

the varied and unique needs of individual States and localities.

#### FUND FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Consolidates 34 programs into ONE flexible, formula-driven Fund for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning to fund locally-determined needs and initiatives related to—

Increasing the capacity of local school districts, schools, teachers, and principals to provide a well-rounded and complete education for all students.

Increasing the number of teachers and principals who are effective in increasing student academic achievement.

Ensuring that low-income students are served by effective teachers and principals and have access to a high-quality instructional program in the core academic subjects.

#### SAFE AND HEALTHY STUDENTS BLOCK GRANT

Consolidates 25 programs into ONE flexible, formula-driven Safe and Healthy Students Block Grant to fund locally-determined needs and initiatives for improving students' safety, health, and well-being during and after the school day by—

Increasing the capacity of local school districts, schools, and local communities to create safe, healthy, supportive, and drug-free environments.

Carrying out programs designed to improve school safety and promote students' physical and mental health well-being, healthy eating and nutrition, and physical fitness.

Preventing and reducing substance abuse, school violence, and bullying.

Strengthening parent and community engagement to ensure a healthy, safe, and supportive school environment.

#### ENHANCED FLEXIBILITY THROUGH FUNDING TRANSFERABILITY

To provide additional funding flexibility to State and local school districts, under the Empowering Local Educational Decision Making Act of 2011 districts will be able to transfer up to 100% of their allocations under the Fund for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning and the Safe and Healthy Students Block Grant between the two programs or into Title I, Part A.

#### EMPOWERING PARENTS THROUGH QUALITY CHARTER SCHOOLS ACT 2011

##### SENATOR KIRK CHARTER SCHOOL BILL

This bill will modernize the charter school program by encouraging the expansion of high-quality charter schools and allowing charter school management organizations to receive assistance directly from the federal government.

Modernizes the Charter School Program to address present realities for public school choice, by incentivizing expansion and replication of successful charter models, providing support for authorizers, and enhanced opportunities for facilities financing.

Encourages states to support the development and expansion of charter schools.

Streamlines federal Charter School Program funding to reduce administrative burdens and improves funding opportunities for the replication of successful charter models and facilities assistance.

Allows proven, high-quality charter school management organizations to apply directly to the federal government, as well as local education agencies, deleting a layer of bureaucracy with the State government.

Facilitates the establishment of high-quality charter schools and further encourage choice, innovation and excellence in education.

Supports an evaluation of schools' impact on students, families, and communities,

while also encouraging sharing best practices between charters and traditional public schools.

#### THE STATE INNOVATION PILOT ACT OF 2011

The bill clarifies waiver authority that is currently in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The clarified waiver provision authorizes State educational agencies and local school districts to submit a request to the Secretary of Education to waive any statutory or regulatory requirement of the law.

State and local leadership: The bill improves the waiver authority currently in law by clarifying that the waiver process is intended to be led by state and local requests, not Washington mandates.

Deference to state and local judgment: If the Secretary chooses not to immediately approve a waiver request, the bill directs the Secretary to develop a peer review process that defers to state and local judgment on waiver requests.

Transparency: The bill ensures that the peer review process will be open and transparent so that it is clear what states and local school districts are asking to waive and what peer reviewers think about those waivers.

Prohibiting additional regulations: The bill prohibits the Secretary from imposing by regulation any additional requirements to waiver requests not authorized by Congress.

The bill encourages State and local education leadership in developing and implementing innovative strategies in:

College and career ready academic content and achievement standards for all public elementary and secondary school students;

High-quality academic assessments that are aligned with and are designed to measure the performance of local educational agencies and schools in meeting those standards; Accountability systems that are based on those college and career ready standards, as well as other academic indicators related to student achievement; and

Programs to improve principal and teacher quality and effectiveness.

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

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

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, I wish to speak briefly on the subject of our relations with Pakistan.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### PAKISTAN

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, earlier this week, I gave a talk based on my service in Afghanistan as a reservist, about the growing threat of a new group to our forces in Afghanistan, ISAF, and the Afghan Government. It is not al-Qaida, which is armed and dangerous, but a shadow of its former shadow. It is not the Taliban, which is still extremely armed and dangerous. It is a new group called the Haqqani Network.

Recently, there was a high-profile attack on the Afghan Government and ISAF headquarters in Kabul, the cap-

ital of Afghanistan. The U.S. Ambassador 2 days ago then announced this was the work of the Haqqani Network. That is a very important factoid. Then yesterday, the Secretary of Defense also highlighted the Haqqani and pointed a direct finger at the Government of Pakistan and its intelligence service, the ISI.

