

am going to serve notice right now—that Ms. Lynch's nomination will not remain in purgatory forever.

So I withdraw my objection.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

HIGHER EDUCATION REAUTHORIZATION

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a copy of my remarks to the American Council on Education.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

HIGHER EDUCATION REAUTHORIZATION

I am here today to read you a letter and ask for your help. I'm going to be very specific. First, I want to thank Chancellors Kirwan and Zeppos for the work they've done with others at the request of four United States senators: two Democrats and two Republicans, Senator Mikulski and Senator Bennett on the Democratic side and Senator Burr and myself on the Republican side.

We asked them to not give us a sermon but to give us specific recommendations for exactly what to do about the problem of over-regulation of higher education, and they've done that. The English professors on your campuses would be very pleased with it because it's actually recommended in plain English with mostly declarative sentences. It's an unusual report. It's very well done. And the way things work in Washington, it reminds me a lot of the report called "Rise Above Gathering Storm" that the National Academy of Sciences sponsored about ten years ago, and Norm Augustine headed it. We basically said, "Just give us ten specific things to do, and if you do, we'll probably do most of them." They gave us 20 recommendations, and we've done most of them.

So this is really a blueprint or an agenda for the United States Congress and the United States Secretary of Education to act on the problem. I want to thank Molly Broad for her work at ACE on this and for organizing it and Terry Hartle and Anne Hickey, who are staff members there. There's Christina West at Vanderbilt University, who worked hard on the report. At the University System of Maryland, there's PJ Hogan, and Andrew LaCasse on our staff in the Senate. They did a terrific job.

Now, what I'm supposed to do here is take 10 or 12 minutes and then sit down and see what questions or suggestions you have with the chancellors. So, I thought the best way to do that was to read you a letter and come close to telling you a story. One of my friends was the late Alex Haley, the author of Roots. After I made a speech one time, he came up after and said, "May I make a suggestion?" I said, "Well of course." He said, "If before you make a speech, you say, 'Instead of making a speech let me tell you story,' people may actually listen to what you have to say." So, let me begin with a short story.

I got this over the weekend from someone I don't know. It's from a president from a University in Missouri, handwritten, and says, among other things, "I've been in higher education administration for over 40 years, the last 20 as a university president, and I've never experienced the amount of regulatory pressure that our institution currently faces."

I hear that in lots of different ways, and this report is an expression of what to do about that. For example, this isn't just a sermon, as I mentioned. There are 59 specific suggestions about what to do. In testimony before our committee, almost everyone who testified said that requiring students to fill out the FAFSA form in their senior year and providing tax information before they file their taxes makes no sense. It would make a lot more sense to do it the year before. Almost everybody said that we should do that.

So, in this report are 59 recommendations, and what I want to ask you to do is organize yourselves in your own state and make an appointment with your member of the United States Congress. And get six or seven members of the university and sit down and talk about this report, and say, "Now we worked two years on this. This is serious business. It costs a lot of money. It discourages a lot of students from coming to our colleges, and we'd like for you to support the legislation Senator Alexander and Senator Mikulski and Senator Burr and Senator Bennett are introducing in order to implement the report." You might add Senator Murray of Washington who is the ranking Democrat on the committee as she will be deeply involved in this as well.

Sometimes university presidents come to Washington to meet with members of Congress. That's the biggest waste of time I can think of. We're all running around here with 15-minute schedules trying to keep up with things and have many more requests for appointments than we have time to see or pay attention to. But almost every single senator who is on the committee that is going to deal with this is home every weekend, and the senator from Tennessee, with all due respect, doesn't really want to see the president of the University of Maryland. He would like to see the president of the University of Tennessee or of Vanderbilt or of Milligan College or Maryville College or Rhodes College. If five or six or eight of those presidents say, "Senator Alexander, may we have a 30-minute appointment with you while you're home next month?", I'll do it in a minute. So will every other senator. And you have the credibility to go to that member of Congress and say, "Will you please vote for this? Will you cosponsor the legislation? Will you support it? Will you encourage the president to sign it?" Odds are, if you do that they will. It's about that simple.

There are a lot of things we work on up here about which we have big partisan differences. There is no reason to have any big partisan differences over this. There are a few things in it that get haggles up on the left and the right, but most things aren't like that at all. There is just the accumulation of eight reauthorizations of the Higher Education Act beginning in 1965, and you know exactly what happens. A well-meaning group of senators, congressmen, education secretaries, regulators come up with an idea and said, "Let's do this, or here's a good idea let's make everybody do that." And they just keep doing that until pretty soon you get a stack of regulations that's twice as tall as I am. You're looking at the Higher Education Act, and that's how tall it actually is. Nobody's weeded the garden. Well, this is an effort to weed the garden. So, I read a letter. I've asked for your help, and your help is very specific.

Will you please make an appointment in your home state, starting with the 22 members of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and say to us, "We hope you'll vote for and support that."

