

U.S. taxpayers deserve better than this conference report. I did not sign this conference report last night and cannot in good conscience vote for this legislation.

But I will promise this to all of the Members who worked so hard to at least get a bill. I will continue to work and advocate on behalf of advancing agriculture.

I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

NATIONAL SCHOOL CHOICE WEEK

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, in America, education is one of the keys to success—but too many Kentucky children are trapped in failing schools. This week is National School Choice Week, an ideal time to remember that school choice can be an important option for children living in poverty.

Over 10,000 young Kentuckians a year drop out of school, with little likelihood to return and reduced prospects for the future. Dropping out before graduating high school very often subjects kids to added hardship. Studies by the U.S. Census Bureau show that the average high school dropout earns 42 percent less than a high school graduate without a college degree. And these failures of our school system fall hardest on minority and low-income children.

But the big government-educational complex too often cares more about the bricks and mortar of a failing school than the children attending it. Special interests, like those of unions, can outweigh the interests of individual students.

We need to provide increased opportunities for families to choose the education environment that best meets the needs of their children. School choice programs do just that—they empower parents.

There are two types of school choice programs. One program provides financial assistance for disadvantaged students to enroll in private schools. The second charter schools—are public schools that are entrepreneurial and free from many of the constraints of school district bureaucracies. Rather than focusing on red tape, they are sin-

gularly focused on academic achievement, and give parents the opportunity to choose the best school for their child.

Both types of programs offer families the opportunity to send their child to safer schools with a proven track record of success. They allow public education dollars to follow the student to the school of their parents' choosing and improve student performance. Surely parents, not bureaucrats, are the best judges of what school is right for their child.

In Washington, DC, studies have shown that the city's private school scholarship program has increased graduation rates by 21 percent. In Indiana, enrollment in the State's private school scholarship program has more than doubled this year, to nearly 20,000 students. Clearly parents in Indiana are pleased with the availability of this option.

Indiana charter school students also saw improvements in learning for math and reading compared to their traditional public school counterparts. If Indiana and Washington, DC, can offer their children better choices, why can't Kentucky do the same?

A recent poll shows that 72 percent of Kentuckians favor charter schools, and yet Kentucky is one of only seven States that does not allow them. I agree with the vast majority of Kentuckians who favor charter schools and have supported Federal incentives for States that permit them, and will continue to do so.

For these reasons, I am a proud sponsor of legislation in the Senate that would expand school choice and allow 11 million low-income students to take Federal funding to the public or private school they choose. This would give parents, not Washington or bloated school bureaucracies, the power to decide how to best use the education money allocated for their children. It would also ensure that students trapped in failing schools don't have to wait for those schools to get better to get a quality education.

While I was encouraged to see Kentucky's ranking among States has improved, more is still needed. Last year, 18 of Kentucky's 22 failing schools were in Jefferson County. Students trapped in failing schools, such as those in the Louisville area, need options before they fall too far behind.

School choice is a way out. For low-income families, it can break the cycle of poverty. Thanks to school choice, many young men and women who would otherwise not have had the opportunity to excel can grow up to become leaders in their communities and their country.

The current one-size-fits-all education system is not the best approach. Our Commonwealth needs to make fundamental changes so that that every child has the opportunity to leave a failing school. I'm grateful for the organizations across the Bluegrass State which are fighting to make that hap-

pen. Kentucky's school children are capable of great things; let's make sure we empower their parents to help their children succeed.

TRIBUTE TO DR. LOUIS ARNOLD

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I come to the floor today in celebration of the anniversary of Dr. Louis Arnold's birth. Dr. Arnold, or "the Flying Evangelist" as he is known by many in our home State, was born 100 years ago on January 19, 1914, in Buckeye, KY, and has spent his life in service to the Baptist church. He is the founding pastor of Clays Mill Road Baptist Church.