It is all well known that while there are terrorists operating loosely in Pakistan who attack Afghans and Americans, it is the Haqqani Network that enjoys the official support and backing of the intelligence service of Pakistan.

Given this new information, and especially given the statement by the U.S. Ambassador in Afghanistan, Ryan Crocker, and now our Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta, the Senate should engage in an agonizing reappraisal of military assistance to Pakistan. We should base our reappraisal on the statements of our own Ambassador in Kabul and the Secretary of Defense himself.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I want to talk about the disaster funding debate that is going on this week.

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

#### DISASTER FUNDING

Mr. BLUNT. I appreciate the Presiding Officer's recognition.

Mr. President, this is a debate that has become the debate as part of the Burma Sanctions Act, which if we were debating the Burma Sanctions Act I would also be for Burma sanctions. But in the debate on disasters, Missouri has played an unfortunate leading role this year of all kinds.

We have had floods along the Mississippi River. We have had floods along the Missouri River. Joplin, MO—one of the bigger cities in our State—was hit by a tornado. We have evacuated a place in southeast Missouri, a floodway called Birds Point, where, for the first time since 1937, the Corps of Engineers decided that 130,000 or so acres had to be used as a floodway. All the crops that were already planted and up were, obviously, destroyed as part of that.

I was in that floodway for a couple of different days in August, and I will say, the resilience of Missouri farmers to get about 80 percent of that floodway back in soybeans means the economic loss, the crop loss, will not be what it was. But the recovery loss is substantial, as is the cost of rebuilding that levee back to the level it was before the Corps exercised the long plan that had not been used to take it down.

Tornadoes struck St. Louis at the airport and around Lambert Field, in communities around Lambert Field. Tornadoes in Joplin were significant. I mentioned on the floor of the Senate before that I live close to Joplin. It was

in my congressional district for 14 years. I had an office there. I am probably as familiar with Joplin as anybody who does not live there or has not lived there.

As I went to the scene of this tornado, the devastation made a city that I was very familiar with—at least a half-mile path, 6 miles across that city—virtually unrecognizable by me or the local police officer who was driving me around. There were no street signs left. Every block looked like the block on either side of it—an incredible amount of devastation.

There were 162 people killed either at the time of the tornado or who within a few days of the tornado died as a result of injuries; 900 people were injured. A hospital was destroyed that will cost about \$500 million to replace. The high school was destroyed. The vo-tech school was destroyed, lots of elementary schools destroyed, 500 commercial properties, 8,000 apartments and homes, and I think “destroyed” in virtually all those cases would be the right word; some of them salvageable, most of them not. Homes, churches, elementary schools, the Catholic school—all destroyed by that tornado.

While we make headway every day, finding housing for people in that community who were affected by the loss of those 8,000 homes, and while the schools were up and running by the day schools were scheduled to start 90 days later, in an incredible way, looking for whatever space was available and turning that into schools for this year, there is clearly a lot to be done.

This exceeds the capacity of an individual community or even a State to do what needs to be done. I am in the process, and have been for some time now, of discussing with GAO the exact right request, to be sure we are not declaring disasters as national disasters that are not national in scope, that we have not gotten into a habit of saying: That is a disaster, the Governor ought to send a request to the President and the President ought to grant it. We do not want to be doing that when a State or a community could handle the problem. But we do always want to be sure we have the resources necessary when States and communities cannot possibly handle this kind of problem by themselves.

The tornado I talked about was one; the flooding in the entire Mississippi Valley watershed, which is I think the fourth largest watershed in the world. And whether it was the Missouri River or the Ohio River or the Mississippi River itself, or the Arkansas River, all of this flooding that occurred this year has set a recovery number that does require national involvement. If we do not recover from these floods, the right kinds of things do not happen.

I had a county commissioner tell me over August that the factory does not open until the highway opens. And the highway does not open until flood protection is guaranteed. And flood protection is not guaranteed until we appropriate the money.