Now, you'll all recognize this. This is what 20 million parents fill out every single year. And lots of colleges have said, "Well we like this information." You have to think about how much you like it. Does it really work? Asking 20 million families to fill out 108 questions like this every year just to get a grant or loan to go to college? A testimony before our committee said we could get it down to two questions: what's your family income, and what's the size of your family? Maybe it's two, maybe it's four, maybe it's 10, maybe it's 12. President Obama in his budget advocated for removing about thirty of those questions, so that takes it down from 108 to about 78.

What's the importance of that? The importance of it is pretty obvious. The importance of it is that it saves money, it saves time, and the president of the community college in Memphis, Southwest Tennessee Community College, told me he thinks he loses 1,500 students every semester because of the complexity of the form that impair students that would like to go to college.

The second story you'd like to know is Chancellor Zeppos's story about how much it costs at Vanderbilt every year to comply with federal regulations on higher education: \$150 million for one institution, \$11,000 or \$12,000 for everyone to add onto their tuition. That's just ridiculous. That's absolutely absurd.

Now, another fact is that the National Academy of Sciences says, and they've done two reports to verify this, that investigators of federally-sponsored research at colleges and universities spend 42 percent of their time on administrative matters. Now we spend \$30 billion, we taxpayers at colleges and universities on research. How much of that money is spent on administrative? Well, Chancellor Zeppos said that at Vanderbilt—and I think I've got my figures right—that about \$136 million of the \$146 was allocated for research. So, the way I figured it, about 25 percent of all the research money he gets at Vanderbilt, which is probably \$500 million, goes to administrative tasks. Forty-two percent of the time we're researching. If we can move from 42 to 35 to 33 to 30, we could save \$1 billion or \$2 billion and take the dollars to fund hundreds, maybe thousands, of multi-year research grants, which we hear so much about declining.

And then the fact that we've been trying to reduce these for a long time. One of my first acts as a senator was to pass legislation requiring the U.S. Department of Education to make a calendar of all of the things that you are supposed to comply with if you are in one of the 6000-plus colleges and universities in America. They have had seven years, and they haven't been able to do it. Well, if they can't do that, how can a small Catholic college in Wisconsin hire somebody to figure it out? And according to this report, there is a new guidance or regulation coming out on average every workday in the U.S. Department of Education. So, you just have that combination of 108-question FAFSA; \$150 million at one university to comply; the National Academy saying 42 percent of time is spent by investigators is spent on administration; and the department itself unable to make a list of all of the rules that it expects you to comply with—that's a pretty good case to make for the people you talk to.

And then I would suggest that a delegation—and again I have discussed this with the chancellors—go see Arne Duncan at the U.S. Department of Education. I meant this isn't all his fault; it's all of our faults among

all of us who have been Secretary of Education, all of us who have been in the Congress since 1965. We haven't done our job, and of the 59 recommendations, probably a dozen are recommendations that the U.S. Secretary of Education could do himself. They could be done by an administrator. So, go to Secretary Duncan and say, "Look, we'd like to make a hero out of you. We're here to say, we've identified the 12 areas that you can change that would make a big difference in increasing innovation and reducing cost of colleges all across America." And I've talked with him about that, and I think he'd be willing to hear about that.

We'll be reauthorizing the Higher Education Act later this year after we get through fixing "No Child Left Behind," which is the first order of business. And the first thing we want to do is make it easier for students to go to college. That's the "FAST Act," aimed at simplifying the student aid form. That includes saying that you can apply your junior year of high school, so you can know what your award will be before you are admitted to college. And, you will know what your tax information is before you have to turn in your form.

We want to simplify the number of grants and loans. We want to make it possible for there to be year-round Pell for your students to be able to follow their own rate and use their Pell grants and student aid progressively at their own rate in college. We'd like to discourage over-borrowing by changing some rules that exist, permit you to do more counseling of students, change the rule that allows a part-time student to borrow a full-time amount of money. We'd like to simplify the repayment plans. Now, all those things don't have much to do with being a Republican or a Democrat. They have a lot to do with an important system.

We'd like to take as many of these fifty-nine recommendations and put them in a bill and pass them as we can. A lot of that will depend upon your business at home to the men and women who run the universities in your state. We want to take a look at the accreditation and make sure it's focused on the right thing. As a former university president, I didn't like a lot about accreditation. The only thing I would like less would be having the U.S. Department of Education take the place of the accreditor. So, let's work together and fix the accreditation system and have focus on academic quality instead of all that random other stuff that accreditors often get themselves involved in.

We want to make it harder to over-borrow. I mentioned a couple of ideas about this. There are a few more in this report. Finally, we want to do our best to make sure that the consumer information that you're asked for really is needed and is presented in a useful way to students. Typically, it's just a big pile of stuff that has the disadvantage of by the time you go all the way through you haven't learned anything. It's like a mortgage application or a car loan. You just sign at the bottom and have no clue about what you just signed. We need simpler, plain English, clear sentences—pieces of information that are valuable to students and that are valuable to parents, and that we can weed our way through the system more confidently.

