improve the environment and the atmosphere in which a child is exposed, the better that child is going to do.

That is why it is important to turn around the trend in terms of dropouts in this country, to see to it that we enhance and enrich the lives of every single student who is going to go to our public schools.

Mr. President, it is conclusive that the environment in which a child lives in their early years—that to which they are exposed, their nutrition, the total environment—is directly a correlation to their ability to learn. The Head Start Program is designed to get to those children most in need for quality support, for uplift, for a greater self-esteem, and for a leg up, a chance to get to a 4-year-old prekindergarten program or to a kindergarten program ready to learn.

USA Today ran an article about a week ago talking about America’s dropout factories, and it enumerated schools in almost every State, with dropout rates of 40, 50, 60 percent. If you look at those schools, if you look at those articles and those schools, you would find a common denominator: Those schools’ children came from the least of backgrounds, with the least support, and from the poorest of environments.

We have an obligation to ourselves and, as Senator ALEXANDER said, America’s future to see to it that every American child arrives at kindergarten or first grade ready to learn. The advancement of programs such as Head Start will make that happen.

I commend Senators ALEXANDER, ENZI, and KENNEDY, Congressmen MILLER and McKEON, and all those who worked on this important legislation. I urge every Member to cast a favorable vote in favor of a better atmosphere for our young children to grow up in, better exposure to those things that help them go to school ready to learn, and turn around the paradigm on dropouts in the United States. I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Vermont is recognized.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I wish to add my voice to the others and thank Senator KENNEDY and Senator ENZI for their leadership on this issue and for the cooperative, bipartisan relationship we see on that committee, which makes it perhaps the most productive committee in the Senate.

As others have said, this is a very important day forward for the children of our country. Right now, I am thinking about the Head Start workers in Vermont who do such an extraordinary job of reaching out for low-income kids throughout our State, and I know the same is true throughout this country. They are dedicated people, they are underpaid and overworked, but they do it for the love of the children. I very much appreciate all that they are doing.

Mr. President, while this is, in fact, an important day forward, it is significant to point out again that this is an authorization bill, not an appropriation bill. We had the disappointment just the other day of the President vetoing the Labor-HHS bill, which includes Head Start. My hope is that in the very near future we are going to have a strong Labor bill, with adequate funding for Head Start, but more significantly—and this is an issue I will talk about until the cows come home—we have to change our national priorities with regard to how we treat the children of this country.

Every Member of Congress, every American should be deeply ashamed and embarrassed that in this country, we have, by far, the highest rate of childhood poverty in the industrialized world. The figures are that between 18 and 20 percent of our children live in poverty. As other speakers have pointed out, if children at an early age don’t get the intellectual and emotional nourishment they need, they are not going to do well in life. It is not an accident that at the same time we have the highest rate of poverty, we also have the highest rate of incarceration of any major nation on Earth. So we don’t take adequate care of our children, and, lo and behold, we are shocked when they end up behind bars, and we spend $50,000 to $70,000 for each person who is incarcerated. It makes a lot more sense to me—and I hope my colleagues agree—that we put that money up front to make sure all of our kids get the opportunities they are entitled to as young Americans.

The truth is that this bill is a significant step forward—and I applaud all those who built it—as Senator KENNEDY indicated earlier, only one-half of
the eligible children in America today, because of inadequate funding, are able to get into the Head Start Program. So this is an important step forward. I congratulate all who have made this day possible. We have a long way to go to, in fact, keep the faith with the children we serve.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I yield 3 minutes to the Senator from New Hampshire.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Wyoming and the Senator from Massachusetts. I rise to express my appreciation for their excellent work on this legislation. It has been a long time in gestation. I think it reflects their commitment to legislate in a bipartisan and effective way that the bill is now at this stage. I congratulate them.