You know we should be and appropriately are focused on jobs as the No. 1 priority in the country today, private sector jobs. But there are a lot of private sector jobs in my State and others that have not been there for months now because the factory is closed or the business is closed. That factory is not going to open again until people can get to work. And people are not going to be on the highway to get to work until the levee is rebuilt. And the levee is not going to be rebuilt until the Corps of Engineers has the money to do the job they are supposed to do and meet their obligations. The Corps is responsible for taking care of some of our most pressing needs, whether it is restoring the levee at Bird's Point or levees in northwest Missouri in Holt County, which has 165,000 acres—more than half the county—underwater. A lot of that has been underwater now for 3 or 4 months.

I talked to a farmer in my office yesterday who went to his own home for the first time in 3 months, by driving a tractor over some fairly high water areas but passable areas. His home had not been flooded, but everything around it was. So he had not been there for 3 months when we talked yesterday until he went this week.

Whether it is water along the entire Missouri River, which has been in flood stage through the month of August, recovering from what has happened on the Mississippi River, we need to do our job. In our case, the Missouri River, this has not been a 1 week flood; this is a 3- and 4-month flood.

I do not remember a time ever—in fact, I am not aware of a time ever—when the entire Missouri River from the Missouri border in the northwest corner of the State to St. Louis was in flood stage the entire month of August, and in some cases has been in flood stage now for what is 4 months. Community development block grants that help with disasters provide communities a short-term and long-term way to meet disaster recovery. Disaster community development block grant funds can pick up where FEMA leaves off. I hope that is part of our plan as we look for this disaster bill, which I am intending to support—or the final, or another disaster bill that we can agree to with the House—to be sure that we make it possible for these communities to do what they could not do on their own or could not even do with State assistance.

In Joplin, it is things such as underground utilities and storm sewers and sanitary systems of all kinds, owner-occupancy programs to get people who owned a house but may never own one again because the house they owned, through frankly their own inability or their oversight or their decision not to have insurance—you know, if you own a house and you do not have a loan, there is no banker to tell you that you have to get insurance. We will have some people who are negatively affected by that. But that was a decision

they made. However, getting them into a house that they do not own is something that there are government programs for that are designed to help.

Community development block grants allow qualifying communities to meet local matches and local needs without a whole lot of redtape, less redtape than a lot of other things that the government does. And, of course, with the most recent hurricane, Hurricane Irene, suddenly FEMA says: Well, I know we made a lot of commitments to other communities that are already in progress, but we now have to turn to the new disaster. I appreciate turning to the new disaster. But you cannot forget that a community has problems they cannot deal with that we said we were going to help with, just because the TV satellite truck has gone somewhere else. I think it is important that FEMA meets its obligations.

As I said before, I think it is important in an ongoing way we are sure that we have a standard for natural and national disasters that truly are national in scope. With thousands of acres of Missouri farmland still underwater, with communities trying to recover from tornados, with commitments that FEMA has told them to move forward on and now suddenly does not have the money that they had already committed, we need to be concerned about that.

Programs such as watershed emergency protection and conservation emergency protection that are in this bill that were in the Agriculture appropriations bill that the committee voted out earlier this week will have a big impact on meeting these obligations.

Despite the unprecedented year, my State and Americans everywhere are responding to these disasters, this is a time when the Federal Government needs to do what the Federal Government has said it is there to do. Hopefully we will do this with this bill or some other bill that comes quickly that allows these communities to meet their needs, these farm families to get back to work, these factory workers to see the factory doors open again. I am supportive of this effort.

I yield the floor.

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** The Senator from North Carolina is recognized without objection in the majority's time. Only 4 minutes is remaining.

**MR. BURR.** Mr. President, am I incorrect that the other side has a speaker coming at 11 o'clock?

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** The Chair does not have information about that.

**MR. BURR.** I will take whatever time the Chair gives me. I will yield, when I need to, to the other side.

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** Without objection, it is so ordered.

**MR. BURR.** Let me add to what my good friend from Missouri talked about. That is about the Federal commitment to disaster. North Carolina happens to be one of those States that is probably the most recent. We welcome the attention of FEMA, but we

also have the last disaster before. And just like he expects the promises to be fulfilled, even though we are first in line now, we expect the promises to be fulfilled to those who are already out there. Our country is great enough to do it. It is the greatest country in the world. But it means we have got to do it in a responsible way. Part of that means we need to pay for it. I hope my colleagues will join what I think will be a House effort to expedite the funding needed for disaster relief but to do it in a way that we do not charge future generations because of our fiscal irresponsibility.

I had the opportunity to participate in a colloquy earlier on reforms to K-12 education. I wish to take the few remaining minutes I have to talk a little bit more about that, because I think to some degree we hear about education and the failures of K-12.

