

300 programs to go after those diseases in nearly 130 different countries. Since the beginning, the United States has been involved and we have said for every dollar that we contribute, we want \$2 from the rest of the world.

In some years we have fallen short. In some years the rest of the world has fallen short. But we need to continue to make a contribution.

Now, what troubles me is this: Last year, as a nation, we contributed \$547 million to the Global Fund. This year we will contribute less. The disease is not under control. The disease is growing faster than our contributions toward ending it. This year if we are lucky we will contribute \$438 million—far short of last year's contribution. And the Global Fund tells us that they need \$551 million from the United States. They will find matching funds 2 to 1 from around the world, and they have plenty of projects just like the one I described to you.

In that West Cape clinic right now 550 victims of HIV/AIDS are receiving the therapy that keeps them alive every day—550.

The universe of those who are eligible is 4,000, to give you an idea. As we contribute to the Global Fund, we are scratching the surface of what this disease is doing to the world around us. As we reduce our contributions to this Global Fund, it limits our ability to save people.

I have spoken, of course, about HIV/AIDS. The challenge of malaria is just as alarming. The Global Fund has been financing the treatment of over 30 million people for over 5 years, a huge increase from the 10,000 people currently treated with new drugs. They need money to do it. People die from malaria as they do from so many other things.

In addition, we have to understand that the fight against tuberculosis is one we can win but one we must assume our responsibility for.

We need to make certain when the supplemental appropriations bills come before Congress, as they are likely to in the next several months, that we revisit our contribution to the Global Fund, not just for those kids in Africa but for ourselves. That life lost in Africa may seem so distant and removed from our own lives but in some ways we are connected. We are all God's children. We all believe this Creator put us on Earth for a purpose, and that purpose is to care for the less fortunate of our brethren.

At the International AIDS Conference in Bangkok last July, Nelson Mandela, who is probably one of the greatest living people, declared:

History will surely judge us harshly if we do not respond with all the energy and resources that we can bring to bear in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Nelson Mandela is right. History will stand in judgment of the bill we pass today, the supplemental bill that will come, and the resolve of this Congress and this administration to make sure

that we continue to lead the world in this historic humanitarian effort.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The distinguished Senator from Tennessee is recognized.

IDEA CONFERENCE REPORT RATIFICATION

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I say a few words about the legislation passed last night that we call IDEA, to help children with disabilities.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which we have enacted is critical for the approximately 6.5 million children with special needs across the country, 125,000 of which I've in my home state of Tennessee.

The bill makes a number of substantial reforms. I would like to highlight two that I think are particularly important:

No. 1, the bill clarifies the definition of a highly qualified teacher, and

No. 2, the bill also creates a seamless early childhood program for children from birth until school age.

Research has shown that students taught by effective teachers greatly outperform those taught by ineffective teachers. That's why it is a priority for me to ensure that students have a highly qualified teacher in their classroom, especially special education students.

I am grateful language was included to clarify for schools what the definition of a highly qualified teacher means. This is particularly important for the 6,037 Certified Special Education teachers employed by Tennessee's public schools, especially for middle and high school teachers.

After the passage of No Child Left Behind, many middle and high school special ed teachers were concerned that they would have to become highly qualified in every subject—reading, math, history, science. The language in the Conference Report allows states to develop a Highly Objective Uniform State System of Evaluation, HOUSSSE, for special ed teachers teaching multiple core subjects. Teachers can also be deemed highly qualified if they meet the educational requirements for each subject under NCLB test or degree. This important flexibility gives states more options to determine what makes a special education highly qualified so that we can keep veteran teachers in these classrooms and enable new teachers to become highly qualified and dedicate their careers to these special children.

I am a strong supporter of early intervention to help children with special needs before they reach school age, so that when they enter school they can succeed. I'm pleased by the changes to the Part C early intervention program included in the conference report. This program has enabled millions of infants and toddlers with disabilities to enter school with

the skills they need to learn, grow and prosper. The bill before us today makes two needed changes to Part C.

