

worked together in an entirely bipartisan manner. Last month, they introduced the Wounded Warriors bill, which was entered as an amendment to the Defense authorization bill. The Wounded Warrior amendment addresses the substandard facilities, which we have all read about and have visited, such as Walter Reed, and the lack of seamless transition when medical care for troops is transferred from the Department of Defense to the Veterans' Administration, which often leads to diminished care.

The legislation also looks at the inadequacy of severance pay to help those who have sacrificed so much already to support their families while they recover, and the need to improve sharing of medical records between the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

It addresses the inadequate care and treatment for traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress syndrome by authorizing \$50 million for improved diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation. We saw this problem highlighted, as I have indicated, in the morning news. There are a number of stories about that, but the main story is in the L.A. Times, which cited a report by a special Pentagon task force showing that 38 percent of soldiers and 50 percent of National Guard members come home from Iraq and Afghanistan with mental health issues. Yet only 27 of these 1,400 VA hospitals have inpatient post-traumatic stress disorder programs.

Finally, the Wounded Warrior legislation provides support for wounded troops whose health insurance programs, such as the TRICARE program for retired veterans, have allowed gaps in medical coverage and treatment.

In the next few days, I intend to take the Wounded Warrior amendment from the Defense authorization bill—there were additions made to that from the time it left committee—and I will seek unanimous consent that we pass it now. The rest of it, with rare exception in the Defense authorization bill, if we passed it yesterday, wouldn't kick in until the beginning of the fiscal year. But the Wounded Warrior amendment legislation becomes law upon passage and approval. I hope we can do that. This would make these provisions immediately effective when the President signs this. Given the immediate care these people need, and the immediate need to act on the Wounded Warrior amendment, which has overwhelming bipartisan support, I am hoping we can all work together to pass it before we leave here. If we have to do it by unanimous consent, I hope we can do that.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

BIPARTISAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, to pick up on some of the observations of the majority leader, bipartisan accomplishments have been altogether too rare this year, but we do have an opportunity here in the next 2 weeks, as he has indicated, to do some good work on a bipartisan basis, and a good example of that will be later this morning.

I commend Senator KENNEDY, and particularly Senator ENZI, for their leadership on this higher education bill. That is a classic example of how we ought to operate more often in the Senate, and I hope we will reach that high standard more frequently for the balance of the year.

SUPPORTING AMERICA'S GLORIOUS FABRIC

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, from America's earliest days, bravery has been essential. A group of courageous farmers were the first to stand against the British. The Declaration of Independence was a death warrant for anyone who signed it. The Constitutional Convention took place in a shuttered room. The Founders were brave, and they knew bravery would be needed to maintain what they had built. As Washington wrote when the veterans of 1776 began to pass away:

Thus some of the pillars of the revolution fall. May our country never want props to support the glorious fabric.

We remember today two men who supported the glorious fabric of our country. Jacob Joseph Chestnut and John Gibson gave their lives on a Friday afternoon while standing sentry at the gates of this great citadel of liberty. The Chambers had fallen silent for the week, staffers were celebrating the passage of a law, tourists were studying old plaques, and the President was getting ready for a weekend trip to his camp when a madman pierced the calm routine of daily life in Washington, and a brave grandfather and young father stood strong against him.

Their heroism was duplicated by the Senator-surgeon who tried to keep the killer and his victims alive, by the British tourist who rushed to one of the victims' side to hear his last words, by the horde of officers who rushed the gunman. When the flags fell, thousands of Americans called the Capitol to grieve. Thousands more showed up to mourn the fallen officers and to honor the ideals they died for. An act of savagery had roused a nation to mercy and compassion. It was an instinct we would see again on an even darker day 3 years later.

We are grateful for the lives of these good men and for their sacrifice. They were not sunshine patriots. They were brave Americans who stood their ground, as Americans so often do, to ensure that the ceremony of freedom would go on. It does. It will. And they will not be forgotten.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

HIGHER EDUCATION AMENDMENTS OF 2007

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1642, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1642) to extend the authorization of programs under the Higher Education Act of 1965, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Coburn amendment No. 2369, to certify that taxpayers' dollars and students' tuition support educational rather than lobbying activities.

Kennedy amendment No. 2381 (to amendment No. 2369), of a perfecting nature.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The senior Senator from Massachusetts is recognized for 10 minutes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2381, AS MODIFIED

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I have a modification to my amendment that is at the desk, and I ask unanimous consent that the amendment be modified.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 2381), as modified, is as follows:

Strike all after the first word, and insert the following:

— DEMONSTRATION AND CERTIFICATION REGARDING THE USE OF CERTAIN FEDERAL FUNDS.

(a) PROHIBITION.—No Federal funds received by an institution of higher education or other postsecondary educational institution may be used to pay any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with any Federal action described in subsection (b).

(b) APPLICABILITY.—The prohibition in subsection (a) applies with respect to the following Federal actions:

(1) The awarding of any Federal contract.

(2) The making of any Federal grant.

(3) The making of any Federal loan.

(4) The entering into of any Federal cooperative agreement.

(5) The extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(c) LOBBYING AND EARMARKS.—No Federal student aid funding may be used to hire a registered lobbyist or pay any person or entity for securing an earmark.

(d) DEMONSTRATION AND CERTIFICATION.—Each institution of higher education or other postsecondary educational institution receiving Federal funding, as a condition for receiving such funding, shall annually demonstrate and certify to the Secretary of Education that the requirements of subsections (a) through (c) have been met.

(e) ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT AND ENFORCE.—The Secretary of Education shall take such actions as are necessary to ensure that the provisions of this section are vigorously implemented and enforced.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I also ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Oklahoma, Senator COBURN, be added as a cosponsor of the amendment at this time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, this amendment gives the assurance to our colleagues here in the Senate that over the evening we were able to work with Senator COBURN and to take into consideration his concerns to do this in a way which I think is consistent with our legislation. I am very pleased the Senator from Oklahoma and I, and Senator ENZI, were able to come to agreement on this amendment.

We all agree that universities should not be using Federal money for lobbying. That is why our amendment bans it. We all agree that Federal student aid should not be used to secure an earmark. That is why our amendment bans it. We all agree there should be a mechanism to ensure that these rules are being followed, and that is why our amendment requires colleges to certify they are following the rules.

This amendment will keep the Federal funds from being used for lobbying while maintaining the ability of colleges to engage in appropriate communications with Government officials. It will allow preeminent research scientists to communicate with the NIH about cancer research; it will allow meteorologists to advise Homeland Security on better ways to predict and prepare for imminent natural disasters; and it will allow scientists to convey to the Department of Defense the latest advances in armor and other protections for our troops.

This amendment strikes a good balance between prohibiting the inappropriate use of Federal student aid dollars while keeping the door open for colleges and employees and officials to communicate with Government in other important matters. That is what our amendment does, so I am pleased we could come up with an agreement, and I thank the Senator for his concern and for his cooperation.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I strongly support passage of S. 1642, the Higher Education Amendments of 2007.

This important bipartisan legislation, which I helped craft as a Member of the Senate Education Committee, would reauthorize the Higher Education Act for the first time since 1998, expand college access and affordability for students and their families, and ensure that teachers have the necessary skills and supports to effectively raise student achievement in the classroom.

This bill builds on our passage last week of the Higher Education Access Act, which makes a nearly \$14 billion investment in additional need-based grant assistance for low-income students. That bill also helps middle-class students and families pay down and manage their loan debt by capping monthly loan payments at 15 percent

of their discretionary income. And it sends a signal about the need for more talented young people to become nurses, teachers, and librarians by offering them loan forgiveness if they continue in public-service professions for 10 years.

Earlier this year, I introduced a bill aimed at making it easier for families to fill out the financial aid form that all students have to fill out to see if they can get tuition assistance. I called the bill the FAFSA Act, Financial Aid Form Simplification and Access Act. It is based on the recommendations of experts and should help make a sometimes difficult process less time consuming and frustrating. First, it would phase out the complex, one-size-fits-all long form at 7 pages and over 90 questions, using the savings to employ "smart" technology to create a tailored online application form to ensure that students answer only the minimum number of questions necessary. Second, the bill would establish a short paper EZ-FAFSA application form, similar to the IRS's 1040-EZ, for the lowest-income students. Third, this legislation allows students to apply for financial aid earlier, and it creates a pilot program to test an early application system under which students apply for aid and receive an aid estimate or determination in their junior year of high school. I am pleased that these provisions are included in the bill the Senate is passing today.

The Higher Education Amendments of 2007 also include provisions from another bill that I introduced earlier this year, the ACCESS Act. Accessing College through Comprehensive Early Outreach and State Partnerships Act—S. 938, modeled on successful programs like Indiana's 21st Century Scholars Program. Indeed, students in the Indiana initiative were nearly five times more likely than nonparticipants to enroll in college. The ACCESS Act creates a new incentive under the Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership or LEAP program to spur states to form partnerships with colleges, businesses, and philanthropies to increase the amount of need-based grants. This new initiative would also make sure that students are aware of this opportunity for more aid in the 7th grade and provide early intervention, mentoring, and outreach services so they can stay on track for college. Again, research has shown that successful college access programs offer these components, and I am glad the bill before us includes them.

Furthermore, the Higher Education Amendments include several provisions from my PRREP—Preparing, Recruiting, and Retaining Education Professionals—Act, S. 1231, to strengthen the existing Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants program and improve college teacher preparation programs. These provisions ensure that prospective and beginning teachers, including for the first time, early childhood educators, have effective teaching skills, inten-

sive, year-long pre-service clinical experiences, and high-quality, sustained multiyear mentoring and support in their first years of teaching. Too often, new teachers lack this kind of training and leave the profession. This bill aims to change that.

This legislation also includes my LIBRARIAN—Librarian Incentive to Boost Recruitment and Retention in Areas of Need—Act, S. 1121, to provide Perkins student loan forgiveness for full-time librarians with a master's degree in library science. Librarians working full-time in low-income areas would qualify for up to 100 percent Perkins student loan forgiveness depending on their number of years of experience. Indeed, a love of reading and books is essential to an educated workforce, but too often schools go without a trained librarian.

We hear often that serving in the military permits our military personnel to gain help with the costs of college when they leave the service, but all too often it is not enough. That is why I included language in this bill to increase Perkins loan forgiveness for members of the Armed Forces from 50 to 100 percent. The legislation also includes provisions I authored to create a career pathway for students with disabilities by providing training and support to middle school, high school, and university staff to encourage interest and understanding of educational and work-based opportunities for students, including those with disabilities, in disability-related fields.

I am also pleased this reauthorization bill includes provisions responding to recently uncovered conflicts of interests between lenders and college financial aid offices. This legislation provides students and families with increased disclosure about special arrangements between lenders and colleges and the terms and conditions of a school's "preferred lender list"; prohibits payments, gifts, and other inducements from lenders to colleges and financial aid administrators; and requires colleges to establish and follow a student loan code of conduct.

