

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 I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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