

the varied and unique needs of individual States and localities.

FUND FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Consolidates 34 programs into ONE flexible, formula-driven Fund for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning to fund locally-determined needs and initiatives related to—

Increasing the capacity of local school districts, schools, teachers, and principals to provide a well-rounded and complete education for all students.

Increasing the number of teachers and principals who are effective in increasing student academic achievement.

Ensuring that low-income students are served by effective teachers and principals and have access to a high-quality instructional program in the core academic subjects.

SAFE AND HEALTHY STUDENTS BLOCK GRANT

Consolidates 25 programs into ONE flexible, formula-driven Safe and Healthy Students Block Grant to fund locally-determined needs and initiatives for improving students' safety, health, and well-being during and after the school day by—

Increasing the capacity of local school districts, schools, and local communities to create safe, healthy, supportive, and drug-free environments.

Carrying out programs designed to improve school safety and promote students' physical and mental health well-being, healthy eating and nutrition, and physical fitness.

Preventing and reducing substance abuse, school violence, and bullying.

Strengthening parent and community engagement to ensure a healthy, safe, and supportive school environment.

ENHANCED FLEXIBILITY THROUGH FUNDING TRANSFERABILITY

To provide additional funding flexibility to State and local school districts, under the Empowering Local Educational Decision Making Act of 2011 districts will be able to transfer up to 100% of their allocations under the Fund for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning and the Safe and Healthy Students Block Grant between the two programs or into Title I, Part A.

EMPOWERING PARENTS THROUGH QUALITY CHARTER SCHOOLS ACT 2011

SENATOR KIRK CHARTER SCHOOL BILL

This bill will modernize the charter school program by encouraging the expansion of high-quality charter schools and allowing charter school management organizations to receive assistance directly from the federal government.

Modernizes the Charter School Program to address present realities for public school choice, by incentivizing expansion and replication of successful charter models, providing support for authorizers, and enhanced opportunities for facilities financing.

Encourages states to support the development and expansion of charter schools.

Streamlines federal Charter School Program funding to reduce administrative burdens and improves funding opportunities for the replication of successful charter models and facilities assistance.

Allows proven, high-quality charter school management organizations to apply directly to the federal government, as well as local education agencies, deleting a layer of bureaucracy with the State government.

Facilitates the establishment of high-quality charter schools and further encourage choice, innovation and excellence in education.

Supports an evaluation of schools' impact on students, families, and communities,

while also encouraging sharing best practices between charters and traditional public schools.

THE STATE INNOVATION PILOT ACT OF 2011

The bill clarifies waiver authority that is currently in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The clarified waiver provision authorizes State educational agencies and local school districts to submit a request to the Secretary of Education to waive any statutory or regulatory requirement of the law.

State and local leadership: The bill improves the waiver authority currently in law by clarifying that the waiver process is intended to be led by state and local requests, not Washington mandates.

Deference to state and local judgment: If the Secretary chooses not to immediately approve a waiver request, the bill directs the Secretary to develop a peer review process that defers to state and local judgment on waiver requests.

Transparency: The bill ensures that the peer review process will be open and transparent so that it is clear what states and local school districts are asking to waive and what peer reviewers think about those waivers.

Prohibiting additional regulations: The bill prohibits the Secretary from imposing by regulation any additional requirements to waiver requests not authorized by Congress.

The bill encourages State and local education leadership in developing and implementing innovative strategies in:

College and career ready academic content and achievement standards for all public elementary and secondary school students;

High-quality academic assessments that are aligned with and are designed to measure the performance of local educational agencies and schools in meeting those standards; Accountability systems that are based on those college and career ready standards, as well as other academic indicators related to student achievement; and

Programs to improve principal and teacher quality and effectiveness.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, I wish to speak briefly on the subject of our relations with Pakistan.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

PAKISTAN

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, earlier this week, I gave a talk based on my service in Afghanistan as a reservist, about the growing threat of a new group to our forces in Afghanistan, ISAF, and the Afghan Government. It is not al-Qaida, which is armed and dangerous, but a shadow of its former shadow. It is not the Taliban, which is still extremely armed and dangerous. It is a new group called the Haqqani Network.

Recently, there was a high-profile attack on the Afghan Government and ISAF headquarters in Kabul, the cap-

ital of Afghanistan. The U.S. Ambassador 2 days ago then announced this was the work of the Haqqani Network. That is a very important factoid. Then yesterday, the Secretary of Defense also highlighted the Haqqani and pointed a direct finger at the Government of Pakistan and its intelligence service, the ISI.

It is all well known that while there are terrorists operating loosely in Pakistan who attack Afghans and Americans, it is the Haqqani Network that enjoys the official support and backing of the intelligence service of Pakistan.

Given this new information, and especially given the statement by the U.S. Ambassador in Afghanistan, Ryan Crocker, and now our Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta, the Senate should engage in an agonizing reappraisal of military assistance to Pakistan. We should base our reappraisal on the statements of our own Ambassador in Kabul and the Secretary of Defense himself.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I want to talk about the disaster funding debate that is going on this week.

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

DISASTER FUNDING

Mr. BLUNT. I appreciate the Presiding Officer's recognition.

Mr. President, this is a debate that has become the debate as part of the Burma Sanctions Act, which if we were debating the Burma Sanctions Act I would also be for Burma sanctions. But in the debate on disasters, Missouri has played an unfortunate leading role this year of all kinds.

We have had floods along the Mississippi River. We have had floods along the Missouri River. Joplin, MO—one of the bigger cities in our State—was hit by a tornado. We have evacuated a place in southeast Missouri, a floodway called Birds Point, where, for the first time since 1937, the Corps of Engineers decided that 130,000 or so acres had to be used as a floodway. All the crops that were already planted and up were, obviously, destroyed as part of that.

I was in that floodway for a couple of different days in August, and I will say, the resilience of Missouri farmers to get about 80 percent of that floodway back in soybeans means the economic loss, the crop loss, will not be what it was. But the recovery loss is substantial, as is the cost of rebuilding that levee back to the level it was before the Corps exercised the long plan that had not been used to take it down.

Tornadoes struck St. Louis at the airport and around Lambert Field, in communities around Lambert Field. Tornadoes in Joplin were significant. I mentioned on the floor of the Senate before that I live close to Joplin. It was