

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

(The remarks of Mr. LIEBERMAN, pertaining to the introduction of S. 160, are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

TRIBUTE TO CLAIBORNE PELL

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, on January 1, Claiborne Pell died. Claiborne Pell was a Senator from Rhode Island, the longest serving Senator from that State, a Senator whose name is known by most college students and by most people who care about education in America because he was largely responsible for helping to create in 1973 what we now call the Pell grant, a Federal scholarship that follows students to the college of their choice. It was originally called the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant, but Pell grant is a lot easier to say. It is a remarkable success in our country. He deserves to be remembered for that success.

I knew him as a staff member when I came here with Senator Howard Baker, who was here just a few hours ago as we were sworn in. That was 42 years ago. I knew him as Education Secretary in 1991 and 1992.

The American higher education system is, at a time when we worry about some of our institutions, one of our great secret weapons in America, one of our great strengths. One reason for that is because of Federal grants and loans.

It all started not with the Pell grant but just at the end of World War II with the GI bill for veterans. It was a college scholarship. Actually, it was an educational scholarship the veterans could spend wherever they wished, and the "wherever they wished" point is the important point because many of those men and some women who came back from World War II used their GI bill money to go to high school. Some used it to go to college in other countries of the world.

No one said you can't go to the University of Delaware or you must go to Notre Dame or you can't go to Brown University or you can't go to a Historically Black College. The GI bill for veterans followed the student to the college of that student's choice.

It was not universally popular. The president of the University of Chicago,

Mr. Hutchins, said at the time that it would create a campus full of hobos because college at that time was for a very limited number of Americans.

At the end of World War II, only 5 percent of Americans 25 and older had completed at least 4 years of college. But today, according to the most recent figures, that figure is six times that. Nearly 30 percent of Americans have completed 4 years of college.

First, the GI bill after World War II, then the Pell grant in 1973, then the various loans the Federal Government allows for students. So today, 60 percent of the men and women who go to American colleges and universities have a Federal grant or Federal loan to help them pay for college.

It is never easy to afford college. The average tuition at a 4-year private school is about \$25,000 today, and you add to that your living expenses. It is important to remember that an average tuition at a 4-year public university is about \$6,500, and the average tuition and fees for community colleges is \$2,400.

So Senator Pell, by his leadership and his work as chairman of the Education Subcommittee of our Health, Education, and Labor Committee, helped add to the legacy of the GI bill for veterans and helped make it possible for so many Americans to go to college.

I wish to conclude my remarks and honor Senator Pell with a thought about our future. I have always wondered why if the Pell grant was such a good idea for colleges, why don't we try it for kindergarten through the 12th grade.

We seem to overlook the fact that American students can choose their college and the money follows the student to the college. It might be Nashville Auto Diesel College. It might be Harvard University. But we don't give the money to the school, we give it to the student to decide where to go. That was a happy accident that happened with the GI bill, and it was a happy accident that happened in 1973.

I remember saying to one distinguished Member of this body: You know, the Pell grant is a voucher.

This Senator recoiled from that and said: I am opposed to vouchers.

I said: But you are not opposed to the Pell grant, are you?

And she said: Well, no, that is different.

I would argue that is not different at all. What we have done in kindergarten to 12th grade is give the money directly to institutions, and we, in that sense, create local educational monopolies and limit the amount of competition in choice.

We can look at our experience with higher education and see how it is generally considered to be by far the best in the world. We not only have the best colleges and universities in the world, we have almost all of them. Then we look at our system of kindergarten through the 12th grade.

The Presiding Officer has been Governor of his State. He worked hard on charter schools. We have all tried many different ideas to try to improve kindergarten through 12th grade, but we have never quite seemed to be able to make it as effective as our success with higher education.

That is why in 2004 I suggested on the Senate floor that we try the idea of a Pell grant for kids. I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD following my remarks the remarks I made on the Senate floor on May 17, 2004, about Pell grants for kids.

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

(See Exhibit 1.)