Senator KIRK alluded to some charter schools in Chicago. I want to mention a school nobody hears about. It is called the KIPP Academy. Technically, it is a charter school. It started in Houston, TX. Then it expanded. Its second location was in New York City. Its third location was targeted to be Atlanta, but halfway between Atlanta and New York they found a little county in rural North Carolina. It is called Northampton County, and a little community there called Gaston, NC, the last place you would expect a Texas innovative charter school to say, let's put a facility here. Predominantly minority; clearly below the average income level of every county in North Carolina; challenged for economic development. They do not have the infrastructure. But KIPP looked at it and said: You know, no child should go without what we are out there to offer. Today the success rate of that school is off the chart. But it also is in every KIPP location that has opened.

When you have successes such as that, whether they are in Houston, TX, or New York City, or Gaston, NC, the responsible thing is to stop and take a breath and ask yourself: What have they figured out that either we have not in Washington or what flexibility do they have that we do not give everybody else?

When you walk into a KIPP school, it is markedly different as soon as you walk in the door. Most kids are in uniforms. The school day is longer. The teachers are partners in education, which begs me to talk a little bit about Teach for America, the program that many Members of Congress support.

Teach for America challenged the next generation of kids who want to be educators to commit a certain portion of their life in these at-risk locations. It is a program we ought to support because its standards for its teachers exceed the definition we have for "highly qualified." As a matter of fact, not only do their credentials make them one of the best individuals to put into a classroom, you match that with their passion for their students to succeed,

and all of a sudden you have got a formula for success regardless of the socioeconomic conditions of the child who came.

Well, I fear Teach for America is not going to get the attention of Congress that it should. Yet across this country, when you find successful, qualified teachers, they have come out of this program. The commitment to be there for 2 years or 3 years or 5 years is no longer a contract that they are waiting for the end of; they are looking for the opportunity to make this a career.

It is those teachers, those Teach for America graduates, who are finding their way to being the principals of schools, to being elected on the school board, to being involved in areas that, for once, now these Teach for America graduates are challenging traditional education to live up to what this obligation is they have got. That is to make sure that every child has the foundational education they need to compete.

It does not matter whether the example I talk about is the KIPP Academy charter model that was started in Houston or whether it is the Noble Street charter that was created in Chicago. All of these examples were not created here. They were not created in Congress or in Washington. Yet what typically we do is we try to import the solution from here.

I will be the first to tell you, a principal is much closer to your children than the Congress of the United States. They are much closer to the school. They are much closer to the school system. They have greater influence on the outcome. Where have we been influencing education? We influence it on the input side, not the output side, because we say: Here is some money. We have got some money. But you can only use it for this because we have determined this is the solution to the problem. KIPP sort of broke the mold. They said: Our mission is to educate every child. We want to see them succeed.

Let me give my colleagues an example. In Charlotte, NC, they opened a KIPP Academy, K-8, next door to a traditional K-6 school. There is no way anybody can look at it and say, this drew kids who were in a different neighborhood. No, it drew kids from exactly the same neighborhood. But if you look at the performance side by side physically, the performance of the kids in the KIPP far exceeds the performance of the kids in the traditional public school system.

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio assumed the chair.)

Mr. BURR. Why? Because KIPP officials have the flexibility to design how they educate those children. The goal at the end is the same—to meet a standard of performance, to meet an educational level that is set nationally.

To me, it only makes common sense for us to see the ones that exceed the goals we set and ask how do we import what they do into the rest of our K-12

system? Part of it is recognizing the fact that up here we don't have the solutions; we are merely a financial partner. That is one of the reasons this morning I introduced a bill. What that bill does is it takes 59 pots of money—59 separate programs that were funded last year. In one area, we call it the fund for improvement of teaching and learning, to say we can take 59 programs and combine them into two pots of money; one is teaching and learning and the second one is safe and healthy students.

In the teaching and learning area, we have consolidated about 24 funding programs into one. We have said to local educators that they can use this money however they want, if their focus is teaching and learning, and they can pull out of the other pot any moneys they need for programs that address safe and healthy students.

We went a step further and said, if one of these pots of money doesn't work for them, then we will give them 100 percent transferability from one pot to the other. So if their objective and their need is greater in teaching and learning, we will give them the ability to take the safe and healthy student money and throw it over into the teaching and learning pot so they can access more funds.