So, that's what we're trying to do, and we need your help. One thing that I would say to you is that this is a train that is likely to move down track in out of the station by the end of year. Why do I say that? Well, because it has bipartisan support in a town that's not noted for that. This report has been active interest of four senators who will a lot more. The FAST Act, as we call it, which will simplify student aid has the support of six: Senator Booker and Senator King and Senator

Burr and Senator Isakson and me, equally divided by party. Senator Murray and I, she's from Washington state, will work together to reauthorize it. I've talked to the president about it. He did a very good job of working with us on some forms on student loans two years ago. There's no reason he can't work with us in that way and this year finish the job.

So, I hope you'll keep in mind the letter that I read. I suspect that you have made the same feelings, and I am here to thank you for the tremendous work that ACE and the chancellors and their team and staff did on the report. It's been one of the most consequential reports made to the Congress during this year. Will you please make an appointment in the next thirty days in your home state, first with the members of the Senate education committee? Bring along a few colleagues and say, "We spent a lot of time on this. This is wasting a lot of money. This is discouraging a lot of students. This is taking a lot of time. Will you please support this bipartisan effort to bring some common sense to the jungle of red tape that is the current federal regulation of higher education?" Thank you.

NATIONAL HEALTHCARE DECISIONS DAY

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I am pleased to recognize that today, April 16, 2015, is National Healthcare Decisions Day.

National Healthcare Decisions Day exists to inspire, educate and empower the public and providers about the importance of advance care planning. Started by a Richmond attorney as a local, grassroots initiative in Virginia, NHDD became an annual event in 2008 and today is recognized across all 50 States. Faith-based groups, doctors and nurses, hospitals, patients, and caregivers alike are engaged in these efforts.

It is critical that Virginians and all Americans—both patients and providers—engage in advance care planning, and that they have access to clear, consistent, and concise information on how to make these critical health care decisions. Today, on National Healthcare Decisions Day, it is important to discuss preferences and goals with family and friends—and this starts with filling out an advance directive. But advanced care planning is about much more than that, and in the last several years, there has been a growing awareness of the need to transform advanced care, both among providers and families.

First, broader transformations in health care, especially the movement towards paying for quality, not volume, of services offer opportunities to speed the adoption of effective advanced care programs. Our health care system does a great job paying for procedures: surgery, chemotherapy, hip replacements. It does a not so good job paying for health care providers to spend face-to-face time with patients, helping them to choose among many options with uncertain outcomes. Improvements to care planning would give individuals and their families the ability to make smarter decisions. It

would provide additional information and support so they can make informed choices based upon those values and goals.

Meanwhile, across the country, people are innovating and creating new models of care to provide patients with the tools and support to make their own advanced care decisions. For example, in my own State of Virginia, a Richmond Academy of Medicine initiative called Honoring Choices Virginia promises to fill a critical hole. This innovative partnership involves the academy and three independent health care systems working to adopt nationally-recognized best practices, and adapting them to the needs of patients, families, doctors, and hospitals of the local community in Central Virginia. This commitment to patients and families in our region sets an example for the rest of the Commonwealth and the country.

It is similarly essential that we consider how Federal policies impact patients and their families during times of serious illness. For example, the vast majority of these patients receive care funded by Medicaid and Medicare, and many of them are elderly or disabled. Medicare, however, does not adequately reimburse physicians or other important members of the care planning team, such as nurses or social workers, for systems to support patients and their families. Likewise, faced with an uneven patchwork of advance directive laws across States, providers too often base their actions on the technicalities of forms or on fear of being sued. Such hurdles make it difficult for health care providers to focus on what the patient really wants.

In the 111th and 112th Congress, I introduced the Senior Navigation and Planning Act, to help people grapple with the challenges of caring for those with advanced illness. And in the 113th Congress, Senator ISAKSON and I introduced the Care Planning Act. The purpose of the Care Planning Act is to align the care people want with the level of care they get. It does not limit choices—it works to make sure people are made fully aware of the broad range of choices they have. I hope to reintroduce the Care Planning Act in the coming weeks.

I believe this effort is critical, not just from my time serving as a Governor and as a Senator, but also through the eyes of a loved one who struggled with these issues. My mother suffered from Alzheimer's disease for 10 years, and for 9 of those years, she couldn't speak. My father, sister and I found grappling with the challenges of caring for her difficult. The difficulty was greater because, when she was first diagnosed, my family didn't take the opportunity to talk in an honest and fully informed way with her and her health care providers about the full array of health care options available, or about what her priorities would be during the final years of her life.

It is not easy, and this is a subject that most people do their best to avoid.