Dr. Arnold felt the call to preach early in life. At age 11, he began preaching to his classmates while they walked to and from school. Then, at 19, he publicly announced his call to preach and held his first sermon in the Mitchellsburg Baptist Church. Following that first sermon—the story goes—he gazed up into the stars with a Bible in hand and said, "Lord, I'd rather be a preacher than to be President of the United States."

Dr. Arnold got the nickname "the Flying Evangelist" during the second World War. Already the pastor of a church in Lexington, KY, he was called to pastor another church in Cincinnati, OH. The churches were separated by 85 miles of country road—too far of a drive to be able to preach at both Sunday services. Undeterred, Dr. Arnold bought an interest in a small plane and learned to fly. Now, not only could he easily commute between the two churches, but he could also fly to revivals and churches across the region. He even equipped his plane with a loudspeaker so he could preach from the sky over cities and towns.

Although Dr. Arnold was born in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, his message has spread far and wide. He has his own radio broadcast, "Preaching at Your Church," and his paper, "The Arnold Report," is mailed to all 50 States. He's organized churches and revivals in his home State of Kentucky as well as travelled abroad to places such as Mexico, Central America, Europe, and the Bahamas. He's written numerous books of sermon and Bible study, and dozens of inspirational novels which have sold in all 50 States and several foreign countries.

Dr. Arnold celebrated his 100th birthday by preaching at the Clays Mill Road Baptist Church; a remarkable testament to his conviction and faith that have not wavered in the more than 80 years since his first sermon. I ask my Senate colleagues to join me in recognizing Dr. Louis Arnold, an upstanding Kentucky citizen, on the occasion of his 100 years of life and his unwavering devotion to his faith.

TRIBUTE TO IRENE GAINER

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I want to congratulate Irene Gainer on her upcoming retirement from Federal service. Most of my colleagues know Irene through her husband, Senate Sergeant at Arms Terry Gainer, but today Irene gets the spotlight as I take a few minutes to recognize her impressive career.

Many great things come from Chicago, including Irene, who was born and raised in Chicago. Chicago is also where she met her husband Terry and started her first career as a nurse. She attended the College of St. Francis and St. Bernard's School of Nursing. During the early years of their marriage, Irene joined Terry as the Navy moved them around the country from Rhode Island to Virginia and then to California. In each State Irene worked as a nurse, and to this day she maintains her licenses and professional credentials in all three States.

Irene also worked in Illinois hospitals, including St. Bernard's Hospital, Christ Hospital, Central Community Hospital, and for 14 years at the Little Company of Mary Hospital.

In 1988, Irene started her second career—she began law school at John Marshall. Irene attended law school during the day, continued working nights as a nurse at Little Company of Mary Hospital, and—did I mention?—she and her husband were raising their six children.

After law school graduation in 1990, Irene accepted a job as Clerk in the Circuit Court of Cook County. She also worked for the State of Illinois as Assistant Director of Health and Energy Policy, served as General Counsel and Executive Director of the Illinois Alcoholism and Drug Dependence Association, and as an associate in a law firm.

Irene and Terry moved to Washington, DC in 1998. While living here in DC, Irene has worked for the National Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities, Sibley Memorial Hospital, and the Peace Corps. And for the past 5 years, she has been Director of the Hearing Office for the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Medicare Hearings and Appeals.

If Irene's busy career is any indication, there is little chance she will spend much idle time in retirement. Between volunteering with her local Catholic church and staying in touch with her six children spread around the world, she is sure to stay active.

I thank Irene for her many years of Federal service and wish her all the best in retirement. And I especially hope that she and Terry find lots of time to spend with their 14 grandchildren.

REMEMBERING ALEXIS "LEXIE"
KAMERMAN

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, on January 17, just days before our Nation observed a day in remembrance of Martin Luther King, Jr., a man recognized for

his nonviolent activism during the civil rights movement, a restaurant in Kabul, Afghanistan, popular with foreigners and expatriates, including Americans, was rocked by a terrorist attack, killing 21 people.