In addition, some communities across the country might need additional help in title I, at-risk students. We allow 100 percent transferability of both of those into title I. For those concerned with title I, not only do we not touch it, we make it available to receive additional funding if a school system decides to do it, not a bureaucrat in Washington, DC.

Under the fund of improving teaching and learning, States and local school districts may use funds for activities and programs that meet the purposes of the fund for the improvement of teaching and learning and their unique and individual needs. These may include evaluation systems for teachers and principals that take into account data on student academic achievement and growth as a significant factor.

That is exactly what Senator ISAKSON was talking about, the need for accountability. But we are trying to take a majority of the responsibility for accountability and send it to the local school systems. All we can see are numbers up here in comparison to what our goal is for people to hit. I am concerned that a community takes ownership in the performance of their school system because that community is reliant on their success for their future.

My hope is, school systems and communities around the country will see this as a tremendous opportunity to once again not only take control of local education but to be empowered to make decisions on the way they teach our kids.

It reforms teacher and principal certifications, recertifications, licensing, and tenure; alternative routes for State certification of teachers and

principals, including mid-career professionals from other occupations, former military personnel, and recent college or university graduates with records of academic distinction who demonstrate the potential to become highly effective teachers and principals.

There is this whole pool of people we exclude because they didn't go through a traditional method of being classified a teacher. Yet their base of knowledge, their expertise and, I suggest, their passion, in many cases, exceeds those who might be in the classroom today.

Is it reasonable to believe that a pharmacist has the institutional knowledge to teach chemistry? I hope so because we trust him every day when we go into a pharmacy. If a pharmacist feels impassioned enough that he or she wants to go into a high school and teach chemistry, what they might lack in the educational process of becoming a teacher they certainly have in knowledge; but more important, they may have the passion to want to be in there and, more important, they have an understanding of why the success of that student is absolutely vital.

It includes performance pay systems; differential, incentive, and bonus pay for teachers in high-need academic subjects and specialty areas and teachers in high-poverty schools and districts; teacher achievement initiatives that promote professional growth, multiple career paths, and pay differentiation.

Everywhere else in the world we pay bonuses for performance. In the government, we pay bonuses even when people don't perform. I haven't quite figured that out. When we introduce bonuses, it is not based upon whether somebody—an agency or a department—succeeded; it becomes part of their annual stipend. We have to revisit that. Why would we institute it in government and then suggest that when we import this into K-12 education, somehow it is wrong?

The only reason it is wrong is because the teachers union doesn't like it because they don't negotiate. That has to change. The teachers union doesn't know our children. The truth is, the only reason the majority of the teachers actually join the union is because they are the only source of liability coverage, liability insurance that teachers can get. The fact is, you and I would not teach in a classroom without liability insurance, based upon the accusations and charges some families come up with against teachers. Ask them, if you don't believe me. Maybe we ought to look at the Federal umbrella and allow teachers to access liability from us and maybe contract with a third-party insurer and give them the opportunity to go into that classroom and only be concerned with educating children. I have never had anybody from Teach for America talk to me about liability coverage. They only come and talk to me about the success of their students or the need to expand programs at work and about the need for flexibility at the local

level because they have gone to multiple school districts and they do things differently, because that is where the administration told them they had to go to get their Federal money.

I am suggesting a radical change: Taking 59 programs, put them into two pots, shake them up, and say: You pick what is best for the school system you are in.

With safe and healthy student block grants, the local districts could use the funds for activity and programs to meet the purposes of safe and healthy students and their individual needs, which are not limited to drug and violence prevention activities and programs, before and afterschool programs, including during summer recess periods, and programs that extend the schoolday, week, and school year calendar.

It includes school-based mental health services. Some of these sound eerily familiar because we have heard people in our community saying we are not doing enough in mental health. That may not be the issue in the community next to us. This now allows the flexibility for the school systems that need to access it to access it. I think every Member here wants to make sure there are afterschool opportunities for the many families in which both the husband and wife work.

Up to this point, we said: Here is the program; you have to use this program. Now what I am saying is: Here is the money; you decide what program best fits your school system. It may not be at the local rec center; it may actually be in the school. Think about it. It is already a facility we own. We are going to have to heat it and cool it. Why not utilize it other than just during the meat of the education day?