I think anybody who has been exposed to Head Start is impressed by the program. There have been studies and reports of that which can be done to improve the program, and hopefully this bill will work in that direction. But the underlying idea of giving low-income kids the ability to come into an atmosphere where they get nurturing, good nutrition, and now, because of the academic program is totally appropriate and something that has succeeded.

If you look at what we are facing as a nation, as discussed here at considerable length—I heard the Senator from Tennessee make an excellent statement on the needs of education, and what our country really needs is the ability to bring into the educational mainstream children who today, unfortunately, are not able or do not come to school with the necessary skills to compete with some of their fellow students. Head Start gives those children that opportunity. It gives low-income kids a chance to start kindergartening them and get into the first grade with an understanding of how, first, to be social and deal with an atmosphere where there are other children; secondly, to have the necessary nutrition to get through the day and be able to learn; and third, begin the building blocks of learning. This program works, and it has worked. It is something that should be continued to be supported by the Federal Government and also by the communities that stand behind Head Start.

That is one of the great things about Head Start. In my experience, when you go to a local Head Start center in New Hampshire—or anywhere—as chairman of the committee, I visited Head Start centers all across the country. They are usually community-oriented events. Behind those teachers and committed people, who are willing to spend the day with the children and try to make their lives better during the day, may be usually a lot of volunteers and people from the community stepping up to also make those programs work well.

So Head Start is one of the success stories and one of the things we need as one of the building blocks in order to continue to make America a great place to live and give people the ability to participate in the American dream. Again, I thank the Senators for orchestrating this effort.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Who yields time? The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, this bill has been a pleasure and an honor to get to work on this bill and to work with people on both sides of the aisle. You can see the unanimity from the Republican side and the Democratic side in making sure the bill came to pass.

As I mentioned before, we have had a lot of false starts trying to get Head Start done. This time, we have gotten through the process. Today, we will have a positive vote and send it to the President. And when you can tell from the debate that it has been a very positive process.

The only distinction appears to be the few comments we have heard about the Labor-HHS appropriations bill. I don’t want to get into that issue because it’s a lot of time to discuss it. I ask unanimous consent to have the Wall Street Journal article from today called “Return to Spender” printed in the Record to counter some of the things talked about. It wasn’t the Head Start bill, Mr. President; it was the entire Labor-HHS budget.

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

RETURN TO SPENDER

Congressional Democrats spent the fall preparing for their budget confrontation with the White House, and the strategy they seem to have settled on is futile. They knew President Bush would veto their first appropriations bill, because it included a $2.4 billion budget gimmick for “advance appropriations” designed to circumvent Democratic “pay as you go” budget rules. Thankfully, enough Senate members realized it, and maybe a few even hoped to recover their credibility on spending.

Since there aren’t enough votes to override Mr. Bush, it’s back to the drawing board. Maybe next time Democrats should try something new—say, spending less money.

Mr. ENZI. I hope the vote today will display the unanimity we have had while working on this bill. I congratulate the Senator from Massachusetts for the way he is running the committee. We have not just done hearings on things—hearings are a little more divisive than the other mechanism, which has been his morning coffees. In hearings, the two sides bring people to testify, and we kind of beat up on each other’s witnesses. In the coffees he has held, we get to bring in a bunch of people and hear what they think. We have the interaction of one person who has had experience, and he talks to another person who has had experience, and they talk about how the two experiences might come together. That has been helpful on this bill, as well as the other ones, the bookends I mentioned. This being the first part of the bookend, and the next one will be working on is No Child Left Behind.