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, to summarize them, they were simply this: Why not look to the example of our higher education system and try it with kindergarten through the 12th grade? The Pell grants for kids I proposed was to give every single child from a middle- or low-income family a \$500 scholarship that would follow them to the school or other accredited academic program of their choice. These would be new Federal dollars so no district would see its share of money from Washington cut, and it would give less wealthy families many of the same choices that families with money already have.

As one example, across our country we see art and music lessons cut in schools. As budgets get tight, they are the first things that are cut. The kids who go to the schools from the areas that have less money from property taxes and less money from sales taxes are not able to have the art and music courses. If they had a \$500 Pell grant for kids, they might take it to an after-school program for art or afterschool program for music, or the parents might get together and go to the school the children attend and say: Look, there are 20 of us with these \$500 Pell grants. We will all come here if you hire an art teacher part time or a music teacher part time. It would give parents some consumer power, it would give children opportunities, and it would give schools with less money more money.

This is an idea I hope we can seriously consider as we look ahead to the future of American public education. We should recognize that there are a great many school districts with children who have less money and less of a tax base than others and that we have had a wonderful example with the GI bill for veterans and with Pell grants in colleges and universities.

So why not try it in a limited way to see if it would help improve opportunity and education in kindergarten through the 12th grade as it has in college.

My main purpose today is to honor Claiborne Pell. He served 36 years with distinction. He contributed greatly to the opportunities of education in America. He did it with dignity, and he did it with intelligence. We respect

him, we miss him, and we honor his legacy.

I yield the floor.

EXHIBIT 1

A half century after *Brown v. Board of Education*, education on equal terms still eludes too many African-American school children. Secretary of Education Rod Paige has called America's persistent racial achievement gap "the civil rights issue of our time."

By the 12th grade, only one in six black students and one in five Hispanic students are reading at grade level. Math scores are equally disturbing. Only 3 percent of blacks and 4 percent of Hispanics test at proficient levels by their senior year. By another standard, about 60 percent of African-American children read at or below basic level at the end of the 4th grade, while 75 percent of white students read at basic or above at the end of the 4th grade.

There is still a huge achievement gap among African-American children and white children. The No Child Left Behind Act's system of standards and accountability is creating a foundation for closing the gap. But funding disparities between rich and poor—too often minority children attend poorer schools—school districts remain a stubborn contributor to inequality. Between 1996 and 2000, poor students fell further behind their wealthier peers in seven out of nine key indicators, including reading, math and science.

These outcomes cry out for a different model, one that helps address funding and equality without raising property taxes; that introduces entrepreneurship and choice into a system of monopolies; and that offers school districts more federal dollars to implement the requirements of No Child Left Behind with fewer strings—in other words, more federal dollars, fewer federal strings, and more parental say over how the federal dollars are spent.

Does this sound too good to be true? I would suggest it is not.

Look no further than our nation's best-in-the-world higher educational system. There we find the Pell grant program, which has diversified and strengthened America's colleges and universities by applying the principles of autonomy and competition. This year, \$13 billion in Pell grants and work study and \$42 billion in student loans will follow America's students to the colleges of their choice. This is in sharp contrast to the local monopolies we have created in kindergarten through the 12th grade education, where dollars flow directly to schools with little or no say from parents.

That is why I am proposing Pell Grants for Kids, an annual \$500 scholarship that would follow every middle- and low-income child to the school or other accredited academic program of his or her parent's choosing. These are new federal dollars, so no district would see a cut in its share of Washington's \$35 billion annual appropriations for K-12, and increases in funding for students with disabilities would continue. Armed with new purchasing power, parents could directly support their school's priorities, or they could pay for tutoring, for lessons and other services in the private market. Parents in affluent school districts do this all the time.

Pell Grants for Kids would give less wealthy families the same opportunities—an example is the Holiday family in Nashville, Tennessee.

Raymon Holiday is a 6th grader who recently won the American Lung Association of Tennessee's clean air poster contest. I was there when he won the 10-speed bicycle you get for winning this poster competition. I met his father, an art major, and his grandfather, a retired art teacher. They told me

his great-grandfather was a musician. So you can see where Raymon Holiday gets his instincts. His grandfather, the retired art teacher, lamented to me that art classes are usually the first to go when school budgets are cut. With Pell Grants for Kids, in a typical middle school of 600 students, Raymon might be one of 500 middle- or low-income students who qualify to receive a \$500 Pell grant. His middle school would see a \$250,000 increase in funding. Raymon would be assured of art lessons.