It includes emergency intervention services following traumatic crises. It seems every year we have these events that happen, and sometimes we forget the effect it has on these students. I talked earlier about eastern North Carolina and the effect of Hurricane Irene. I have communities right now where people have not been able to return to their homes. The road is gone, the power is not back on, and the only access is by ferry. Don't for a minute believe this doesn't have an effect on a fifth grader. Maybe school had only been in effect about a week, but they are traumatized from it. If it is identified by a school system, now they have the flexibility to treat that, because I can assure you that if they are traumatized, the ability to learn is probably minimized.

There are programs that train school personnel to identify warning signs of youth suicide. I would like to suggest that doesn't exist, but the truth is, we know it does. In many cases, it is identified by the people who spend the most time with them, which are the teachers, coaches, and administrators. They don't have the capacity to intervene in any way, shape or form. Now the flexibility is at least there.

I am not suggesting that any of these areas are things school systems have to do. But I think, for once, we have laid out a buffet and said they can pick and choose what works. If I could best summarize where I think our focus should be in Washington on K-12, it is on the outcome. Are our kids learning?

Last year, about 66 percent of our Nation's high schoolers graduated on time. In North Carolina, it was barely over 70 percent graduating on time. Let me assure the pages who are here and young folks who might be listening to this, there is a Federal law that says every company has to accept an application from somebody who is looking for a job. There is no Federal law that says they have to interview that applicant. If you are an employer today and you have 100 applications and 98 have a high school diploma and two of them don't, I can assure you the two who don't have a high school diploma will not be invited back for an interview. They are out of the pool of selection because that has become the base minimum for consideration of a job that might have any upward mobility. It doesn't mean every child has to have a 4-year degree. But it does mean, from a standpoint of the business world, business has sort of cut it off and said our threshold is a high school diploma. A high percentage of our kids are not graduating from high school on time. If I was on the floor talking about health care today, we would call this an epidemic and we would fix it. No, this is education. This is somebody else's children. I have raised mine and educated mine.

This is the future fabric of America. We can either fix education or the rest of the world will clean our clock economically in the future. The secret to long-term success is making sure we field a team of highly gifted, knowledgeable Americans. If we plan to do that with a high of 60 percent of our kids with barely a high school diploma, I assure you the rest of the world will see that as an opportunity to surpass us and bury us. We have an opportunity to fix it now.

We talked earlier about No Child Left Behind—the right direction of legislation that was severely implemented incorrectly. It could have been a real winner if people embraced it, but they didn't. Now, 9 years later, 4 years after we were supposed to assess its success, make changes, and reauthorize it, we are in the ninth year, struggling to put together a reauthorization bill—in large measure because up until now everybody wanted to try to create a Washington bill to initiate solutions to elementary and secondary education versus a local approach that Washington is a partner in that provides flexibility and imagination.

We are going to spend a lot of time between now and the end of the year because it is vital we get reauthorization in 2011. I don't think we can let another class of students suffer through the lack of flexibility in the school systems they live in.

Senator KIRK talked about the need to expand charter school opportunities. I am for it. I cosponsored the bill. But just because there has been a private alternative that works, let's also face the reality that we are not going to put every child in America in a charter school. We might ought to, but we are not. And unless we want to say up front that everybody who is not in a charter school is going to suffer and they are not going to have the educational foundation kids over here have, then we better do both at the same time—provide that new avenue of education, which is an expansion of charter school opportunities; challenge the private sector, like KIPP stepped up; and design a school that works and at the same time look at the public side of it and say: What do we need to do as a country?

I would suggest, when we honestly look at that and we focus on outcome versus input, what we will find is we have to empower more of the local community. We have to challenge business leaders in that community to hold the school system accountable. We have to challenge parents to actually look at the performance of their children and to hold those principals and administrators and teachers accountable for the performance of their kids. We have to make sure a community sees the success of education as the ability for that community to grow in the future.

When you go into a community, the worst thing you can hear, as a Member of Congress, is that when the kids graduate from high school, they never return. They never return because the business opportunities aren't there. Usually that is rooted in the fact that K-12 in that community doesn't work because wherever you have an educated workforce, you have a company looking to make investments.