We have already done the Higher Education Act on this side. I look forward to conferencing that and getting on to the Workforce Investment Act, which passed this body twice already but never has been conferenced. Our work is still cut out for us, but this is a day to celebrate the good work done on both sides of the aisle.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I think that my friend and colleague from Wyoming. He believes we ought to listen to experts before we actually legislate, which was a rather dramatic
thought to many around here. He certainly is right. He reminds us of our unfinished business in terms of higher education and the workforce legisla-
tion. We are strongly committed, and we will get a response on that.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT AGREEMENT—H. CON. RES.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that upon the adop-
tion of the conference report to accom-
pany H.R. 1429, the Senate proceed to the consideration of H. Con. Res. 258, a correcting resolution; that the concurrent resolution be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tem-
poris, is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KENNEDY. Finally, I would take a few moments to mention the staff who worked on this bill. I want to person-
ally mention those who have worked so hard on this legislation. Some of us are working on this for a few years. I will not get into the reasons for that. This has been a very long and, in the past, contentious piece of legis-
lation and without them, there is no way we could have completed this bill.

I want to thank Michelle S. Carmel Martin, Roberto Rodriguez, David Johns, Lily Clark, Liz Maher, and Raquel Alvarezena from my staff.

I would like to thank Katherine Graham Hildum of Senator Dodd’s staff; Janelle Krishnamoorthy of Sen-
ator HARKIN’s staff; Mildred Otero of Senator CLINTON’s staff; Michael Yudin of Senator BINGAMAN’s staff; Robin Juliano of Senator MIKULSKI’s staff; Seth Gerson of Senator REED’s staff; Kathryn Young of Senator MURRAY’s staff; Will Jawando of Senator BROWN’s staff; Huck Gutman of Senator SANDERS’ staff; and Steve Robinson of Sen-
ator OBAMA’s staff.

This has been a bipartisan process all the way. I also want to thank Senator ENZI’s wonderful staff, specif-
ically Katherine McGuire, Beth Buehlmann, Lindsay Hunsicker, and Adam Briddell.

I would also like to thank David Cleary and Sarah Bittling of Senator ALEXANDER’s staff; Celia Sims of Sen-
ator BURR’s staff; Juliann Andreen of Senator HATCH’s staff; Allison Dembeck of Senator GREGG’s staff; Elizabeth Floyd of Senator COBURN’s staff; Karen McCarthy of Senator MUR-
KOWSKY’s staff; Suzanne Singletary of Senator ALLARD’s staff; Glee Smith of Senator ISAACSON’s staff; and Alison Anway of Senator ROBERTS’ staff.

It is important to mention the work done by our colleagues in the House and the many in the Senate. There was work by South Freidman of Congressman MILLER’s staff; James Bergeron, Kristen Duncan and Susan Ross of Congressman McKENZIE’s staff; Lloyd Horwich of Con-
gressman KILDEE’s staff and Jessica Gross of Congressman CASTLE’s staff, for all of their work on this legislation.

I would like to thank especially Ro-
berto Rodriguez and David Johns who have taken the lead on Head Start in my office. Their good work has made all the difference. I know Roberto is es-
pecially pleased to see the Senate and House pass this conference report, as he has worked on this legislation for several years now. I commend him for his expertise, diligence, good nature and all of his efforts.

Mr. President, finally, the Head Start Program reaches the neediest children in this country. It reaches them to help and assist by providing health care, early education, nutrition, and assisting proper development of cog-
nitive abilities to ensure that children are ready to successfully transition to school.

Head Start is targeted to the need-
iest children in this country. Even with the small numbers we reach—we only reach a million, and there are 4 million poor children who are between ages 0 and 5—we see the difference it makes. Head Start raises them to a level playing ground. This is really about—trying to raise people to a level playing ground. Head Start alone does not guarantee success, but it gives them the opportunity to be successful.

If we have a group in our society that needs this kind of support, it is our children. As pointed out in this debate, through no fault of their own, many children are born into difficult and challenging circumstances. As a nation we cannot abandon them. It is really about trying to raise people to a level playing ground. Head Start alone does not guarantee success, but it gives them the opportunity to be successful.