First, it allows States to give parents the option of either (a) keeping a child in the Part C program until reaching school age, or (b) having their child transferred to the pre-school program at age three. This provides a comprehensive and fluid system of services for special needs children from birth to school age.

Second, it provides incentive grants to States that choose to give parents that option. Under the conference report, 15% of appropriated funds in excess of \$460 million for Part C will be dedicated to these incentive grants.

In Tennessee, about 5,730 children participate in the Part C program. One of these children is Kaylie, a little girl who was born with Down Syndrome. The hospital referred her family to the Kiwanis Center for Child Development for services as part of the Part C early childhood program. At the Kiwanis Center, Kaylie receives physical, occupational, and speech therapy—there is even a therapeutic pool. She is provided with child care where she interacts with other children her age. All these services are provided through various federal and state programs, but the Part C program was the critical link that coordinated these programs so she can receive them all at one site. Kaylie was only 8 months old when I told this story at our Senate HELP Committee mark-up of this bill; today she's about two years old. Under the current Part C system, when Kaylie turns 3 she will no longer be able to continue to receive this seamless system of services at Kiwanis. She will have to attend the half-day pre-school program at the local elementary school. That date is fast approaching. But the changes included in this Conference Report, that we are about to ratify, will allow the state of Tennessee to give Kaylie's family the option to stay in the Part C program and continue receiving services at the Kiwanis Center until she goes to Kindergarten. Any fees that Kaylie's family currently pays they will continue to pay. If Kaylie's family would like her to attend the local public school for pre-school they still will have the opportunity to send her. We ought to give her parents that choice, and I'm grateful we're acting in time to make that possible.

This is one more example of the Senate working in a bipartisan way.

This is a complex bill. It affected 6.5 million children with special needs across this country, and 125,000 of them were in Tennessee.

Again, I want to focus on two aspects of it, especially how it affects teachers and children and families all across the country.

First, it clarifies the definition of a highly qualified teacher. That is important because of the No Child Left Behind Act.

Second, it allows children with special needs who are receiving services in

the community to continue to do that after age 3 all the way up to the time they enter school. Today, those children may be provided one service here and one service here and one service here. When they get to age 3, they suddenly have to go into a certain preschool program. This gives more parents more choices, more flexibility, and it is a great advantage.

One very important aspect of the bill—it is the first thing I mentioned—is the definition of highly qualified teacher. This may not sound very important to people who aren't teachers with special needs children, but this has been a source of a lot of anxiety for teachers.

In elementary schools, in early grades, teachers teach a lot of subjects. If you are certified to be an elementary school special needs teacher, then you can be a highly qualified teacher. But when you get to the middle school and high school level, you will be teaching special needs children in math, science, English, history, and geography. The original legislation said a special needs teacher in Shawnee, KS, or Fort Dodge, KS would have to be qualified in special needs in English, in math, in science, history, and geography. That is quite a burden for a special needs teacher in high school in some districts. This legislation creates some flexibility. It creates a way for States to look at this in a practical way, and says in middle schools and high schools across this country when teachers are teaching special needs children, we are going to come up with a commonsense way to make sure they are highly qualified because these children deserve that, too, but to take into account the reality. We are talking about maybe 100,000 teachers in the middle and high schools, maybe 15,000 or 20,000 schools.

We have to be careful when we write a sentence about elementary and secondary education in America. We are not the national school board, or at least we shouldn't be. We need to make sure it is practical and realistic and gives as much flexibility as possible to communities and States to come up with what actually works with an individual child in an individual classroom. This is one disappointment I have with the bill.

Senator SESSIONS from Alabama and I tried to change the effective date of the definition of a highly qualified teacher for middle and high school. We said it ought to be a year from now. But the majority felt this new requirement should go into effect in August of next year, which is 6 or 7 months from now. I think that is a mistake.

What has to happen is the President has to sign this bill in December. Then the U.S. Department of Education has to interpret its regulations—that is January or February. Then the States have to come up with their new, flexible ways of determining what “highly qualified teacher” is. Then the teachers have to read it. They have to per-

haps do some professional development. They have to become certified. And all of this has to be done by July or August.