The Pell grant model also encourages great American entrepreneurship. Enterprising principals, like Raymon's principal, might design programs to attract parental investment: advanced math classes, writing workshops, after school programs, English lessons—whatever is lacking due to funding constraints.

Surveys continue to show that while Americans are concerned with the state of public education, most support their own child's public school.

Herman Smith, superintendent of schools in Bryan, Texas, would welcome the \$6 million that would accompany 13,500 eligible Bryan students—90 percent of his district. Bryan is right next door to College Station, home of Texas A&M where, according to Smith, their budget cuts are larger than Bryan dreams of spending for new programs and personnel. Property values there are double those in Bryan, as is the per-pupil expenditure. Not surprisingly, Bryan's population is almost half African-American or Latino, while College Station is three-quarters white.

With 30 million American school children eligible for Pell Grants for Kids, my fellow fiscal conservatives are probably raising an eyebrow. But please listen. Every year, Congress appropriates increases in funding for kindergarten through the 12th grade. What I am offering here is a plan to earmark most of these new dollars—aside from increases in spending for children with disabilities—for parents to spend on educational programs of their choice. Otherwise, we will continue to invest in the same bureaucracies that have disappointed poor and minority families for too long.

Pell Grants for Kids could be implemented gradually, starting with kindergarten and 1st grade at an initial cost of \$2.5 billion. If the program had been in place during President Bush's first two years in office, the extra \$4.5 billion spent on K-12 education—again, not counting another \$3 billion for children with disabilities—would have created \$500 scholarships for all nine million middle- and low-income students through the 3rd grade.

We have had 50 years to deliver an American education on equal terms to all students. But a baffling commitment to the status quo has prevented us from living up to Brown's noble legacy. This anniversary presents the perfect opportunity to inaugurate a new era, one that uses the strategy that helped to create the best colleges to help create the best schools. Let us start with Pell Grants for Kids and move on from there "with all deliberate speed."

I would like to make several additional remarks about Pell Grants for Kids.

As I mentioned, the idea is a pretty simple one—significantly new federal dollars, fewer federal strings, and more say by parents about how the money is spent.

To give you an idea of how much money that would be, I have taken a quick look at my home state of Tennessee. Tennessee has 938,000 students in kindergarten through the 12th grade. Pell Grants for Kids would be eligible to all those students who are from families below the state median income. The state median income for a family of four in

Tennessee is about \$56,000. So for families who have an income of \$56,000 or below, each of their children would have a \$500 scholarship that would follow that child to the school or other approved academic program of his or her parents' choice.

In June I hope to introduce a piece of legislation, hopefully with a bipartisan group of senators. In July, Sen. Gregg and I have already discussed a hearing, which we will have in the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. And then perhaps next year, the President of the United States might want to make this a part of his budget.

I believe it is time in this country to recognize we need to give poor and middle-income parents more of the same choices of educational opportunities wealthier families have and that we may be able to do this without harming our public schools. We have had, since World War II, scholarships that have followed students to the educational institutions of their choice, and they have done nothing but help to create opportunity and create the best system of colleges and universities in the world. I think we ought to use the same idea to try to create the best schools in the world.

We estimate about 60 percent of all of Tennessee students would be eligible for a \$500 Pell grant. In some of the rural counties where there are a great many poor children, it might be 90 percent of the students. In other places—such as Davidson County, Maryville, and Oak Ridge—it might be a smaller percentage.

But all in all, there should be about 562,000 students in Tennessee who would be eligible. This would bring an additional \$281 million to Tennessee for K-12 education, and parents would have a say over how that money is spent.

Often when this issue comes up and we talk about spending more federal dollars for local schools, the senators on my side of the aisle get a little hot under the collar. We do not want to spend any more federal money for local schools. On the other hand, when we say let's give the parents more say on how the money is spent, the collars get a little hot on the other side of the aisle because they are reluctant to give parents more choice.