Finally, there is one thing we have learned in the area of education; that is, the more resources are targeted to early education, the better the oppor-
tunities these children have to succeed. In this reauthorization we have taken advantage of the lessons we have learned from Head Start’s successful history and built upon excellent rec-
ommendations made by members of our committee. This is a very solid and
important piece of legislation that will make a difference in the lives of mil-
lions of children. I urge the Senate to support it.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous con-
sent that the following three letters in support of the Head Start reauthoriza-
tion conference report be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD following my remarks on the conference report.

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

NATIONAL HEAD START ASSOCIATION,
Alexandria, VA, November 13, 2007. Hon. EDWARD KENNEDY,
Chairman, Senate Committee on Health, Edu-
cation, Labor & Pension, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN KENNEDY: On behalf of the National Head Start Association, the children, parents, staff and teachers of Head Start and Early Head Start programs, and the Board of Directors, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, the members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pension for your leadership in the reauthorizing the Head Start—truly a bipartisan effort and success story for America’s premier preschool pro-
gram, Head Start.

As the national association representing the Head Start community, we represent more than 1 million children and their fami-
lies, 200,000 staff, and 2,700 Head Start pro-
grams. With the assistance of over 1 million volunteers, these programs comprehensively meet the early childhood development, edu-
cational, health and family needs of our chil-
dren.

Head Start as you very well know, was es-

duced in 1965 as part of President Lyndon Baines Johnson’s “Great Society” program, and is the most successful, longest running, national school readiness program in the United States. Head Start has served over 25 million preschool-age children, infants, toddlers, and pregnant women since its incep-
tion. Your successful reauthorization of Head Start signals the continued legacy for future low-income children and families.

The Head Start reauthorization bill is a lesson in bipartisan cooperation and leader-
ship addressing a critical need of our country—the preschool readiness of our children.

In short, the “Improving Head Start Act” addresses income eligibility, where the working poor are supported and provided incentives to work; terminates the National Reporting System; helps more pro-
grams operate full-day and year round; reaff-
irms the accreditation of teachers in early childhood; provides expansion for Migrant and Seasonal Head Start and American Indian/Alaskan Native populations; and under-
scores the importance of parental involve-
ment in the education of their children.

Therefore, I call upon our longtime friends and supporters in the U.S. Congress to ap-
prove overwhelmingly the “Improving Head Start Act of 2007” and send it to the Presi-
dent for his signature.

Again, congratulations on your success and that of our children and families.

With great gratitude,

SANDRA GREENE,
President and CEO.

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS,

DEAR SENATORS KENNEDY, ENZI, DODD AND ALEXANDER: The over 3,500 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors and warriors of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids know from the front lines—and the research—that invest-
ments in Head Start are critical to our na-
tion’s public safety. Head Start helps kids get a good start in life so that they avoid later criminality and grow up to become re-
sponsible citizens. But the maximum crime reduc-
tion impacts—reduction in violent crime—are not realized until kids are in their teens.

We are pleased that the final conference report version of the Improving Head Start Act of 2007 (H.R. 1429) includes the following:

Funding authorization: We are pleased the bill includes increased funding authoriza-
tions in Fiscal Years (FY) 2008-2010, with “such sums” funding level in FY12. A $750 million increase in FY08—beyond the FY07 level—is needed to simply restore fund-
ing to the FY02 service level. And that level would only serve a small percentage of eligible, poor kids now left out of Head Start. These increases are an important first step in the right direction.

Teacher qualifications: We are pleased the bill includes a quality improvement require-
ment that 50% of classroom lead teachers...
have at least a bachelor’s degree by 2013. The requirement is crucial to Head Start program quality, since no peer-reviewed, scientific research study has found an early care and education program that demonstrated significant, long-term crime reduction and education results without a bachelor’s degree teacher requirement.

Quarterly impact set-aside: We are pleased the bill directs 40% of annual increases over the prior year’s funding level to quality improvement, with half of those funds used to improve teacher compensation rates. Improved teacher compensation is critical to attracting and retaining better-educated individuals—who would otherwise flock to higher paying opportunities, including K-12 schools.