This is the kind of thing that does not build support for the No Child Left Behind Act. I think it very important that we remember while we may have a very good idea, we are not a national school board of the small school districts. This is a massive country with many different parts to it. We are dealing in this case with probably 100,000 teachers.

Overall, this is a very important bill and I am delighted to be a part of it. I commend especially Senators GREGG and KENNEDY for their leadership.

THE AMERICAN HISTORY AND CIVICS EDUCATION ACT OF 2004

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I wish to discuss H.R. 5360, the American History and Civics Act of 2004.

I support H.R. 5360, the American History and Civics Education Act of 2004. The bill represents an important step forward in the teaching of these critical subjects. The Senate acted last year on an earlier version of this bill that I sponsored along with the Senator from Nevada, Mr. REID. I introduced that bill in my Maiden Speech before the Senate, and we later voted 90-0 in support of its passage. The House has now passed its version of the bill, under the leadership of Congressman ROGER WICKER from Mississippi. Senate passage of the bill today will be the culmination of nearly two years of work on this important piece of legislation.

National exams show that three-quarters of the nation's 4th, 8th and 12th graders are not proficient in civics knowledge and one-third does not even have basic knowledge, making them “civic illiterates.”

Children are not learning about American history and civics because they are not being taught it. American history has been watered down, and civics is too often dropped from the curriculum entirely.

It is time to put the teaching of American history and civics back in its rightful place in our schools so our children can grow up learning what it means to be an American. This act does precisely that. It establishes Presidential Academies for Teachers of American History and Civics and Congressional Academies for Students of American History and Civics. Their purpose would be to inspire better teaching and more learning of our history and way of government. The Secretary of Education is authorized to provide grants to universities, libraries, museums, or other non-profits that demonstrate expertise in the core subjects of history and civics and government. For example, the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, which operates and maintains the home of our first President, might apply to host an academy at their historical site, focusing

on the history of the founding of our nation and the principles upon which it was founded.

Additionally, the bill allows the Secretary of Education to provide grants to the National History Day program, a year-long national program that trains teachers and sponsors a national competition among junior high and high school students, who produce dramatic performances, imaginative exhibits, multimedia documentaries and research papers based on research related to an annual theme.

I want to extend my gratitude to the Senators who have supported the bill here in the Senate: Senators FRIST, REID, GREGG, KENNEDY, STEVENS, and BYRD, among many others. And I want to thank our colleagues in the House who worked so hard on the bill, including Congressmen BOEHNER, MILLER, CASTLE, WOOLSEY, BLACKBURN, and especially Congressman WICKER who was the lead sponsor.

A strong, bipartisan team of players stood up for the future of our children and this nation by working on this legislation. With Senate passage, today is a great victory for everyone working to improve the teaching of American history and civics so our children can grow up learning what it means to be an American.

This bill will be coming, hopefully, before the Senate later today. It passed the Senate unanimously last year. Now it has passed the House and is coming back in an amended and improved version. I believe it has full support. The lead sponsor is the new Democratic leader of the Senate, HARRY REID. It is also sponsored by Senator KENNEDY and Senator BYRD, who testified for the bill. Most of the Republican Senators have cosponsored it.

This is a bill very simply to put teaching of American history and civics back into its rightful place—in schools where our children can grow up learning what it means to become an American.

It takes a modest step to establish Presidential Academies for Teachers of American History and Civics in the summer and the Congressional Academies for Students of American History and Civics. They are modeled after the very successful Governor's Schools that are in many States across the country where students and sometimes teachers go for 2 weeks or 4 weeks to learn particular subjects.

The reason for it is that high school seniors in the United States make the lowest scores of any subject on U.S. history. The lowest scores of any subject, according to the National Assessment for Educational Progress of America, for high school seniors are on U.S. history. That is absolutely disgraceful.

Here we are a nation at war, our principles are being attacked, and we are not teaching our children those principles. Here we are a nation that celebrates itself for being one for many with more new Americans coming than