The bill we are passing today is significant legislation that addresses one of the top concerns of American families. It tackles the twin goals of increased college access and affordability for students and their families as was intended when the Higher Education Act was created in 1965. It represents an important step in ensuring that every student with the drive and talent to go to college has the opportunity to do so. I thank Chairman KENNEDY and Ranking Member ENZI, and their staffs, particularly Carmel Martin, J.D. LaRock, Missy Rohrbach, Erin Renner, and Emma Vadehra for their excellent work on this bill. I look forward to working with my colleagues to ensure that this important bill becomes law, so that we continue our commitment to creating and expanding educational opportunities for all students.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I am pleased to vote for the Higher Education Reauthorization Act because it will open the doors of college to more students across the country. I want to commend Senator KENNEDY for his leadership on this bill. I have been honored to work with him and the other members of the committee to produce this comprehensive solution.

In response to the recent student loan scandals, this bill reforms the student loan process so that it puts the interests of students first and makes the system more transparent. To help address rising college costs, this bill takes a number of steps to increase user-friendly information available to students and parents about college costs. I am also pleased that this bill will make it easier for students to apply for financial aid by replacing the current 10-page application with a new 2-page version. This bill offers more help for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Specifically, it strengthens TRIO programs to make students more prepared for higher education. It also expands and improves GEAR UP programs, which are a critical tool to help guide and prepare disadvantaged students for high school graduation and college enrollment.

I am especially pleased that the bill includes my proposal to train math and literacy coaches in colleges of education. As I have been working to improve our schools, I have recognized that we need to provide additional support to students in math and reading. By addressing those areas, we can improve the graduation rate and help students graduate prepared for college and careers. When I introduced the PASS Act, S. 611, earlier this year, I included reading and math coaches as a key way to improve the graduation rate. I am pleased that this higher education reauthorization includes a grants program that will help train those coaches, so we have a ready pipeline of qualified coaches to address these critical areas.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate Chairman KENNEDY and Ranking Member ENZI on passage of this very important legislation. I also thank them for their assistance in including within the Higher Education Amendments Act of 2007 a bill I have worked on, the Early Federal Pell Grant Commitment Demonstration Program.

The Early Federal Pell Grant Commitment Demonstration Program will bring us one step closer to making sure that every child has the opportunity to go to college. Our current higher education system is riddled with barriers that students must overcome to obtain the keys to their future—a college education. This program will break down some of those very barriers by making an early promise of Federal aid to students early enough in their academic careers so that the reality of a college education is firmly in their grasp.

How we choose to support our students today will have broad ramifications

for not only them but for our country 10, 20, and 30 years down the road. The consequences are dire if we do not take a more aggressive approach to make sure the doors to a college education are open wide enough so every student that wants to pursue a college education can do so regardless of their family income. If we maintain the status quo, the outlook for too many students is grim. Take, for example, the fact that over the next decade 2 million college-ready students from households with an income below \$50,000 will not attend college because they cannot afford the costs. Every door we fail to open for our students is a door closed—a missed opportunity—for our country down the road.

I commend my colleagues for their leadership in developing meaningful reforms regarding the cost of and access to a college education in this bill as well as the recently passed Higher Education Access Act of 2007. I am pleased that the Early Federal Pell Grant Commitment Demonstration Program is one component of those reforms—providing students and their families with a commitment of Federal aid early in their academic careers, information about the costs of college, and information about the various types of available financial aid. Right now, students don't find out whether they are eligible for Federal aid until their senior year—much less how much they will receive. This timeframe doesn't work for many families. Making a commitment—a promise—of Federal aid to students at an early age will begin the conversation about college earlier and continue it through the day they receive the acceptance letters from the schools of their choice.

If you have seen the news articles, or if you are putting a child through college, you know that the cost of a college education can be daunting to a student and their family. Many children think—erroneously—that they can't afford to go to college, and they go through high school thinking their futures are limited. We should not wait to tell those that need it that they will receive help to pay for college. Committing a Pell grant—the maximum of which is \$4,310 under current law and \$5,400 in the Senate-passed Higher Education Access Act—will critically alter the expectations of low-income students. For those students whose future plans often do not include college, this program will provide a financial promise, and the hope that comes with knowing you can afford a college degree.

Under this early commitment plan, four States will receive funding for a demonstration program, each of which will work with two cohorts of up to 10,000 8th grade students; one in school year 2008–2009, and one in school year 2009–2010. Schools with a National School Lunch Program participation rate above 50 percent would be eligible for the program, and by using the same eligibility criteria as the National

School Lunch Program, students would be identified based on need in the 8th grade.

The Early Federal Pell Grant Commitment Demonstration Program will also provide funding for states, in conjunction with the participating local educational agencies, to conduct targeted information campaigns beginning in the 8th grade and continuing through students' senior year. These campaigns will inform students and their families of the program and provide information about the cost of a college education, state and federal financial assistance, and the average amount of aid awards. A targeted information campaign, along with a guarantee of a Pell grant, will allow families and students to not just plan ahead for college, but to dream of a future that includes higher education.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, today, marks the culmination of yet another journey towards making college more affordable with the passage of the Higher Education Amendments, and with the passage several days ago of the Higher Education Reconciliation Act. It represents the single largest Federal investment in higher education since the GI bill. I am pleased to support this legislation because it reflects a commitment to expanding access to higher education and making it more affordable. It opens the door to those previously denied educational opportunity due to a lack of adequate financial resources or who could not carry the burden of excessive student loan obligations.

This legislation is a great victory for students and families across America, including my home State of Michigan, which would receive over \$80 million above the current \$429.8 million in new assistance for the upcoming academic year and an additional \$689.6 million over the next 5 years.

I have long supported efforts in the Senate to expand the availability of student aid and to ensure that students have access to a postsecondary education, including raising the maximum Pell grant award. This much-needed legislation increases the maximum Pell grant from \$4,310 to \$5,100 in 2008, building upon our efforts in February of this year when we passed a significant increase in the maximum Pell grant award to \$4,310 from \$4,050, the first increase in 4 years.

This legislation also increases the income level at which a student is eligible for the maximum Pell grant; caps monthly student loan payments at 15 percent of discretionary income; encourages public service by providing loan forgiveness for borrowers who commit to public service; simplifies the financial aid process for all students; and reforms the student loan system so that it works for students rather than lenders.

There is one fact that we cannot escape, which is that more and more students and families are struggling to pay for college at a time when access

to a higher education is increasingly important in a competitive, global economy where training beyond a high school education is required.

The legislation will protect working students by increasing the amount of student income sheltered from the financial aid process. The cap on Federal student loan payments at 15 percent of a borrower's discretionary income will bring much-needed relief to students with the burden of excessive loans. For example, a social worker in Michigan with one child earning \$45,620, with student loan debt of \$19,000, would have his or her monthly payments reduced by 12 percent. Forgiving the debt of borrowers who continue in public service careers, such as law enforcement, nursing or teaching for 10 years will be provided significant relief under this bill. For instance, a starting teacher in Michigan earning \$35,557 with the State average loan debt of \$18,942 could have monthly payments reduced by 20 percent. After 10 years of teaching, all remaining debt would be forgiven, in this case, a benefit worth \$10,906.

A student's access to higher education ought not depend on his or her family's income. Working families and aspiring students across this country are struggling to obtain the financial resources to secure a college education. Low and middle income students who have managed to enter and stay in college are graduating with unprecedented levels of debt. This legislation responds to this crisis.

The passage of this bipartisan legislation is a notable accomplishment.

(At the request of Mr. REID, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

• Mr. OBAMA. Mr. President, I first want to thank the chairman and ranking member of the HELP Committee—Senator KENNEDY and Senator ENZI—for their leadership in bringing this important legislation to the floor. I also appreciate their willingness to incorporate the ideas and concerns of the various committee members. I am pleased to urge my colleagues to support this comprehensive package to improve higher education. This is a worthy conclusion to the discussion that began last week, with the passage of the Higher Education Access Act, to make college more affordable and more accessible.

Education is the centerpiece of a deal America has entered into with its students: if you work hard, if you gain the right set of skills, and if you accept responsibility for your learning, you have a chance for a better life. That is the basic premise of education in our country.

And this deal includes a college degree. A college education and a diploma improve the chance of getting a good job, increase earning potential, and ease entry into the middle class.

Last week, we passed legislation making a college degree more accessible for many students, by increasing student financial aid. Today, we must

move forward on the remainder of a comprehensive package for college students and their families. In this legislation, we are asking colleges themselves to look more closely at the increases in their costs, and to report more information, so that students and families have a clearer picture of the cost of attendance.

We are reforming the student loan system, by shedding more light on the process, illuminating more clearly the arrangements between colleges and lenders, and prohibiting payments that give some lenders an unfair advantage. Instead, we must make sure that the system works to the advantage of students. We must act to curb the financial abuses that have been so widely reported at a few institutions, and that have hurt too many students. In this legislation, we have also increased access for many by making the process more user-friendly, by simplifying the financial aid application process, and by helping students plan for their college education earlier in their high school career. All these provisions of the Higher Education Amendments are worthy of the support of my colleagues.

There are two provisions in this legislation which I would especially like to thank my colleagues on the HELP Committee for supporting, and advancing. The first establishes an innovative method for teacher preparation. We know that teachers are the most important resource for students in our schools. And yet, too many students in high-need schools are taught by inadequately prepared teachers, who are often not ready for the challenges they face, and who often choose to leave the classroom too soon.

We must recruit talented Americans to become teachers, and we must help transform teaching, restoring its luster as a profession. We must better prepare prospective teachers, so that when they join the profession, they are successful and choose to stay, so that their students may share in that success. As we ask teachers and school leaders to accept more responsibility for student learning, we must do our part to adequately prepare teachers to achieve success.

Research shows that good preparation programs can make novice teachers effective more rapidly. This legislation includes a provision for residency programs to effectively prepare teachers for the reality of challenging classrooms. Teaching Residency Programs are school-based programs in which prospective teachers teach alongside a mentor teacher for one year, while undertaking coursework to attain teacher certification. Graduates of the program are placed in high-needs schools and continue to receive strong mentoring and support for their first years of teaching.

I am particularly proud that such Teaching Residency Programs are included in title II of these Higher Education Amendments, because it is a

model of effective teacher preparation that I have advocated since before I was elected to the Senate. I have seen firsthand the success of such a program in Chicago.

Teaching Residency Programs are based on what we know works best to prepare teachers. We know that mentoring is critical to help novice teachers improve their skills, and to retain many who might otherwise leave the profession within their first few years. We can no longer afford to lose high quality teachers because they are not adequately supported, or because they realize that they are not progressing in their chosen profession.

I am also pleased that the Higher Education Amendments we consider today contain a provision to support predominantly Black institutions—a proposal first suggested by my good friend, Representative DANNY DAVIS. These are colleges which serve a growing number of African-American students, most of whom are the first in their families to go to college and most of whom receive student financial aid. It is appropriate that we support such institutions, to help ensure that these colleges, in turn, support the efforts and talents of these students. Over the years, Congress has acknowledged the key role of similar institutions through provisions supporting historically Black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, and other colleges and universities whose mission includes educational opportunities for minority students.