This is a conflict of principles. It is the principle of equal opportunity—giving parents more choices. But there is another valid principle on the other side. It is called "e pluribus unum." We have public schools, common schools, to teach our common culture, and we do not want to harm them. It is a proper debate in this body to say—let's ask questions, if we are giving parents more say, more choices. Will that harm our common schools? And there is a proper way to ask in this Senate: Can we wisely spend that much more money? This is quite a bit more money.

Fully funded, Pell Grants for Kids programs would cost \$15 billion in new federal dollars a year. It would add about \$500 to the \$600 we now spend on each of the children in America today from the federal government. Only about 7 or 8 percent of the dollars we spend on children comes from the federal government. So it would be about a 70 percent increase in federal funding for every middle- or low-income child fully funded.

We are proposing to do this over a long period of time. Basically, to add to the new money that we would appropriate every year for K-12 and give most of that to Pell Grants for Kids. This would create more equality in funding for poor districts. It would especially help African-American and minority kids. It would provide extra dollars to implement the standards of No Child Left Behind, and it would introduce for the first time into our K-12 system the principle that has created

the best colleges in the world—the idea of letting money follow students to the institution of their choice.

Over the next several weeks, I will be discussing this with individual senators. I have not prepared a piece of legislation yet because I don't want to stand up and say: here it is, take it or leave it. Let's say one team says no choice and one team says no money, then we are back where we were. I am looking for ways to advance the debate.

I don't believe we are going to be spending much more money through the federal government in the same way we are doing it today. A lot of senators, and I am one of them, do not want to spend more federal dollars through programs that have lots of federal controls. We have seen the limit of command and control from Washington, D.C., with No Child Left Behind. That program will work. But I don't believe we can expect to give many more orders from Washington to make schools in Schenectady, Nashville, and Anniston, Alabama and Sacramento, better. That has to happen in local communities.

The right strategy is significantly new federal dollars with fewer federal strings and more parental say about how those dollars are spent. This does not have to be a Republican versus Democrat idea. I am not the author of this idea.

In 1947, the G.I. bill for Veterans was enacted. Since that time, federal dollars have followed students to the colleges of their choice. Today, 60 percent of America's college students have a federal grant or loan that follows them to the college of their choice.

When I was president of the University of Tennessee, it never occurred to me to say to the Congress: I hope you do not appropriate any money for children to go to Howard University or Notre Dame or Brigham Young or Vanderbilt or Morehouse or the University of Alabama. We give people choices. Or put it another way, in my neck of the woods, what if we told everyone where they had to go to college? What if we said, Sen. Sessions, you have to go to the University of Tennessee. We said to young Lamar Alexander: You have to go to University of Alabama. Civil wars have been fought over such things.

That is exactly what we do in K-12. We give people choice and have created the best colleges in the world. We give them no choices, and we have schools that we wish were better. So the idea would be to try what worked for colleges here in K-12.

I said I was not the only one to think of this. There was the G.I. bill for Veterans—that was bipartisan—after World War II; maybe the best piece of social legislation we ever passed in the history of our country.

In 1968, Ted Sizer, perhaps the most renowned educator in America today, proposed a poor children's Bill of Rights: \$5,000 for every poor child to go to any school of his or her choice, an LBJ power-of-the-people, liberal, Democratic idea at the time. In 1970, President Nixon proposed, basically, giving grants to poor children to choose among all schools. The man who wrote that speech for President Nixon was a man named Pat Moynihan. He was a U.S. Senator. In 1979, he and Sen. Ribicoff, two Democrats, introduced essentially exactly the idea I am proposing today. In fact, in 1979 Sens. Ribicoff and Moynihan proposed amending the Federal Pell Grant Act and simply applying it to elementary and secondary students.

At that time, when the Pell grant was \$200 to \$1,800, a 3rd grader could get a Pell grant, or if you were a high school student and you were poor, you could get a Pell grant.

Senator Moynihan said to this body in 1979: "Precisely the same reason ought to apply to elementary and secondary schooling—if, that

is, we are serious about educational and pluralism and providing educational choice to low- and middle-income families similar to those routinely available to upper income families."