Tragically, we lost one of our own from Illinois during this act of senseless violence: Ms. Alexis "Lexie" Kamerman, a Chicago native who for years had dedicated herself to serving others and only the year prior had moved to Afghanistan, working with the American University there to help increase access to education for Afghan girls and women.

Lexie grew up in Chicago in my home State. She was a 2004 graduate of the Latin School of Chicago, a 2008 graduate of Knox College—where she was also an all-star conference water polo player—and she went on to receive her Masters in Higher Education from the University of Arizona.

Countless friends and family have described Lexie as generous, fearless, and passionate about helping to create a better world. It's no surprise that the 27-year-old found herself in Kabul, working as a student development specialist with American University of Afghanistan. American University of Afghanistan has been committed for years to extend high-quality, affordable education for Afghans, especially girls, who may not have had access to it otherwise.

Sadly, American University of Afghanistan lost another member of its family in the same attack: 29-year-old political science professor Alexandros Petersen from Washington, DC. He and Lexie both were too young, too bright, and too dedicated to helping others to be leaving the world so soon.

Afghanistan has seen many ups and downs over the years. But these heinous attacks on innocent civilians, people such as Lexie who work every day to help the Afghan people achieve a better future, are among the lowest of lows.

My deepest sympathies go out to Lexie's parents, Jack and Alison, and the rest of her family, as well as the family at American University of Afghanistan and to all victims of the attack and their loved ones. It is only fitting that Knox College has created a scholarship in Lexie's name, a well-deserved tribute for a young woman who was so dedicated to others and to the value of education during her all-too-short life.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
MEDICAL RESEARCH

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I rise today to correct some unfortunate remarks made on the floor this month and reaffirm my long-standing support for the medical research programs at the Department of Defense, most of which fall under the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program, or CDMRP. This program has led to major scientific breakthroughs since its cre-

ation in 1992 and it is one of my proudest accomplishments here in the U.S. Senate.

This program was created by me and together with my Defense Appropriations colleagues Senator Ted Stevens and Senator Daniel Inouye specifically in response to grassroots advocacy spearheaded by those who suffer from breast cancer, those who have survived it, and their families. The Department of Defense runs one of the largest health systems in the country, serving 9.6 million servicemembers, their families and military retirees, and as a result offered a unique opportunity to undertake Breast Cancer Research. Military families suffer from the same conditions and diseases that affect our society at large, and they also have disproportionate rates of some diseases as a result of their service. My colleagues and I believed that offering potentially lifesaving research specifically focused on this population was a logical step.

So we started with Breast Cancer research in 1992. In the 22 years this program has been funded, we have spent almost \$3 billion on Breast Cancer research, and \$7.5 billion overall on important research on numerous conditions through the Department of Defense. Millions of Americans, including those who receive their health care from DOD, have been touched by conditions such as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis—or Lou Gehrig's disease—autism, lung cancer, multiple sclerosis, neurofibromatosis, ovarian cancer, prostate cancer, tuberous sclerosis complex and many others.

And what has that investment yielded? It has paid dividends, with breakthroughs in our understanding of breast cancer. It led to the development of the revolutionary drug Herceptin that is saving and prolonging the lives of millions of American women every day. DOD breast cancer research directly contributed to the discovery of a frequently mutated gene that contributes to several cancers and the OncoVue breast cancer risk assessment test.

But this program's payoff has not been limited to breast cancer: Those who receive Coenzyme Q10 treatment for gulf war illness can thank DOD medical research. The prostate cancer treatment Zytiga received FDA approval in 2011 due to the rapid early-phase clinical testing funded by DOD. Research jointly funded by CDMRP, the National Institutes of Health—NIH—and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency are creating advanced prosthetics that are accurately recreating the movement of the human hand—which in recent trial allowed a quadriplegic to feed herself for the first time in years. These are just a few small examples of the many research, diagnosis, and treatment breakthroughs this research has brought about.