The Higher Education Amendments we consider today contain much that will help our students be more successful. I am proud to have been involved in developing this legislation, and I urge my colleagues to support its passage.●

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I rise today in strong support of Wisconsin's students and families. Students work hard to get into college. Along with their families, they are working even harder to pay for college. However, the high cost of college, combined with the slow growth of family income and insufficient grant aid is pricing many Wisconsin students out of a college education. Today help is on the way.

To reverse this trend the Senate has acted on two bills that will significantly improve access to college and make a college education more affordable for students and families. The Higher Education Access Act will provide \$17.3 billion in new aid to students, paid for through reforms to the student loan industry, and the Higher Education Amendments extends a variety of important programs, such as work study, Perkins loans and TRIO. Both bills passed with strong bipartisan support and together, they represent a major victory for students and families.

Wisconsin students will benefit from \$32 million of new financial aid, including an increase in the maximum Pell award from \$4,310 to \$5,100 next school

year. Pell-eligible students should expect an additional \$430 in aid to help offset the cost of school. This legislation will also cap loan payments at 15 percent of a student's discretionary income, bringing needed relief to students from excessive loan burdens. Lastly, this bill provides loan forgiveness for students who choose careers in public service such as, nursing, teaching, or law enforcement for 10 years.

The Senate has made college access and affordability a top priority. I am proud of the bipartisan way the Senate has acted to give students around the country access to college and a chance at a better and more productive life. I am proud to support this bill.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I am here today to talk about the reauthorization of the Tribally Controlled College or University Assistance Act of 1978, which is reauthorized in conjunction with the Higher Education Act. As chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, I have been working closely with the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee to ensure that amendments enhancing tribal colleges and universities are included in S. 1642, the Higher Education Reauthorization Act.

Title IX of S. 1642 reauthorizes the Tribally Controlled College or University Assistance Act of 1978 and includes a new title to authorize Department of the Interior funding for institutional operations of the two tribally controlled postsecondary career and technical institutions: United Tribes Technical College and Navajo Technical College. Funding authorized under the Tribally Controlled College or University Assistance Act is essential as it provides the resources necessary for these institutions to continue to provide high quality, culturally relevant higher education opportunities for Indian students in Indian country.

I have been a longtime supporter of the Nation's tribal colleges and universities because I see how they benefit both their communities and individual students. There are 34 tribal colleges and universities throughout the United States. My home State of North Dakota is fortunate to have five of these remarkable institutions.

Tribal colleges and universities offer a wide range of accredited academic programs including many from areas of high need such as teacher education, business administration, and nursing. In addition to college level programming, tribal colleges and universities also offer much needed high school completion programs, job training, and college preparatory courses.

These vital institutions are essential to their tribal communities, many of them serving as community centers, public libraries, tribal archives, career and business centers, economic development centers, public meeting places and child and elder care centers.

Approximately 28,000 American Indian and Alaska Native students attend tribally controlled colleges and

universities across the country. Tribal colleges are located in isolated, remote areas, with high unemployment rates where average family income is approximately \$14,000.00—27 percent below the Federal poverty level. As a result, the cost of attending a mainstream institution, which for many reservation communities is several hours away, is prohibitively high, especially when tuition, travel, housing, textbooks, and other expenses are considered.

Most students attending tribal colleges are the first generation in their family to go to college. American Indians who earn a bachelor's degree or higher can expect to earn two times as much as those with a high school diploma and four times as much as those with no high school diploma. Tribal colleges are proven agents of change and provide real hope for the future of their graduates and their tribal economies.

I have been fortunate enough to hear from many American Indian students who have benefited from tribal colleges and universities, including one young woman who faced many challenges growing up on the Turtle Mountain Reservation in North Dakota.

As a young child, this young woman often felt isolated at school, but realized at a very young age that education was the key to making a better life for herself and enriching her community. This belief stayed with her throughout a particularly challenging period of her life in which she dropped out of high school and became a mother. This series of events provided her with even more incentive to seek education, so she enrolled in the Turtle Mountain Tribal College. She loved college, excelled and has earned her Ph.D. Her story illustrates the important role tribal colleges play in lifting Indian children and young adults, who have faced so many obstacles and adversity in their lives, out of poverty and despair.

In addition to the Tribal College Act reauthorization, S. 1642 reauthorizes a program for developing institutions under title III of the Higher Education Act specifically for the Nation's tribal colleges and universities. I fully support the adoption of the proposed changes that I believe will greatly enhance the tribal college's ability to provide higher education opportunities to their reservation communities.

Lastly, I applaud all institutions that serve American Indian students but we need to make sure that the proposed new title III program for "Native American-serving, nontribal institutions" included in S. 1642 does not negatively impact the already limited funding available for tribal colleges and universities.

I remain committed to finding ways to increase access to quality postsecondary opportunities for American Indian students and to further strengthen the capacity of tribal colleges. S. 1642 provides solid steps towards doing just that.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I speak today in support of passage of the Higher Education Act of 2007.

Last week, the Senate took an important step toward increasing access to higher education for low-income students by passing the Higher Education Access Act of 2007 which would increase student aid by approximately \$17 billion by cutting Federal subsidies to lenders and banks. Today, the Senate expands on last week's important work by passing the Higher Education Act of 2007, which reauthorizes programs under the Higher Education Act of 1965, including title II teacher education programs and title IV student aid programs.

Many students today dream of going to college but face hurdles to making that dream a reality, including financial hurdles, which for many low-income students can become insurmountable. This legislation helps students make their dreams of going to college a reality by reauthorizing a number of important programs that I support, including the Pell grant program, TRIO, GEAR UP, and LEAP. These programs seek to reduce the financial and college preparation barriers that many students face when applying to and attending college.

Higher education is one of the most important investments our Federal Government can make, and Congress created need-based student financial aid programs to ensure that individuals from low-income families are not denied postsecondary education because they cannot afford it. I am deeply concerned about the emergence of a widening educational gap between rich and poor. Statistics illustrate that students from low-income families are pursuing postsecondary education at a much slower rate than individuals from middle and upper income families.

Increasing the maximum award for Pell grants can help in closing the gap between college attendance rates of low-income students and students from middle and upper income families. I have led and supported many efforts to increase the maximum Pell grant award in recent years, including earlier this year when I joined with Senators KENNEDY, COLLINS, and COLEMAN in leading letters to the Senate Budget and Appropriations supporting the highest possible increase in the maximum Pell grant award. I am pleased that the Higher Education Act of 2007 increases the authorized maximum for Pell grants to \$6,300 by the 2011-2012 academic year, and I will continue to work with my colleagues to push for fiscally responsible increases in the Pell grant program in the coming years.

This legislation also makes important changes to the title II, Teacher Quality Partnership Grant Program to better train and prepare teachers for working in our Nation's classrooms. Access to high-quality teachers is a key determinant in student academic success at the elementary and secondary level. The provisions in this

legislation that promote mentoring and training new teachers through residency programs will help to ensure that new teachers entering our Nation's schools are better prepared and receive the support they need during their beginning years of teaching.

I was also pleased that the committee accepted language into the managers' package to ensure that the grants for training of teachers will promote a wide range of teaching skills, including measuring students on different forms of assessment, such as performance-based measures, student portfolios, and formative assessments. In an era of increased accountability at the local, State, and Federal level, we need to do all we can to promote more responsible and accurate assessment of students in our K-12 schools.

I remain concerned about the increased use of high-stakes standardized testing at the K-12 level, including using high-stakes standardized tests to make decisions regarding school accountability. By broadening the definition of student learning and teaching skills as this new title II language does, we can better ensure that teachers are trained to more accurately and responsibly measure student achievement through alternatives to high-stakes standardized testing.

This bill also takes important steps toward addressing the abuses in the student loan industry by requiring lenders, banks, and universities to provide more disclosure to students before these students take out education loans. The bill also prohibits campus employees from receiving gifts of more than nominal value from lenders or banks. I was pleased to cosponsor Senator KENNEDY's Student Loan Sunshine Act earlier this year and support the inclusion of those legislative provisions in this reauthorization bill.

The bill also includes language based on previous legislation I introduced that defines the terms "different campus" and "different population" for purposes of administering the Federal TRIO Program. I have long supported increased funding for TRIO Programs which provide education outreach services and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds as they pursue higher education. The language included in this bill ensures that higher education institutions with branch campuses geographically apart from each other can compete on equal footing for the important TRIO grants.

I am concerned that this bill may not adequately protect the privacy of individuals whose information is contained in Federal and State databases. Almost a year ago, I wrote to the Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education regarding the Commission's first draft report which contained language proposing the creation of a national student unit record tracking system, and I questioned whether such a system, if created, could adequately protect the privacy interests of the students it would be

tracking. The bill, while purporting to prohibit such systems, exempts any existing data systems that are used to operate programs authorized by the act, as well as any successor systems. Moreover, while the bill includes provisions to restrict access to the National Student Loan Data System, it includes no similar provisions for other Federal databases.

The bill also includes a pilot grant program to develop State-level postsecondary student data systems in five States. Grant recipients must comply with the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act, which prohibits certain policies and practices relating to disclosure of information; however, I believe additional protections may be necessary to ensure individual privacy. I plan to work with my colleagues on these matters as the bill moves forward.

Mr. President, the Higher Education Act of 1965 was one of the key Great Society programs that sought to extend the opportunity to pursue higher education to Americans of all backgrounds, regardless of their economic circumstances. With Senate passage of both the Higher Education Act today and the Higher Education Access Act of 2007 last week, we have acted to continue and expand upon these essential college access programs. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the coming weeks and years to continue to support and strengthen higher education programs. In an increasingly global and competitive 21st century, ensuring access to higher education for all Americans who wish to pursue it must remain a priority in Congress for many years to come.

Mr. WEBB. Mr. President, I wish to speak on behalf of an amendment I was very proud to cosponsor with Senator WARNER, the senior Senator from Virginia, that was passed by a unanimous vote while I was outside the Senate when we came into session yesterday. I thank Senator WARNER for his leadership on this bill, and I express my appreciation to the Senate for their support.

This amendment is called the minority-serving institution digital and wireless technology opportunity amendment. It will help close what is clearly a digital divide at minority institutions in the country. This was a bipartisan effort, as I pointed out, and it is directed toward ensuring we are addressing the current needs that exist in our colleges and universities by giving our students an opportunity to compete with anyone anywhere around the world.

Over 60 percent of jobs require information technology skills these days, and many jobs in the information technology field pay significantly higher salaries.

It is vital to our global competitiveness that all institutions of higher education provide their students with access to the most current information technology and equipment.

I commend our leadership and the HELP Committee for making these sorts of issues a priority on the bill we voted on today and for ensuring that our students have the tools necessary to succeed and compete in our changing economy.

This particular amendment will establish a new grant program to be administered by the Secretary of Education to assist historically Black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, and tribal colleges. These grants have a 5-year time period in which they have to be used. I believe they are highly appropriate in helping these minority institutions reach a level playing field.