This was the impulse behind the basic educational opportunity grants program as enacted by Congress in 1972. He was talking about Pell grants. It was the impulse by the presidential message to Congress which I drafted in 1970 which proposed such a program. It is the impulse to provide equality of educational opportunity to every American, and it is as legitimate and important an impulse at the primary and secondary school level as it is at the college level.

I am going to strongly urge my colleagues not to make a reflexive reaction to this idea because, on the one hand, it has too much money, or on the other hand, it has some choice. Think back over our history and think of our future and realize we have the best colleges and we do not have the best schools. Why don't we use the formula that created the best colleges to help create the best schools?

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the Congressional Record at the conclusion of my remarks Sen. Moynihan's statement in the Senate in 1980, and following Sen. Moynihan's remarks, an article which I wrote for the publication Education Next, which is being published this week, entitled "Putting Parents in Charge."

This article goes into some detail about the Pell Grants for Kids proposal. I look forward over the next several weeks to working with my colleagues, accepting their ideas and suggestions about how we improve our schools.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk (John Merlino) 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. CARPER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from West Virginia is recognized.

FIFTY YEARS IN THE SENATE

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, in my multivolume history of the Senate, I noted that the Senate is "the anchor of our republic." It is, I wrote, "the morning and evening star in the American constitutional constellation." Today, I recall those words because I am even more convinced that the Senate still stands as the great forum of constitutional American liberty.

For five decades—that is a pretty long time—I have seen this Senate weather the storms of adversity, withstand the barbs of cynics and the attacks of critics as it provided continuous stability and strength to our great country during periods of strife and uncertainty. The Senate has served our country so well because great and courageous Senators have always been willing to stay the course through the continuum and to keep the faith. The Senate will continue to do so as long as there are Members of the Senate who understand the Senate's constitutional

role and who zealously guard the Senate's powers.

It has been said that this institution—meaning the Senate—has a life of its own. That may be true. I also know from my 50 years of service in this Chamber that the life of the Senate is rooted in the character of the men and the women who serve in the Senate. During my five decades of service here, I have had the high honor and the great privilege of serving with some of the finest and a few of the greatest Senators in history. This distinguished list includes my mentors, Senator Richard Brevard Russell, Senator Lyndon Baines Johnson, Senator John Calhoun Stennis, and Senator Mike Mansfield. It includes the great Margaret K. Smith, who never for a moment hesitated to follow her conscience. It includes Barry Goldwater, and it includes Phil Gramm, both of whom were spear carriers for the Reagan revolution. It includes those giants of the Senate, Howard Baker and Mark Hatfield, both of whom exemplified stunning political courage. And of course any list of greats must include our own beloved TED KENNEDY, who went from being a bitter adversary in the beginning of my years to my dearest friend. It has been an honor and a great privilege to have served with these Senators and with so many others who have contributed and who still contribute to the Senate to make it the great institution it has become. I hope and I pray to the Good Lord that in my 50 years here, I have also made a small but positive contribution, and I pray that I will continue to do so.

Because of the good people of West Virginia, my half century—my 50 years—of service in this Chamber has allowed the foster son of an impoverished coal miner from the hills of southern West Virginia—and the wife of that coal miner to have a son—to have the opportunity to walk with Kings, to meet with Prime Ministers, and to debate with Presidents. I have had the privilege not only to witness but also to participate in much of America's history. From the beginning and the apex of the Cold War to the collapse of the Soviet Union, from my opposition to the 1964 Civil Rights Act to my role in securing the funds for the building of the memorial to Martin Luther King, from my support for the war in Vietnam to my opposition to Mr. Bush's war with Iraq, I have served here, and I have loved every second of every blessed minute of it.

My half century of service in the great Senate has also allowed me to experience profound changes in this institution. Unfortunately, not all of them have been for the best.

During my tenure, especially in recent years, this Chamber has become bitterly partisan. All of us already know this, so I will not belabor the point other than to say we should do better. I will point out that we should do something about the vitriol before it destroys the Senate and the people's faith in the Senate.