Targeting to serve the poorest children: We are pleased the bill maintains Head Start’s priority for serving the poorest, most at-risk children by ensuring that children living in poverty are served first as income eligibility is expanded to 130% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Early head start: We are pleased that the bill adds flexibility for Head Start programs to serve zero-to-three-year-olds if they meet the Early Head Start quality standards. In addition, we are pleased that the bill directs half of new expansion funding toward Early Head Start enrollment increases.

The bill also includes several provisions that will continue to strengthen Head Start’s quality:

No state block grants, state waivers, or state applicaiton authority that might have undermined accountability standards;

Training/technical assistance activities (including through a 2.5%-3% set-aside);

Strengthened research-based school readiness efforts at Head Start (of course, it is critical to maintain and strengthen all eight of the domains of Head Start’s outcomes framework);

Strengthened parent education and home visiting provisions;

A requirement that Head Start agencies utilize high-quality, research-based development screening tools to identify children with early emotional and behavioral problems, so kids can receive the treatment they need to prevent later delinquency;

Improvements in fiscal and program accountability among grantees, including improved monitoring and termination of grantees that are significantly and/or systematically deficient;

Enhanced outreach to at-risk kids;

Enhanced collaboration and coordination efforts between local Head Start grantees and other early education providers though collaboration grants;

Increased state-level coordination through State Advisory Councils on Early Childhood Education and Care;

The development of an integrated data collection system to provide complete information about children served by the programs and the services offered; and

Suspension of the National Reporting System, which will allow for any future assessment approaches to be based on the results the National Academy of Sciences study regarding appropriate, comprehensive and scientifically valid and reliable child assessments.

We appreciate the efforts of the Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee and the Education and Labor Committee to strengthen Head Start through this reauthorization legislation. This bill will benefit at-risk kids now and help ensure safer communities and governments to come. The result will be generations of disadvantaged children progressing toward school success and graduation rather than later arrest and incarceration.

Sincerely,

DAVID S. KASS, President, MIRIAM A. ROLLIN, Vice President.

COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES WELCOME HEAD START RENEWAL

WASHINGTON (Nov. 14, 2007).—The nation’s Community Action Agencies applaud the Senate and House passage on Head Start reauthorization and look forward to passage of this national child development legislation later this week.

Community Action Agencies (CAs) administer 30 percent of Head Start grants and a third of all enrollments nationwide. Children and families participating in programs offered by CAs also benefit from the comprehensive services offered by these organizations to help them secure housing, gain employment, and build assets to help them achieve economic sustainability.

"Low-wage working families who turn to Community Action Agencies to prepare their children for school with Head Start leave with a variety of resources to help them improve the lives of the entire family," said National Community Action Foundation Executive Director David Bradley.

"Once these important enhancements are adopted for the Head Start program, we hope that the next step in its transition to the remaining Human Services initiatives: the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and the Community Services Block Grant, will receive the same focused attention," Bradley said.

Mr. KENNEDY. I yield back what-
New York, programs have been forced to eliminate vital transportation services. This much needed increase in funding will finally give Head Start agencies the resources they need to maintain enrollment, improve quality service levels, and provide for the necessary cost of living increase for teachers.

The Head Start Improvement for School Readiness Act of 2007 enhances teacher quality. That the Senate has shown that the right teaching training and successful instruction lead to successful Head Start programs. Right now, about a third of Head Start teachers hold a bachelor's degree. This bill will help increase the skills and training of more Head Start teachers and increase the quality of instruction for Head Start children. I am pleased this conference report retains the important roles parents have always maintained in Head Start programs, including ensuring parents' voices are heard in Head Start's daily operations.

The bill also increases a portion of the income eligibility guidelines from the current 100 percent of poverty level to children in families with income up to 130 percent of poverty. This is particularly important for States like New York, where the cost of living is higher than most States. Many programs need flexibility in serving these families earning just slightly above the poverty line, including the ability to assist families who have moved off welfare and are now working and struggling to make ends meet. For New York City, this provision means thousands more children will be able to participate in Head Start programs. This bill will give those hard working families support as they become self sustainable.