Virginia is home to six historically Black colleges and universities—Norfolk State University, St. Paul's College, Virginia Union University, Hampton University, Virginia University of Lynchburg, and Virginia State University. These are examples of some of the universities that will be helped by this amendment.

Investing in our minority-serving institutions will give our students an opportunity to compete far more effectively in our global economy.

This amendment addresses the inequality of access to technology that exists in many cases because of technical and economic restraints.

I am looking forward to working closely with the appropriators to ensure that necessary funds are provided for this critical program.

I again thank my colleagues, in particular the esteemed senior Senator from Virginia, Mr. WARNER, for helping make adoption of this important amendment possible.

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, with the passage of the Higher Education Amendments of 2007, we have given the millions of students and families the key to unlock the door to a college education and the American dream. This bill represents an incredible victory for students and families, and we can be proud that in this new Congress we have renewed our commitment to students working hard to achieve the promise of America.

The Higher Education Amendments of 2007 is the first reauthorization of the Higher Education Act in nearly a decade and is the result of 2 years of bipartisan compromise. This legislation will reform the student loan industry and serve the best interests of our students.

I believe student loans should be an investment in the future. Sadly, for too many students, their student loans have become a barrier to following their dreams. That is why I am pleased this bill includes provisions from my Student Borrower Bill of Rights Act. My provisions will ensure all student borrowers have accurate and timely information on their loans and will provide much needed help to borrowers with disabilities. These provisions are a major step forward for students who have become disabled and are overwhelmed with student loan debt.

I am proud this legislation also includes provisions from my Non-Traditional Student Success Act, as the number of nontraditional students continues to increase on college campuses across America. These are students with children, students working while studying, and so many others. By including a provision to make Pell grants available year around, the Higher Education Amendments of 2007 provides the critical support these students need to complete their college education and makes college more accessible and affordable for them.

I also worked with my colleagues on the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee to author two new initiatives to help more students arrive at college ready for success. The first provision will provide the training and support necessary to place 10,000 new teachers in disadvantaged communities over the next 3 years. The other provision will supply comprehensive data and offer targeted assistance to increase the college-going rates of high school students in disadvantaged communities.

The Higher Education Amendments of 2007 will produce transparency in college cost for students. It will also promote strategies to recruit and prepare qualified teachers and will invest in financial literacy for students and parents. This legislation will simplify the Free Application for Federal Student Aid to improve the process of applying for student assistance and give families tools to plan for the cost of higher education. In addition, this bill will improve the TRIO/Upward Bound and the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness of Undergraduate Programs, strengthening the pathway to higher education for millions of low-income and first-generation students.

I am proud to be an original cosponsor of this legislation. I thank my Senate colleagues for making this groundbreaking investment in the next generation of American leaders.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I am pleased that the Senate passed today 5-year extension of the Higher Education Act to renew major programs that help ensure our Nation's students attain a college degree.

This legislation, with strong bipartisan support, also includes new measures to address rising college costs and would reform the student loan system so that it better serves students.

Last week, the Senate passed an important piece of legislation that will provide over \$17 billion in new grant aid to low-income college students—\$2.5 billion of which would go to help California's students afford college.

Nationwide, students and their families are struggling to pay the growing costs of a college education.

Four-year public university costs increased 52 percent, while the median family income only increased 3 percent during the school years from 1995–96 to 2005–06.

In California, even after financial aid is taken into account, 33 percent of the

median family income is needed to pay for 1 year of college at a 4-year public college.

As a result, many students rely on loans to finance their education—the percentage of undergraduates at 4-year public colleges with student loans has risen to 66 percent, especially among low-income students.

At the same time, lenders have been provided substantial government subsidies beyond what is required for participation and competition.

Specifically, this bill would raise the authorized level for the Pell grant maximum award by \$1,990 over 5 years—from the current \$4,310 level to \$6,300; authorize the U.S. Department of Education to award competitive grants for Teacher Preparation Programs that help recruit and retain high-quality teachers in high-need schools; improve programs that help low-income middle and high school students prepare for college. For example, GEAR UP program grantees, which serve over 150,000 California students, would be permitted to use funds for tutoring, extended school day programs or scholarships; create a nationwide “Higher Education Price Increase Watch List” of colleges whose costs are increasing at a rate greater than other schools and create a higher education price comparison index to help students and parents compare college tuition costs; require colleges to recommend lenders to their students based on the best interests of the students. It also prohibits payments from lenders to schools that create conflicts of interest; and simplify student financial aid forms by creating a new 2-page form for low-income students, and phasing out the current 10-page form for all applicants within 5 years.

The key reforms in this legislation will help ensure that college is more affordable for our young people and that they receive the education they deserve to succeed in our global economy. I am pleased that the Senate will pass this important legislation today.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I thank my colleagues Senator ENZI and Senator KENNEDY for making sure that the managers' package includes my amendment to add Kentucky State University to the list of historically Black colleges and universities, HBCU, that are eligible to receive funding for their graduate programs.

Kentucky State enjoys a proud heritage as the Commonwealth's only HBCU. Chartered by the Kentucky General Assembly in 1886, Kentucky State is one of the 15 original HBCUs recognized in the historic Morrill Act of 1890. In recent years, Kentucky State has developed strong undergraduate and graduate programs in the natural sciences, most notably aquaculture.

Earlier this year, I was pleased to visit with Kentucky State's president, Dr. Mary Evans Sias. During our meeting, Dr. Sias called my attention to the fact that Kentucky State's graduate

programs were not eligible to receive the Federal funding set aside for HBCU graduate programs because the institution was not among those schools listed in the Higher Education Act.

I told Dr. Sias I would try to help Kentucky State, and last week I introduced legislation, S. 1826, to add Kentucky State to the list of eligible institutions under the Higher Education Act. I thank my colleagues, Senator ENZI and Senator KENNEDY, for including this legislation in their managers' package. I am confident that it will go a long way towards strengthening Kentucky State's ability to serve the Commonwealth's students.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, paying for college is harder than it used to be. Over the last 5 years, the combined cost of tuition, fees, room and board at 4-year public colleges and universities increased by 42 percent, and more students are leaving college saddled with debt. More than two-thirds of 4-year college students now borrow to pay for school, and their average debt more than doubled between 1993 and 2004.

Unfortunately, we have learned that some lenders and some universities are engaging in practices that are not always based on what is in the best interests of the students. The New York Times revealed that some lenders have offered schools incentives to be placed on a college's “preferred lender” list. One example was an all-expense paid trip to the Caribbean for school officials and their spouses to attend an education “summit” held at a luxury five-star beachfront resort. Between symposiums and discussions on how important it is to address the cost of higher education, guests could enjoy complimentary water and beach sports, volleyball, and access to an 18-hole championship golf course, a 10-court tennis complex, two beachfront pools, and a luxury spa. News of the trip drew such a negative response that the sponsor of the trip, Loan to Learn, ultimately cancelled it. Other examples of incentives to schools include iPods given away at a financial aid administrators meeting and bonuses based on how much students borrow. Nothing about these incentives ensure that the lenders or the schools are looking to provide the best loan available for students.

The bill we are considering on the floor today, the renewal of the Higher Education Act, includes major provisions from a bill Senator KENNEDY and I introduced earlier this year, the Student Loan Sunshine Act. The Student Loan Sunshine Act reforms the student loan system so that it works for students, not lenders. The bill we are considering today ensures that colleges are recommending lenders to students based on the best interest of students, not the self-interest of financial aid officers. We protect students and parents from exploitation by lenders. Lenders are prohibited from providing inducements to colleges and financial aid administrators that create conflicts of interest. It also ensures that students

and their families have only the facts and can feel confident that they are receiving the best deal on their college loan.

I am also pleased that this bill includes key provisions from legislation I introduced earlier this year, the Campus Law Enforcement Emergency Response Act. Shortly after the Virginia Tech shootings, I introduced legislation to ensure that all colleges and universities develop emergency response procedures and campus notification systems, and test them at least annually.

The Higher Education Amendments Act before us today includes key elements of that bill. For example, the bill requires colleges and universities to develop procedures for responding to large-scale emergencies on campus and to test those procedures at least annually. This includes procedures for promptly notifying the campus community in case of such emergencies, a new competitive grant program to improve emergency response, and a new role for the Departments of Education, Justice, and Homeland Security to advise colleges and universities on model emergency response procedures and best practices. The language added to this bill will ensure that our colleges and universities are better prepared for emergency situations, and it will better protect those who live and work on college campuses from threats to their security.

This bill also simplifies the financial aid process, creates a pilot program to allow students to receive a financial aid estimate in their junior year of high school so they can make more informed choices when selecting which college to apply to.

The bill makes an important attempt to provide students and parents with more information on the cost of higher education. As I mentioned earlier, the cost of higher education has gone through the roof. Every time I meet with the presidents of colleges and universities from Illinois I ask them: What can we do to control the skyrocketing cost of higher education? This bill will create a Higher Education Price Increase Watch List, which will include a ranking of each institution of higher education whose tuition and fees are rising faster than the average. It directs the Secretary of Education to develop model price calculators to help students and families determine the net price of an institution of higher education. Universities will be required to publish this information in their application materials so it is easily accessible to prospective students. If we want to take a serious look at the rising cost of higher education, we have to make more information available to students and families about the real cost of attending college.

The Higher Education Amendments Act we are considering on the floor today strengthens many of the successful provisions of the Higher Education Act. It also addresses some of the new

problems and issues that have emerged in the area of higher education, including unethical practices in the student loan system, threats to the safety of our students on campuses, and the rising cost of college.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, as I understand, we have 20 minutes, and I want to give notice to our colleagues there will be two votes. There will be the vote on this perfecting amendment, which has been introduced by myself and Senator COBURN and others, and then the final passage. That will be in approximately, I don't know, 15 or 17 minutes.

How much time remains?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Massachusetts has 7 minutes remaining and the Senator from Wyoming has 10.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I will make some concluding comments, and I ask the Chair to let me know when there is 1 minute left, if the Chair would be so kind.

The Declaration of Independence proclaimed that we are all created equal. Our Constitution demands that we promote the general welfare. The words carved above the entrance to the Supreme Court are "Equal Justice Under Law." There is nothing more basic to who we are as Americans than those immortal words that lie at the foundation of our democracy, in that everyone counts, everyone matters, and everyone has a role to play in our society.

From our earliest days as a nation, education has been the mainstay of our society and the engine of the American dream. Our Nation's Founders knew that an educated citizenry would strengthen our land and build up the values and character that make us Americans. They invested in education because they looked to the future and saw an even greater America over the growing horizon.

We looked forward when we passed the GI bill, and it allowed service men and women coming back from the Second World War to get a college education. They became the greatest generation. The GI bill produced 67,000 doctors, 91,000 scientists, 238,000 teachers, and 450,000 engineers. It funded the education of three Presidents, three Supreme Court Justices, and about a dozen Senators who served in this Chamber.

That is the kind of vision we have had in America when it comes to education, and it is our vision today as we reclaim our destiny and invest once again in the next generation.

