

We know that children struggle when their families are not involved in their education; and that parents play the most important role in ensuring the success of their children. This legislation encourages a high level of family involvement, maintains the integral participation of parents in the day-to-day operations of the programs, and offers family members key roles as decisionmakers.

I am pleased that this bill also improves program accountability by further clarifying governance responsibilities and enhancing teacher quality expectations. While we establish goals for improving educational standards for staff, we acknowledge that current resources may not adequately support staff to pursue additional training, nor provide enough for increased wages; therefore, we do not make these standards mandatory.

Head Start must continue to maintain a core and integral role in our broader early childhood care and education systems as we expand our efforts to improve early education across this country. The legislation encourages greater collaboration and coordination with other early childhood development programs.

Passing the Head Start for School Readiness Act today is an important step forward to improve opportunities for low-income children. Nothing reduces poverty like learning, and Head Start gives children what they need to learn early. I look forward to working with my colleagues to see that this important legislation becomes law.●

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I would like to inquire of Chairman KENNEDY regarding the State advisory councils on early childhood education and care included in S. 556, the Head Start for School Readiness Act.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, S. 556 affirms the active role that States have in coordinating their system of early childhood education programs, and encourages States to enhance that role to increase the quality of programs available to young children. The act designates an early care and education council in each State for the purposes of conducting an inventory of children's needs and exploring the availability of prekindergarten opportunities; exploring areas for collaboration and coordination across programs; developing plans for data collection and to support the professional development of early childhood educators; and providing for the review and upgrading of State early learning standards. For those States prepared and interested in moving forward with a statewide plan encompassing these activities, S. 556 provides for one-time incentive grants to further develop and implement these important efforts.

S. 556 also permit States to designate an existing entity to serve as the State advisory council on early childhood education and care, if such entity includes representation consistent with members mentioned in the act.

Mrs. MURRAY. I thank the chairman for his explanation of these provisions. I am concerned, however, that it may not be practical for States with existing advisory councils to reconfigure their membership to reflect all of the individuals mentioned in the Head Start bill. In my home State of Washington, we are leading the way on early childhood coordination and reform with the establishment in 2005 of Governor Gregoire's cabinet-level Department of Early Learning and the Early Learning Council, which became the Early Learning Advisory Council. The council is working hard to make sure early learning programs in my State are aligned and are providing high quality services. However, I want to make sure that the council is not unduly burdened for being a leader, and that it will not have to reconstitute its membership. I ask the chairman for his commitment to work with me as this bill is considered in conference with the House, to further resolve this issue.

Mr. KENNEDY. I agree and would be happy to work with you on this issue. S. 556 directs Governors to designate specific individuals as members of the State advisory council to the maximum extent possible. While some members may need to be added by States to their existing councils in order to meet the goals of this legislation, I agree fully that Governors will need some flexibility in this function. Therefore, I support grant additional discretion as they consider the makeup and function of their existing councils in relation to the roles and responsibilities under this Act.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I share Senator MURRAY's concerns and appreciate the commitment to working with us on this issue.

S. 556 also includes specific responsibilities of the State advisory council regarding early childhood activities, professional development and opportunities for coordination and collaboration. My State of Connecticut has been a leader in promoting the coordination and improvement of early learning opportunities for young children and has successfully carried out activities that complement the responsibilities under this act. Connecticut's Early Childhood Education Cabinet, which includes many of the members required by the Head Start Act, already advises the State on policy and on initiatives to meet early childhood goals, conducts statewide evaluations of the school readiness programs, and promotes collaboration and consistency of quality services.

Is it the intention that States would be required to abandon the progress made with their existing efforts and begin new initiatives to fulfill their responsibilities under S. 556?

Mr. KENNEDY. I appreciate the Senator's inquiry on this important point. That is not my intention, and S. 556 does not stipulate any requirements for States to conduct new efforts concerning their assessment of children's

needs, opportunities for collaboration and coordination, the establishment of a unified data system, professional development activities, or other efforts described under the responsibilities of the State Advisory Council in this legislation. My own State of Massachusetts has also been a leader in carrying out several of these efforts through our own State Department of Early Care and Education.

Preexisting and current efforts in States to improve and enhance the quality of early childhood education programs would certainly help fulfill and count toward the responsibilities stipulated by the Head Start for School Readiness Act.

I ask Senator ENZI if he agrees with this point.

Mr. ENZI. I do agree with the chairman and would be happy to join him, Senator DODD, and Senator MURRAY in further clarifying these points as the conference committee considers S. 556 and begins its work on the reauthorization of the Head Start Act.

Mr. KENNEDY. I thank my colleagues for their work with me on these issues, and I commend them for their leadership on the important reforms in this bill.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the substitute amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table; that the bill, as amended, be read three times, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table; that the Senate insist upon its amendment, request a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses, and the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees on the part of the Senate; and that the HELP Committee be appointed as conferees, with the above occurring without further intervening action or debate.

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

The amendment (No. 1714) was agreed to.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill was read the third time and passed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER appointed Senators KENNEDY, DODD, HARKIN, MIKULSKI, BINGAMAN, MURRAY, REED, CLINTON, OBAMA, SANDERS, BROWN, ENZI, GREGG, ALEXANDER, BURR, ISAKSON, MURKOWSKI, HATCH, ROBERTS, ALLARD, and COBURN conferees on the part of the Senate.

ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, JUNE 20, 2007

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 9:30 a.m., Wednesday, June 20; that on Wednesday, following the prayer and pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved

to date, the morning hour be deemed expired, and the time for the two leaders reserved for their use later in the day; that the Senate then resume consideration of H.R. 6 and resume consideration of the DeMint amendment No. 1546 and that there be 30 minutes of debate prior to a vote in relation to the amendment, with the time equally divided and controlled between Senators DEMINT and BINGAMAN or their des-

ignees; that no amendment be in order prior to a vote in relation to the amendment; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote in relation to the amendment, without further intervening action or debate.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M.
TOMORROW

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate today, I now ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 8:18 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, June 20, 2007, at 9:30 a.m.