I have heard my colleagues say that North Carolina has unfair advantages in economic development; that we have 58 community colleges, and that gives us something to sell that everybody else doesn't have; that we have the mountains and the beach, and that is not something everybody has. It is all a good thing to sell, but let me tell you what North Carolina really has. Let me tell you why companies around the world are investing in North Carolina. It is because we produce the second largest pool of graduates of higher education annually than any State in the country other than California. When a company invests \$1 billion in North Carolina, they know every year they can reach into the graduate pool and have a shot at getting the cream of the crop of those students. Why would it be any different for a company looking at locating in any community? If they look at a community that has a pitiful performance in K-12, why would they ever think of making the investment there? They will make the investment where the future workforce is available. If they believe the kids graduate

and leave and never come back, they will look for where those kids moved to and make their investment there.

If we want to keep communities alive, whether they are in Ohio or North Carolina, we have to find a way to make K-12 a success in every community, big and small, urban and rural, and it starts by legislation that empowers those local school systems and, more importantly, shifts accountability from Washington and puts it back into the community, makes it the responsibility of the officials, the business leaders, and, most important, the parents.

Mr. President, I thank the Chair for accommodating me this morning. I noticed the other speaker didn't come in, so I am thrilled I was given the extra time.

I urge my colleagues over the months to come to pay attention to the K-12 reauthorization. There are many proposals out there. Not all will work, and we are not assured any are certain to succeed. But if you look for guidance, talk to the people who are closest to the problem. What they are screaming for today is the flexibility to put the money where it can have the greatest effect on the outcome of education, and that is this legislation.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 20 minutes.

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

#### LEGISLATION ON HOLD

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I come to the floor frustrated, angry, and disturbed that our Republican colleagues are holding up three crucial bills. And America needs to hear this. They are stopping us from completing our work on our emergency FEMA bill, which contains the monies needed throughout this country to rebuild and repair storm damage, a lot of it infrastructure—sewer plants, waterplants, roads, bridges, and highways.

We see pictures of what is happening in places such as Vermont, where, as Senator LEAHY told us yesterday, a woman he talked to has to drive 1-hour-plus for her chemotherapy because the road is gone, and it used to take her 5 minutes. We need to fix that road. We need to fix the roads, the bridges, the highways, the sewer systems, the water systems, the schools that get harmed in these natural disasters, and the Republicans are holding up the bill to let us do that.

We have holds—more than one—on the highway bill, known as the Trans-

portation bill, and the FAA, our Nation's aviation bill. And here is the real shocker: The FAA and the Transportation bill, which have been merged into one bill, have come over from the House of Representatives, and the House relented on the numbers. They are at current levels of spending. They are clean extensions, which we wanted, but the Republicans over here will not let us get to those bills.

Tomorrow, the FAA authorization to fix up the airports, rebuild the airports, expires. So there will be no fee as of tomorrow, and we have to stop, midstream, our airport improvements that are going on. It is called the airport improvement fund. They already shut that down once. I went around my State and saw safety projects stopped midstream. Now they are doing it again right over here—the Republicans right over here—holding up the FAA bill again. It means 70,000 jobs lost on Friday night.

They are holding up the highway bill, the Transportation bill, which—I am so proud—in our committee, we got the extension. Everybody agreed to it, Republicans and Democrats, in the committee. Republicans are holding it up now on this floor. It is a clean extension. It is 1.8 million jobs, everybody. There are 1.8 million jobs relying on that extension. It has come over here from the House. Take it up and pass it. Oh, no. Oh, no. There they go again, stopping progress in this country.

I will tell you why I am so particularly frustrated. It has to do with the rebuilding that is going on and that has gone on in Iraq and Afghanistan with American dollars. Not one Republican ever objected. Let me show you the pictures. Let me show you the pictures.

This is a picture of a new water treatment plant that has been built in Nassiriya, Iraq, at a cost of 277 million American dollars. Not one Republican said: Stop this. Not one Republican said: Pay for it by cutting some other program. What is going on?

Let me show you the picture of a water treatment plant near the border of Mexico in my State of California. It is old. I visited this treatment plant. It got hurt in an earthquake, and FEMA—the bill they are holding up—will pay to finish this water treatment plant, which has to be fixed before another earthquake hits us. And we know that is what is happening.

So they were fine with building a water treatment plant in Iraq—not a complaint, not a murmur, not a word, not an amendment—but we have to fix our water treatment plants here with the FEMA bill, and they are holding up the bill, and everybody knows that because we could have taken care of that yesterday. So that is an example.

Here is another example. This is a picture of road construction in—and I want to say this right—Kapisa Province, Afghanistan. Everyone is very proud that America has built a road there. We have spent a lot of tax dollars in Afghanistan and Iraq. I am