In these past few days, we have made a new promise to American students and families—a promise to invest more as a nation, to ensure that all of our young people—and we mean all—regardless of background, get the education they deserve and the training they need to succeed in today's global economy.

We have pledged here in the Senate that it doesn't matter where you are

from; what matters is where you are going. No American should be denied the right to go to college because of money.

Last week, we showed this commitment again when we made another new promise to students, providing them with the largest new investment in student aid since the GI bill. We increased the Pell grants. We provided relief for student loans by saying your monthly payments will never exceed 15 percent of your monthly income. We said: If you become a teacher, a firefighter, or enter other public service jobs, your loans will be forgiven after 10 years.

The bill before us brings about other key reforms that will make college more affordable to young Americans. Our legislation will take steps to ensure that the student loan system is working in the best interest of students by pursuing needed ethic reforms in the student loan industry. It will simplify the Federal financial aid application and delivery process to ensure that a complex system does not work as a barrier to access for low-income students. It demands that colleges do their part to keep college costs down. If we do our part to provide needed student aid, they must do their part to keep their tuition and fees reasonable.

It will reform and improve our teacher preparation system. Teachers are the backbone of our K-12 education system and this bill will promote high-quality teacher preparation programs and help recruit and retain high-quality teachers in high-need schools.

I thank all my colleagues, and in particular all the colleagues on the committee for the work they put in on this legislation. I especially thank MIKE ENZI, our ranking member, for all his leadership on this bipartisan legislation. This has been in the works for over 2 years—close to 2 years. I thank all the staff who have worked so hard over the past months to make this happen.

I want to personally mention those who have worked so hard on my staff. I would like to thank Michael Myers, who does a great job on all of the undertakings of our committee, and I am enormously grateful for his leadership and his friendship. I would like to thank Carmel Martin and J.D. LaRock, Missy Rohrbach, Nick Bath, Erin Renner, Emma Vadehra, David Johns, Raquel Alvarenga, Liz Maher, Jennifer Fay, Ches Garrison, Dave Ryan, Jay McCarthy, Lily Clark, Patrick Flaherty, and Brendan Gants.

As we mentioned, this has been a bipartisan effort, and I would also like to thank Senator ENZI's wonderful staff. Senator ENZI pointed out that they have worked very well and closely together, as we have seen over the course of the year. This is a major undertaking, and to be able to get this kind of joint effort on it has been a great tribute to all of those who have worked so hard. These staff members make such a difference to Senator ENZI, and

they have to me: Katherine McGuire, Ilyse Schuman, Greg Dean, Beth Buehlmann, Ann Clough, Adam Bridwell, Lindsay Hunsicker, and Kelly Hastings.

I would also like to thank MaryEllen McGuire, Sean Maher and Roger Hollingsworth of Senator DODD's staff; Rob Barron of Senator HARKIN's staff; Robin Juliano of Senator MIKULSKI's staff; Michael Yudin of Senator BINGAMAN's staff; Kathryn Young of Senator MURRAY's staff; Seth Gerson of Senator REED's staff; Mildred Otero of Senator CLINTON's staff; Steve Robinson of Senator OBAMA's staff; Huck Gutman of Senator SANDERS' staff; Will Jawando of Senator BROWN's staff.

I would like to thank especially Senator CONRAD and his terrific staff who have worked with us on these bills: Mary Naylor, Joan Huffer, Robin Hiestand, and Lisa Konwinski.

I would also like to thank David Cleary of Senator ALEXANDER's staff; Allison Dembeck of Senator GREGG's staff; Celia Sims of Senator BURR's staff; Glee Smith of Senator ISAKSON's staff; Karen McCarthy of Senator MURKOWSKI's staff; Juliann Andreen of Senator HATCH's staff; Suzanne Singleterry of Senator ALLARD's staff; Alison Anway of Senator ROBERTS' staff; and Matt Blackburn of Senator COBURN's staff, all of whom put in many hours making both of these bills a reality.

I would also like to thank the Parliamentarian, Alan Frumin, and Assistant Parliamentarians Elizabeth MacDonough, Peter Robinson, and Leigh Hildebrand for their assistance throughout the process. I would like to thank Paul Cullinan at the Congressional Budget Office, and his extremely knowledgeable and capable team—Deborah Kalcevic and Justin Humphrey—for working late nights and through the weekends to model and estimate the budgetary effects of the complex provisions in this bill. I thank them for their tireless dedication and commitment to understanding the intricacies of the law. I would also like to thank Mark Koster, Kristin Romero, and Amy Gaynor in the Senate Legislative Counsel's office, who also worked many long hours to assist the committee in drafting the language and working out the technical issues in the bill. Finally I would like to thank the members of the education team at the Congressional Research Service—Adam Stoll, Charmaine Mercer, Jeff Kuenzi, and Dave Smole whose expertise was invaluable throughout this process.

This legislation received unanimous bipartisan support in the committee, and I hope it will see the same broad support today. We know education is the real key to opportunity. This legislation reflects that knowledge. It is a commitment I believe we must make to ensure educational opportunity to each and every young person in this country.

I urge the Senate to approve this important legislation. Our students deserve nothing less.

I reserve the remainder of my time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The senior Senator from Wyoming is recognized for 10 minutes.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, it is always exciting when we get down to the end of a bill, particularly a bill where there has been good bipartisan participation and achievement, and this is one of those. This reauthorization bill we have been considering was reported out of the HELP Committee by a vote of 20 to nothing. It is the result of 3 years of bipartisan negotiations, and we can point to ideas in the bill in which both the Republican and Democratic members of the committee and people outside the committee have participated, proposed, and have wound up in the bill. In the end, it is a product with strong bipartisan support.

I would mention it is not going to be a perfect bill. I would be willing to say that about any bill we pass out of here, it is always a work in progress until it finally gets signed by the President. Quite often when they get signed by the President, they are not perfect bills either, but they are a perfect compromise when they get signed. That means both sides give a little bit, and we concentrate on those areas where there can be agreement. There are a lot of things both sides would like to have in this bill, but they are divisive rather than inclusive, and we have left out those divisive things, for the most part.

In conference committee, we will take care of some of the other things that are slightly divisive to make them more inclusive so the final bill will help as many students as possible. When I say "students," I am not just talking about college students. One of the things I hear back in Wyoming is: What about the kids who want to go to tech school? We include that sort of thing in here too. That is a program where they can get a certification that is recognized throughout the United States.

My wife was at the National Apprenticeship conference. It was the 75th anniversary of certification for apprenticeships and the theme song there was done by a friend of mine from Alaska who is the balladeer of Alaska. I am sure many of you have heard this song. It is: "I am an Educated Man." It talks about a person who has a little bit of trouble with the book-learning stuff, but if you give him a problem he can solve with his hands, he is an educated man. There are still a lot of jobs out there—and there always will be a lot of jobs out there—for which you have to have hands-on work. We cannot exclude those people from the education system. They are absolutely essential to our lives. This bill does some things for the ones who want to go to tech school too.

Senator WARNER, in a speech the other day mentioned, when he first went into the military, about a third of the people whom he went through basic training with couldn't read or write.

When they were assigned to a ship, there were jobs on those ships those people could do without being able to read or write. Today, the battleships are bigger and they are much more technical. It is a whole different level of education that has to be done for the people who run those battleships and do the jobs that are needed on the battleships.

That is what has happened with jobs throughout this country. Jobs change. It is very important that people who are in high school now realize that when they enter the job market, they are probably going to have 14 different careers—not 14 different jobs, not 14 different employers—14 different careers. Of those 14, 10 have not even been invented yet.

It is very important to get a good education so people throughout their lives can transition to the new jobs that are happening—because that will be happening. Those who do not get the knowledge and the capability to make the transfer to new careers will be left behind. We do not want that to happen.

This committee is in charge of education from birth to death. We have Head Start—we have already passed that through the Senate and it is in conference now. That takes care of preschool. Of course, we have 64 other programs besides that that deal with preschool, and we probably need to do something about the proliferation of programs that have a lot of overlap in that area, but we have the Head Start one already going through the process.

The next bill we have been told we will work on in the committee is No Child Left Behind. That takes care of kindergarten through 12th grade. There has been a commission that has been formed that has presented us with a lot of ideas about what needs to be done. It is a bipartisan commission. I am sure a lot of that will be incorporated in the bill. There has been good bipartisan work in the committee on the ideas that have to be incorporated, some of the tweaks that have to be in No Child Left Behind to make it work even better. There is quite a bit of agreement. It has worked, but it can work better. We will be working on that next.

Of course, this is the Higher Education Act. We did it in two pieces. I will have some more comments about that in a moment.

But there is another piece missing, and I am hoping our committee will work on that soon, and that is the Workforce Investment Act. We passed that through the Senate twice, unanimously, in each of the previous two Congresses, but it has never been conferred. We need to get that done; we could train 900,000 people a year to do higher skilled jobs. We don't need to keep exporting those jobs because we lack people with the skills. We need to train people with the skills. That is a bill that will do it. I think we have a good basis to work from on that and, again, a way to find bipartisan agreement. Some of the fear in the past is

what might happen in conference. The ones who had the fear of what might happen in conference will now be in charge of the conference, so that is not an excuse. We have to get that one done.

Education in America is both a right and privilege, and we have to get people to recognize the value of that privilege as we make sure all of them can have the education we promised—and we have made some very significant promises in those areas and have fulfilled many of them. This bill we are working on today is one of those. I am pleased we have been able to have both the reconciliation bill and the reauthorization bill considered within 5 days of one another.

By considering the entirety of the Higher Education Act, we are ensuring continued quality in the Federal student loan programs, while providing disclosure of information that students and their families need to make informed financial decisions. Those informed financial decisions—or uninformed ones—will have a significant impact on their future.

This is the second time in as many Congresses we have been on the brink of systemic reform of the Federal higher education programs. However, this time we will cross the brink and make these programs more efficient, as well as more effective. We will be allowed to meet the challenge of making higher education more accessible, more affordable, and particularly more accountable.

The American system of higher education is renowned throughout the world. American students will now be provided with the tools and assistance contained in both of these bills to complete their higher education and training and to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to be successful in the 21st century economy.

I supported reporting both bills out of committee. I did so with the expectation that they would be considered together as a whole by the Senate. I am very pleased that the Senate Democratic leadership worked with me and my colleagues to provide this opportunity to have an open and full debate on all aspects of the Higher Education Act. I look forward to moving both these bills together and ensuring a comprehensive reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. There is no reason they cannot be combined at this point in time.

As debate on this legislation comes to a close, it is necessary to thank those who have worked long and hard on this bill. First and foremost, I would like to thank Chairman KENNEDY. I would like to thank him for his commitment to keeping this process bipartisan and working with me and my Republican colleagues on the HELP Committee throughout this entire process, for maintaining an open position on ideas, and following through with those with focus so we could actually wind up with a bill.

And I thank him for his approach to the committee process so we use the markup to see what the intensity is and the number of improvements that are being suggested and not make it a straight up-or-down approach so we can modify them so they fit and we get the kind of bipartisanship that we have at this point in time. That is a tremendous task. I think our committee must handle about 40 percent of the things that come before the Senate, so it is a wide-ranging task and he does a marvelous job with it and he has been very inclusive and I thank him and congratulate him for that.