The bill also terminates use of the National Reporting System, NRS. I have expressed my concern about this test for several years now. In 2003, I joined my colleague Senator BINGAMAN in offering an amendment during the markup of Head Start to suspend the NRS. In 2005, the Government Accountability Office produced a report underscoring our concerns when it called into question the validity and reliability of the NRS. I am pleased this bill suspends the unfair NRS test and asks the National Academy of Sciences to make recommendations on an appropriate assessment for young children.

Head Start is critical to ensuring our most vulnerable children enter school ready to learn. Head Start has provided comprehensive services to low-income families—from health and nutrition, to academic skills and family literacy. I am pleased that we were able to move this bill forward in this session in a bipartisan manner. The Senate passage of this bill is a victory for our neediest children and the Head Start community that serves them.

Mr. KENNEDY. I move to reconsider the vote and to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, H. Con. Res. 258 is adopted, and a motion to reconsider that vote is considered made and laid on the table.

The resolution (H. Con. Res. 258) was agreed to by the Yeas—Mr. DORGAN, Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

FARM, NUTRITION, AND BIOENERGY ACT OF 2007—Continued

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is my understanding that we are on the farm bill?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. I send a cloture motion to the desk on the substitute.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Harkin amendment No. 3300 (Substitute) to H.R. 2149, the farm bill.


CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I send another cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Calendar No. 339, H.R. 2149, the Farm, Nutrition, and Bioenergy Act of 2007.


CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I indicated this morning that sometime today, unless something changed, I would file a cloture motion on the Dorgan-Grassley amendment and, as I have indicated, on the bill, which I have just done. I had a long conversation with the distinguished Senator from North Dakota. Very few people know the farm bill as well as he does. Certainly his partner in this amendment, Senator GRASSLEY—no one can dispute his knowledge of the farm bill.

It is the feeling of Senator DORGAN, after having conferred with Senator GRASSLEY, that it would be in the interests of the Senate, the farm community, and the country to go forward on cloture on that amendment at this time. I have followed their suggestion and that is why I did not go forward with this.

Unless something is worked out, it appears very clear—we have heard the debate all day on the farm bill. Tremendously difficult, hard work has gone on. The bill was reported out of the Agriculture Committee. Every Senator there voted for it. There was a recorded “no” vote, but that only says part of the story. The rest of the story is numerous Senators worked for weeks and months to arrive where a bill could come out of that committee. It came out here to the floor. It came out last week and we have tried to move forward on it. That we have been unable to do that was unfortunate.

I hope Senators who are called upon to vote cloture on this matter, would understand that the work of the committee was very good work. Does that mean there should not be amendments to improve it? Probably not. But if we did nothing more than pass the bill that came out of that committee and took it to conference with the House-passed bill, we would be way ahead of the game. I hope that is what Senators will understand.

I am confident virtually every Democratic Senator will vote for cloture on the farm bill, even though there are many Democratic Senators whose No. 1 industry in the State is not agriculture. But they recognize that agriculture is an important business for this country. It is an important business for this country for so many reasons, one of which is the farming and ranching industry in this country is exemplary. We are able to compete with the rest of the world, without any question. We have modern techniques that have gone into farming that have made our production extraordinary.

We now have, as represented by Senator Tester from Montana, one example—we have now a thriving business in America of organic farming. There are many people in this Senate who, when they go shopping, will only buy organic produce. That is part of this bill. Part of this bill recognizes that. It is very unfortunate that we have been stopped from going forward on this bill because people want to vote on immigration matters, they want to vote on tax matters, they want to vote on issues that are unrelated. I want to appeal to the Senate this morning, of all the nonrelevant, totally nongermane amendments that have been given to us.