I thank those on my staff who have worked tirelessly—when I say “tirelessly,” I mean both sides have worked through evenings, weekends, and reached compromises—and later I will mention more specifically some of those people.

I think I have used my time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The time of the Senator has expired. The Senator from Massachusetts has 1 minute 10 seconds remaining.

Mr. KENNEDY. I see the Senator from Tennessee—if he would like to make use of my last minute to talk about education. He is a former Secretary of Education. He has been very much involved in education policy. If he would like to say a word to conclude our discussion?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The senior Senator from Tennessee is recognized.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I thank the Senator from Massachusetts.

The American people should be grateful to Senator KENNEDY and the committee and I believe this Senate, for increasing the opportunity for Americans of all ages to continue their education and, second, for continuing what arguably is our strongest asset in competition worldwide, our system of higher education.

I can recall the former President of Brazil saying to a number of us before he went back to Brazil: What we remember about the United States, he said, is the American University. There is nothing like it anywhere in the world and we have a responsibility to continue to keep it excellent and provide access to it.

I thank the chairman for offering me this time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. All time has expired. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I am going to ask for the yeas and nays on my amendment.

Mr. REID. Will the Senator withhold?

Mr. KENNEDY. I withhold.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, George Mitchell told me this. Of course, I didn't believe him, but I do now. One of my most difficult jobs is trying to determine when votes take place and what the schedule is.

I have not had a chance to speak to my friend, the comanager of this bill.

But I believe it would be in the best interests of the body—I have conferred with the staff of Senator MCCONNELL—that we have these votes—we have two votes is my understanding. All debate has been completed; is that right?

Mr. KENNEDY. The Senator is correct. We have one procedural matter we have to address, but then we will have the two votes.

Mr. REID. The procedural matter would not take any time?

Mr. KENNEDY. No time.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent—and I am doing this because I want everyone to be happy, and we don't need unanimous consent, but I am going to ask unanimous consent that the first vote occur at 12:25; then the second one occur—the second vote will be a 10-minute vote—and that there be no speeches in between the votes, we just vote on both of them, one right after the other.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, doesn't that run us into the policy meetings? We have some really important things to cover.

Mr. REID. I have spoken to Mr. Schiappa. He understands that. He was going to speak to either Senator HUTCHISON or Senator MCCONNELL. We have not heard anything back from them. We will try it at 12:20 with the same unanimous consent request I previously mentioned, except 5 minutes earlier.

I ask unanimous consent that the first vote will be at 12:20 and the second vote on final passage be immediately after the first vote, with no speeches in between.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, parliamentary inquiry: In lieu of voting now, there will be no votes until 12:20?

Mr. REID. What would happen, I have asked Senator COCHRAN and Senator BYRD to give their opening statements on homeland security.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I would like about 2 minutes to finish up the thank-yous on this bill.

Mr. REID. I say to my friend, we have lots of time for thank-yous now. Senator COCHRAN and Senator BYRD need to work their way up here.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, parliamentary inquiry: I ask for the yeas and nays both on my amendment and on final passage. I ask that it be in order now. I ask also unanimous consent that the yeas and nays on the Coburn amendment be vitiated.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered. The yeas and nays are vitiated on the Coburn amendment.

Is there a sufficient second? There appears to be a sufficient second.

Mr. KENNEDY. So the first amendment vote will be at 12:20. It will be on the Kennedy amendment. Is that correct?

And following that, the vote will be on final passage.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The first amendment will be the Kennedy amendment at 12:20, followed immediately by final passage.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ran out of time before I could thank members of my staff and others' staff who have participated in this bipartisan effort to get the Higher Education Act reauthorized. I would like to do that at this time because this bill is proof that a bipartisan effort can get a bill done.

In particular, I would like to thank Katherine McGuire, who is my committee staff director. She does an excellent job of keeping the trains running on time on a multitude of issues all at once. Her first higher education reauthorization was back in the early 1990s. She also provides an attitude and a focus that says: Let's get things done. And she is able to work with the other side, and has proven that she is trustworthy and knowledgeable on the issues. That goes a long way in making sure there can be a bipartisan effort, that willingness to work within common parameters and principles which helps us to get all of those things done.

I especially wish to thank Beth Buehlmann, who is my education policy director. Beth has devoted her career to improving educational opportunities for all Americans. From her work as a math teacher to her devotion to workforce training, Beth really knows what she is doing and brings extraordinary energy to the issue every day. Her knowledge and leadership have shaped education policy in our country over the last 30 years. She provides the same kind of focus and direction on education issues that Katherine does for the entire committee.

I also wish to thank the rest of the education team who greatly contributed to the bill: Ann Clough, Adam Briddell, Lindsay Hunsicker, and Kelly Hastings. They have worked diligently and, as I have mentioned, through weekends and evenings.

I also wish to thank Ilyse Schuman and her fantastic knowledge of working a bill through the Senate floor. She is one of the few lawyers I have on my staff. She gives that group of people a good name with her, again, work ethic, knowledge of the law, and wordsmithing.

I wish to thank Amy Shank, who is my budget expert, and has been doing that for several years. She knows the rules and the requirements and the capabilities of the budget process and keeps us all on our toes and ensures our work meets the budget requirements.

Finally, Greg Dean, who did a great job of organizing the amendment process. He is so attentive and he scurried to make sure that every little detail is plugged and that we are all up to speed on every one of those little details.

I would also like to thank members of Senator KENNEDY's staff for their hard work: Michael Myers does a great

job of coordinating with us and providing leadership on the issues, since they are in the leadership now. Senator KENNEDY's staff director does that kind of work and is very cooperative with our side and sensitive to the priorities we bring up.

I thank Carmel Martin, J.D. LaRock, Missy Rohrbach, Emma Vadehra, and Erin Renner for their expertise on the issues. You should see the talent of these people and their knowledge of education, which you do not get to see, but you get to see the result of their work as we present it. Sometimes we do not do justice to all of the effort that they have put in.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the members of the HELP Committee and their staffs for their hard work throughout the process. This is one of the most demanding committees. We cover, as I mentioned, 40 percent of the issues that come before the Senate. That requires a lot of time, a lot of knowledge, and such a wide variety of issues that I think the members get a college education about every month, a college course of education about every month as we cover these different issues. I appreciate their help especially working on this college education bill.

It has been an interesting road and about 3 years' worth of work and all of it on a bipartisan basis. I thank all of those who have participated.

I yield the floor.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, the Senator from Wyoming is typically thoughtful and gracious about his staff and mine as well.

As I said, I will include in the RECORD the wonderful work of all of the other staff.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following the second vote, the Senate then recess for the party conferences.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be a cosponsor on the Kennedy-Coburn amendment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I understand there will not be final action on any of this legislation except for the final two votes. Am I correct on that?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is correct.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I would suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Utah is recognized.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BRIGHAM YOUNG AND THE PIONEERS

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, today is July 24, which probably means not very much to most of the people in this Chamber, but in my home State, July 24 is close to the biggest day of the year. July 24 is the day that Brigham Young and the first group of Mormon pioneers came down the canyon outside of Salt Lake Valley and decided that was the place where they would stop. They had been coming across the Plains for months looking for a place to settle, and as Brigham Young rose up out of his wagon at the mouth of the canyon and looked down over the valley, he stared for a few moments and then turned to his associates and said: It is enough. This is the right place. They decided that was where they would settle. This date, therefore, became enshrined as the founding date of the State of Utah, and it has been celebrated with a parade ever since.

I remember as a young child being taken by my parents to sit in the upper window of a department store overlooking Main Street in Salt Lake City and watching as the floats and the cars went down the street.

I remember, as a little boy, that there was always one float that had a big banner on it that said "Pioneers;" that is, these are people who had actually come across the Plains before the railroad, either walking or in covered wagons—or primarily a combination of both—and had arrived in the valley. They were still alive when I was a little boy to watch them. One of them was my grandfather, who had been born in Birmingham, England, and been carried as a 2- and 3-year-old across the Plains by his father and mother and landed in Salt Lake City in the 1860s prior to the coming of the railroad.

I watched every parade, and that group of pioneers kept getting smaller and smaller each year. Finally, there was a parade where there were no pioneers. There was no one who had been part of that trek. But the parade lives on.

Senator HATCH and I were both scheduled to be in it today, as I have been in virtually every July 24 parade since I have been elected. But votes here on the floor of the Senate have made it impossible for us to do that and at the same time discharge our duties. So I simply wish to take note here on July 24 of the importance of that event and make this comment about it that I think may have some relevance to what we are doing today.

Those people came to Utah because they had no other choice. They came to Utah because they were—the first group of them—finally driven out of every other place in the United States where they had tried to settle. They had created a settlement in Ohio, and they were driven out. They had created a settlement in Missouri, and they were driven out. They had created a settlement in Illinois, and they were driven out. And there were many in their group who decided: We have had enough.

They decided to stay in the Midwest, give up their religion, give up their commitment to the cause that had held them together, and settle down in the hopes they would have peace with their neighbors. But that hardy group that decided they were not going to give up, that they were going to move someplace where everyone would leave them alone, deliberately chose Salt Lake Valley because nothing had ever been raised there before. It was part of the great American desert. John C. Freemont, the great frontiersman, offered \$1,000 for the first bushel of corn that could be raised in Salt Lake Valley. They faced enormous adversity to do what they did, to demonstrate their commitment to their religion and their convictions.

After 9/11, President Bush spoke to us in the National Cathedral, and he talked about adversity. Quoting an unknown source, he said: Adversity introduces us to ourselves. As the descendant of some of those pioneers, that is a lesson worth reminding ourselves of at least once a year. Adversity introduces us to ourselves. Those people, as they went through that adversity, discovered who they were and determined that they would not linger on the past and their adversity but they would be confident about their future. They built there in that forsaken valley not only trees and crops and houses but the foundation of a movement that now moves around the world.

I am grateful to them for what they did. I am grateful to them for the legacy of reminding us that the future is more important than the past, that our opportunities are more important than our grievances, and that when adversity has told us who we are, we should, in the words of a hymn they sang as they moved across the plains: Gird up our loins, fresh courage take, and move forward in the conviction that our God will never us forsake.

Today, on July 24, I share that with my fellow Senators in the belief that it is still good advice for our future.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Idaho is recognized.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I join the Senator from Utah in his comments. Many of the citizens of my State are members of the LDS Church and obviously strong leaders who have done exactly in Idaho what he said his forebears did in Utah. They made the deserts bloom, and they built a culture and a religious base that serves my State so very well today.

WESTERN WILDFIRES

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I have come to the floor to speak about something that is going on in the West as we speak, that is a tragedy in reality and something that certainly we all ought to be aware of. As I got on the plane Friday morning in Minneapolis in my commute to Idaho, a group of young men and women got on my plane: firefighters of the State of Missouri. They were flying to Idaho to

help Idahoans extinguish the wildfires burning there. I thank them and all of the brave firefighters who have been battling these immense wildfires in a season that is dramatic as we speak.

I got on the plane yesterday morning in Boise to return to Washington. Another group of young men and women, bedraggled, tired, and smelling of smoke, got on the plane to fly back to Minneapolis. That was another group of firefighters who were flown in from the Eastern United States to help out in Idaho and the Great Basin West. They were simply tired and returning home.

We are, in Idaho and in the West, at this moment experiencing one of the most dramatic wildfire seasons in our history. I say that because the season in reality has just started. From a historic perspective, it is late July, August, and September that the fire season we think of on our public lands, both forested and grasslands, usually begins.

Last year, we went through the worst fire season in history based on total acreage burned. As I speak, we are now ahead of last year and burning even greater. Headlines in the local largest daily in Idaho yesterday said: more fires burning in Idaho than any other State in the Nation, well over 600,000 acres burned and many burning.

Yesterday morning, five counties in the State of Idaho were declared a state of emergency due to those wildfires burning. Currently, the largest fire burning in the United States is the Murphy complex, estimated to be 570,000 acres; 7,500 people were evacuated from the area. Evacuations were being ordered across the State due to the number of fires and the extreme of the fire behavior: 100-degree temperatures in an area where that extraordinary heat has reduced the dew point to such a situation that anything that grows becomes kindling for a wildfire.

Of the 72 large fires in the United States, half of those burning today are in the State of Nevada and in my State of Idaho. The weather outlook has gone from bad to horrible, as these temperatures continue and as the Great Basin of the United States progressively dries out. More hot and dry weather is expected along with dry lightning, fires, and wind storms. As these lightning storms sweep through, literally thousands of strikes occur, and hundreds of fires can be set in one evening across the public lands of the West.

As I mentioned, the 2006 fire season broke several records, including acreage. By the end of this week, we will have surpassed that increase as it relates to time and place of the fire season. We have obviously not yet burned the 10 million acres of last year, but by measurement this fire season is now worse.

Almost 100 years ago, the Forest Service started something. They started with a commitment and a philosophy to full fire suppression. Now I take you to a little bit of history as to

what may be producing the very dramatic fire season we experienced last year and the year before, and we are now experiencing today. During that time, the Forest Service's aim was to extinguish every fire, man-made or lightning caused. With the exception of the last 15 years, the timber industry, on our public lands, enjoyed booming success during the same period. So while Mother Nature was not allowed to burn the forest, man was allowed to come in over the last 100 years and thin and clean. We called it logging. That produced the timber for the home and building industries. As a result, it is arguable that wildfires were kept somewhat under control. Not only did we put the fires out, but we were taking the fuels off the land.

In the 1990s, during the Clinton years, as a result of the impact of a variety of public policies, from the Endangered Species Act to the New Forest Management Act to the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act, and a lot of other combinations, we began to progressively reduce the overall cut of timber on public lands. In the 8 years of Bill Clinton, we reduced the allowable cut.

Here are the figures on this chart. It is patterned by revenue flow. We reduced the allowable cut of timber on our public lands by 80 percent—not 8 percent, by well over 80 percent. So if you follow the green line on this chart, you follow the revenue flow that was coming from our public lands through the U.S. Forest Service. Of course, it was during that time that the Forest Service had money. As a result, they had the money to fight the fires. Then you see the decline on the chart.

As we discontinued timber harvests on our public lands, the revenue no longer was produced. But something else was happening. We were leaving on our public lands dramatic increases in timber and brush and, in today's situation, fuel for the fires.

So in part, the West is burning today because of public policy, because of attitude, not because of Mother Nature. Mother Nature has ebbed and flowed over time. But when Mother Nature is taken out of balance by man's practices and policies, dramatic results can occur. As the revenues declined and they paralleled human activity on the public lands, dramatic increases in fire resulted.

What do we do about it? For the last several years I have stood on the Senate floor and participated in the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and chaired the Forestry Subcommittee for many of these years and have said openly and publicly: We, by our public policy, have destroyed the U.S. Forest Service. We bankrupted it. It no longer has any money. In so doing, we keep putting greater burden on it, and we won't fund it.

We are not in the habit of funding it because timber sales historically funded the U.S. Forest Service. It not only funded all of their practices, both logging and trail clearing and wildlife

management and habitat control, it did something else: It put money into the U.S. Treasury. We created a unique balance over the last 100 years because you can't predict a fire season. You have the revenue flow coming in. So we simply borrowed the money to fight fires from the different accounts of the U.S. Forest Service and at the end of the year, when the fire season was over and all the bills were paid, we simply replenished all of the accounts of the U.S. Forest Service that it used to manage the different components of the Forest Service itself.

It no longer happens today. We are still borrowing money from accounts to fight fires, but there is no money in the accounts. At the end of the year, because of tight budgets, we don't replenish the money from the general fund of the U.S. Government. There is no money there. Timber receipts used to fund the money, used to create the balance, used to do a lot of things. They no longer exist, in large part because of public policy.

What is happening in Idaho and across the West at this moment, when you see the valleys full of smoke and the mountains full of smoke and the skies with dark bands of carbon-filled air across the West, our natural resources are literally going up in smoke. What is burning out there are trees. It is also watersheds and water quality and wildlife habitat. All of that is disappearing in a ball of fire, and it should not be that way.

What are the solutions? Throwing more money at fire suppression? Well, we have been doing that by ever increasing amounts every year for the last 5 or 6 years, to the tune of billions of dollars annually.

I am the ranking member of the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee. I put in another half billion dollars to fight fires, and it will quickly go up in smoke at the rate the fires are burning in the West.

What is the solution? More active management? Yes. More active management on our public lands will help the fire situation because active management—if you look at the Healthy Forests Act we passed several years ago—means you are in there thinning, you are in there cleaning the underbrush, you are doing the kind of things that fire would have done naturally 100 years ago. But we changed the circumstance, and we changed the environment.

Fire is unique in that it can be beneficial if it is handled appropriately. If you have 100 trees per acre, and fire is allowed to amble through and burn out all of the underbrush, it does not kill the tree, in many instances. But if you have 400 trees per acre of the kind we have allowed to happen over the last good number of decades, then it burns everything because the fire is so intense by the volume of fuel on the forest floor. That is a circumstance the West is experiencing, as we speak.

Fire is a unique natural disaster because humankind has found a way to

fight it. It can change the situation that breeds fire. How do you fight a tornado? Well, you cannot. Yet it is called a natural disaster. How do you fight a hurricane? Well, you cannot. You can predict them, and you get out of their way, because it is a natural disaster. How do you fight a wildfire? Give me a shovel, give me the tools, give me a better environment—a managed environment, if you will—and I can fight a wildfire. Do not allow Federal judges to be land managers. Allow foresters to be land managers in the right context of public policy and you can fight a wildfire. Give me the tools necessary in the local communities to do so, and you can fight a wildfire. Allow me to use a chain saw selectively in the forest to thin them and clean them, and you can fight a wildfire. But, all in the name of the environment, we have decided to do none of these. We have decided to simply preserve and allow it to be natural.

Let me conclude with these thoughts. The fires that are burning in the West today are not natural. They are hotter, they are more intense, they are more destructive than any forest fires we have seen in our forests literally within a century. The reason is quite simple. The 100 trees per acre I talked about that Lewis and Clark might have ambled through 200 years ago are the same acres in which there are now 400 trees. Because of the heat and the drought, they are dead or dying, and they have created a fuel load on our forest floor that is unprecedented. Yet, we, by public policy, have tied the hands of our land managers. As a result, literally millions of acres are now burning annually. For what reason? I believe it is because we, as a manager of public and natural resources, have failed.

There are reasonable ways to do so. There is an alternative besides simply locking it up and letting it burn. Yes, the skies of Idaho and the Great Basin West are full of smoke at this moment. That smoke is our natural resources going up in smoke, literally.

If we are worried about climate change, and we are worried about the carbon we are putting into the atmosphere, the fires on the public lands of this Nation this year will put more carbon in the atmosphere than any 1 year of automobile driving. Yet somehow there are those who are willing to ignore it only in the reality that it is nature and uncontrollable. I would argue that is not true because 30 years ago we did not have these kinds of fires, and 20 years ago we did not have them, even though we had peaks of drought and dryness and heat.

Our professionals told us some time ago if we did not become, once again, active managers of our public land resource it would go up in smoke—and it is.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BAYH). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASEY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, this afternoon, the Senate will proceed to the Homeland Security bill. I speak in advance of that happening.

In every State of the Union Address since the terrorist attacks on 9/11, the President has raised the specter of another attack. This past January, the President said—hear me, the President said:

Every success against the terrorists is a reminder of the shoreless ambitions of this enemy . . . I wish I could report to you that the dangers had ended. They have not. It remains the policy of this government to use every lawful and proper tool of intelligence, diplomacy, law enforcement and military action to do our duty . . . to protect the American people.

Let me say that again. The President said:

Every success against the terrorists is a reminder of the shoreless ambitions of this enemy . . . I wish I could report to you that the dangers had ended. They have not. It remains the policy of this government to use every lawful and proper tool of intelligence, diplomacy, law enforcement and military action to do our duty—

To do our duty—

to protect the American people.

And yet despite the President's warnings and the President's promises, the President's budget failed to commit significant resources to address these dangers. Too often the Department of Homeland Security settles for security that looks good on paper but leaves serious gaps in the defense of our homeland. There is too much rhetoric on homeland security and too little action; too much wind—too much wind—and not enough wisdom.

Despite the August 2006 arrests in Britain of terrorists determined to blow passenger aircraft out of the sky over the Atlantic, we still don't have proven technology to detect liquid explosives.

I wish to say that again. Hear me now; hear me. Despite the August 2006 arrests in Britain of terrorists determined to blow passenger aircraft out of the sky over the Atlantic, we still don't have proven technology to detect liquid explosives.

On an average day, 7,500 tons of cargo is placed in the holds of passenger aircraft at our Nation's airports, little of which is screened for explosives and virtually none is screened for radiation. Our seaports remain vulnerable. Our police, firefighters, emergency medical teams, and emergency managers remain understaffed and underprepared to handle the challenges of the times.

The White House—hear me down there—the White House talks a good

game, but talk is cheap, cheap, cheap. But security is not cheap. The White House asserted that its budget proposes an 8-percent increase for the Department of Homeland Security. However, after sifting through the gimmicks, we found that it is a 1.7-percent increase above current funding. That is barely enough to cover inflation for existing programs. More paper security; more paper security. More failed promises; more failed promises. We have a responsibility. We have a responsibility; yes, we have a responsibility to the people of this country to do better, and this legislation meets that responsibility.

For border security, the bill provides the funds to hire 3,000 new Border Patrol agents. The bill also includes \$1 billion for border fencing, infrastructure, and technology. Our bill adds funds for 4,000 new detention beds, 3,050 more detention beds than are requested by the President. Get that? We commit the funds that are essential for a coordinated, comprehensive border security effort.

Real security cannot be done on the cheap. Hear me. Real security cannot be done on the cheap.

For aviation security, the bill invests funds that will help save lives, and it may be your life, it may be your life, it may be your life, maybe someone's life whom you know, it may be some child's life, but it cannot be done on the cheap.

Despite a documented need for \$3.6 billion to purchase and install explosives detection systems, the President—get this—the President, the President of the United States, proposes to cut, the explosives detection program by 17 percent. The bill provides \$89.4 million above the President's request to purchase and install explosives detection equipment at airports. That is for you, the people of this country, to install this equipment at airports for your security.

We take on the challenge of screening cargo before it is loaded onto aircraft, which you, the people of this country—the passengers—will board.

The bill includes \$66 million, \$10 million above the request—\$10 million above the President's request—to deploy 70 additional canine teams—God bless them, those good, great dogs—to deploy 70 additional canine teams, and more screening technology at airports nationwide, at airports where the people of this country will board nationwide.

Funds are also provided to establish 20 radiation screening teams at key U.S. international airports to inspect aircraft and cargo. You, the people out there, will be boarding these aircraft. Let me say it again. Funds are also provided to establish 20 radiation screening teams at key U.S. international airports to inspect aircraft, which you will board, and cargo, which will be boarded by you, the people. All of this money is well spent. It will protect human lives and cargo and aircraft.

In this legislation, we also speed up the work on disaster preparation. Two years ago—how soon we forget—just 2 years ago, Hurricane Katrina demonstrated our dismal failure in dealing with a major disaster. Hurricane Rita showed that we do not know how to organize an effective mass evacuation. I want to say that again. Hurricane Rita showed that we do not know how to organize an effective mass evacuation. Now, we better get on it. We better get with it. I am going to say it once again: Hurricane Rita showed that we—that is you and that is me—do not know how to organize an effective mass evacuation. That is hard to believe.

Maybe it isn't so hard.

The White House After Action Report on the hurricanes concluded, and I quote from that report. I am quoting from the White House After Action Report, not my report.

We are not as prepared as we need to be at all levels within this country.

We are not as prepared as we need to be at all levels within the country. What an understatement. What an understatement. Yet the President's budget proposes a \$1.2 billion cut—a cut—in vital homeland security grant programs, including funds for disaster preparations and first responder training. Where, oh where, is the sense in that?

According to the Department of Homeland Security's own estimates, two-thirds of the States and urban areas do not have adequate plans to respond to a catastrophic event. This legislation rejects the proposed budget cuts and puts us on the right track—planning and training for a catastrophic event.

The bill that is before the Senate increases first responder funding by \$644 million. The President signed the SAFE Port Act last year with great fanfare. Yet 9 months later, his budget—the President's budget—includes no additional funds for the new security requirements contained in the law that the President signed. This bill makes good on the promises of the SAFE Port Act, hiring specialists to help inspect the 11 million containers that come into the United States every year. The bill commits funds directly to our ports to tighten security.

Let me say that again: The bill commits funds directly to our ports to tighten security—security for you, the people out there—at the ports. Port security grants are increased by \$190 million to the fully authorized level of \$400 million. We double the frequency of unannounced Coast Guard inspections at our port facilities.

Get that? You better wake up out there. I am going to say it again: We double the frequency of unannounced Coast Guard inspections at our port facilities, and we fund the installation of radiation detection equipment at our ports to guard against nuclear weapons and dirty bombs. I will say that again: We fund the installation of radiation detection equipment at our ports to

guard against nuclear weapons and dirty bombs.

The threat at our ports needs to be addressed now. It is foolish to delay any longer. In order to restore the ill-considered cuts proposed by the President for equipping and training our first responders, and to fund the increases that I have described for border, port, and aviation security, the bill exceeds the President's request by \$2.25 billion.

Incredibly, President Bush has threatened to veto the homeland security funding bill. Why? Because of what he, the President, labels as excessive spending. Excessive spending. That is what President Bush said. Let me read that again: President Bush has threatened to veto the homeland security funding bill—that is for you, the people out there in the hills and valleys of this great land. Why? He has threatened to veto the homeland security funding bill because of what he labels as excessive spending.

The \$2.25 billion increase in this bill is about what we spend in 1 week—in Iraq. Let me say that again. Now listen to me. Hear me now. Incredibly, President Bush has threatened to veto the homeland security funding bill because of what he labels as excessive spending. Yet the \$2.25 billion increase in this bill is about what we spend in 1 week in Iraq.

Just 2 weeks ago, the Secretary of Homeland Security was quoted as saying that it was his gut feeling that the United States faces an increased threat of attack this summer. Now, that is not ROBERT BYRD making that assertion. Let me say it again. Just 2 weeks ago, the Secretary of Homeland Security was quoted as saying—did you hear that—he was quoted as saying that it was his gut feeling—that is pretty deep—that our country faces an increased threat of attack this summer. That is now, isn't it? This is July. This summer.

On the heels of the Secretary's warnings, the administration, our administration, the Bush administration, has released its latest National Intelligence Estimate concerning the terrorist threat to the U.S. homeland. Where is that? Here, the U.S. homeland. I will quote from the report. This is not ROBERT BYRD talking, this is the report, the National Intelligence Estimate, concerning the terrorist threat to the U.S. homeland.

We judge the U.S. Homeland will face a persistent and evolving terrorist threat over the next three years. The main threat comes from Islamic terrorist groups and cells, especially al-Qaida, driven by their undiminished intent to attack the Homeland—

That is my homeland. That is your homeland.

and a continued effort by these terrorist groups to adapt and improve their capabilities. . . . [W]e judge that al-Qaida will intensify its efforts to put operatives here.

Where? Not out there, here. Here is everywhere in our homeland.

As a result, we judge that the United States currently is in a heightened threat

environment. . . We assess that al-Qaida's Homeland plotting is likely to continue to focus on prominent political, economic and infrastructure targets with the goal of producing mass casualties, visually dramatic destruction, significant economic aftershocks, and/or fear among the U.S. population.

These are the words written by the best intelligence analysts in our Government. Those are the words that should force our Government, both in the executive and in the legislative branches, to reevaluate the priority that we are giving to funding to stop terrorist attacks against this country, our country—my country, your country, our country.

I call on the President—yes, I call on the President of the United States—to reconsider his veto threat in light of the concerns raised by his own administration.

The mission of the Department of Homeland Security is critical to the safety of our citizens. The potential threats are enormous. The Congress must strike a balance that preserves our cherished freedoms and provides for enhanced security.

We need to stop squabbling and pass the Homeland Security bill for the President's speedy signature. This is no time to jockey for political points or to argue over minor differences. The Appropriations Committee, by a vote of 29 to 0, has produced a balanced and responsible bill which needs action now.

I thank Senator COCHRAN and his able staff for their support in producing this legislation.

I yield the floor.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, will the Senator yield for just one moment? Mr. BYRD. I yield.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I am pleased this afternoon to join Senator BYRD in presenting the appropriations bill for the Department of Homeland Security for the next fiscal year. I might say, having sat here and listened to all the comments of the distinguished chairman, there is another side to the story on some of the issues that he raised, and I assure the Senate that they will have an opportunity to hear the other side.

Mr. BYRD. Yes, Mr. President, I thank my dear friend and colleague. The Senate needs to hear the other side; all sides, all sides. I thank my colleague, and I yield the floor.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 2381

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question occurs on amendment No. 2381, as modified, offered by the Senator from Massachusetts, Mr. KENNEDY. The yeas and nays have been ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant journal clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. BIDEN), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. DODD), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON), and the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA) are necessarily absent.

Mr. LOTT. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Kansas (Mr. BROWNBACK), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 93, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 274 Leg.]

YEAS—93

Akaka	Domenici	McConnell
Alexander	Dorgan	Menendez
Allard	Durbin	Mikulski
Barrasso	Ensign	Murkowski
Baucus	Enzi	Murray
Bayh	Feingold	Nelson (FL)
Bennett	Feinstein	Nelson (NE)
Bingaman	Grassley	Pryor
Bond	Gregg	Reed
Boxer	Hagel	Reid
Brown	Harkin	Roberts
Bunning	Hatch	Rockefeller
Burr	Hutchison	Salazar
Byrd	Inhofe	Sanders
Cantwell	Inouye	Schumer
Cardin	Isakson	Sessions
Carper	Kennedy	Shelby
Casey	Kerry	Smith
Chambliss	Klobuchar	Snowe
Clinton	Kohl	Specter
Coburn	Kyl	Stabenow
Cochran	Landrieu	Stevens
Coleman	Lautenberg	Sununu
Collins	Leahy	Tester
Conrad	Levin	Thune
Corker	Lieberman	Vitter
Cornyn	Lincoln	Voinovich
Craig	Lott	Warner
Crapo	Lugar	Webb
DeMint	Martinez	Whitehouse
Dole	McCaskey	Wyden

NOT VOTING—7

Biden	Graham	Obama
Brownback	Johnson	
Dodd	McCain	

The amendment (No. 2381) as modified, was agreed to.

CHANGE OF VOTE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, on rollcall vote 273, I voted "yea." It was my intention to vote "nay." I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to change my vote since it will not affect the outcome of the vote.

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

Under the previous order, the question is on agreeing to amendment No. 2369, as amended, offered by the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN).

The amendment (No. 2369), as amended, was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute, as amended.

The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute, as amended, was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall it pass?

The yeas and nays have been ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) and the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA) are necessarily absent.

Mr. LOTT. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Kansas (Mr. BROWNBACK), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

The result was announced—yeas 95, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 275 Leg.]

YEAS—95

Akaka	Dole	McConnell
Alexander	Domenici	Menendez
Allard	Dorgan	Mikulski
Barrasso	Durbin	Murkowski
Baucus	Ensign	Murray
Bayh	Enzi	Nelson (FL)
Bennett	Feingold	Nelson (NE)
Biden	Feinstein	Pryor
Bingaman	Grassley	Reed
Bond	Gregg	Reid
Boxer	Hagel	Roberts
Brown	Harkin	Rockefeller
Bunning	Hatch	Salazar
Burr	Hutchison	Sanders
Byrd	Inhofe	Schumer
Cantwell	Inouye	Sessions
Cardin	Isakson	Shelby
Carper	Kennedy	Smith
Casey	Kerry	Snowe
Chambliss	Klobuchar	Specter
Clinton	Kohl	Stabenow
Coburn	Kyl	Stevens
Cochran	Landrieu	Sununu
Coleman	Lautenberg	Tester
Collins	Leahy	Thune
Conrad	Levin	Vitter
Corker	Lieberman	Voinovich
Cornyn	Lincoln	Warner
Craig	Lott	Webb
Crapo	Lugar	Whitehouse
DeMint	Martinez	Wyden
Dodd	McCaskey	

NOT VOTING—5

Brownback	Johnson	Obama
Graham	McCain	

The bill (S. 1642), as amended, was passed, as follows:

(The bill will be printed in a future edition of the RECORD.)

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1:01 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. CARPER).

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2008

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.R. 2638, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2638) making appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who seeks recognition?

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.