

yet done. Now we begin the next phase. As Chairman ALEXANDER has said throughout our floor debate, ultimately we need a bill President Obama will sign into law, and though this bill has taken a number of steps in the right direction, there are still a few more we need to do before our work is done. We have important work to do in conference to reach an agreement on a final bill.

The President has made it very clear to us he can only sign a bill that strengthens the accountability measures in the Every Child Achieves Act and that addresses inequality, where some schools are unable to offer the same opportunities as others. I agree that is a must, and I know I will continue to work hard, alongside ranking member BOBBY SCOTT in the House and the administration, to make accountability and resource equity a priority in conference.

The only way forward is for the strong bipartisan work we have seen in the Senate to continue in that process. Now, I will say, unfortunately, so far, House Republicans chose a partisan approach to reauthorize this bill. Their bill doesn't represent one end and ours represents another, where we have to meet in the middle. Their bill really represents an unacceptable partisan approach and path and ours represents a carefully negotiated compromise with just a few important steps to go.

So I hope in conference our friends in the House, the House Republicans, will be ready to join House and Senate Democrats, Senate Republicans, and the administration as we work together to get this done in a way that works for all our students and families.

By working together, I am confident we can get this bill over the finish line and fix this broken law for our teachers in my home State and across the country and help make sure all our students have a quality education. Delivering on that promise of a good education for all students will pay off for generations to come. This is one of the best investments in our country we can make to ensure we have broad-based and long-term economic growth because, as we all know, when students have the chance to learn, we strengthen our future workforce. We know our country grows stronger and we empower the next generation of Americans to lead the world. We will help our economy grow from the middle out, not just the top down, and that is something we have known for a long time.

Fifty years ago, in what would be just months before signing the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act into law, President Johnson said, when it comes to education, "nothing matters more for the future of our country." That is still true today. The future of our country hinges on our students' ability to one day lead the world.

So I am looking forward to our continued work on this Every Child Achieves Act for our students, for our

parents, for our teachers, and for the future of our country.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, it is my understanding we are in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, will the Senator from Indiana yield for 60 seconds?

Mr. COATS. I will be glad to yield.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I forgot to mention the number of amendments that were considered, and I would like to place that in the RECORD.

In the committee, we adopted 29 amendments. On the floor, 178 amendments were filed, 78 were considered, and 65 amendments were adopted—10 of those through rollcall votes, 28 through voice votes, and 27 by unanimous consent through two managers' packages.

Nearly 100 amendments were adopted to the bipartisan draft that Senator MURRAY and I presented to our education committee earlier this year. I think the fact so many Senators not only had a chance to have their say but had their ideas included in the bill—and I think especially of the Senator from Rhode Island who has worked for the last couple of years on a particular provision—was one important reason why we had a consensus that rose to 81 votes.

I thank the Senator from Indiana for his courtesy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I rise to speak but first want to acknowledge and thank my colleague Senator COLLINS for allowing me to step ahead of her in this process. I promise to be expeditious in terms of getting through this. It turns out her plane to Maine leaves later than my plane to Indiana, so she has very graciously allowed me to go forward.

WASTEFUL SPENDING

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, the last 6 months of this Senate I have been coming down here every week to talk about the "Waste of the Week"—examples of waste, fraud, and abuse within the Federal Government. I can't believe this is No. 17. We are continuing to rack up significant savings to the taxpayer. We can eliminate these documented and certified wastes that have been determined through the various government agencies, inspectors general, and others.

Today we turn to a rather serious topic regarding the receipt of taxpayer dollars by criminals who are avoiding felony arrest but are still receiving benefits at taxpayers' expense.

Here is a little history. The Social Security Act currently prohibits those fleeing justice from receiving Social Security and other Federal benefits.

Congress first addressed this issue in 1996, when it banned fugitive felons from receiving Social Security benefits. It then expanded this prohibition in 2004 to also apply this ban to Social Security disability insurance and World War II benefits.

Unfortunately this law has run into some conflicting opinions by court challenges, which have weakened the effects of the law and led to a lack of clarity in terms of what the original language and original intent by Congress was supposed to be. To address this problem—because it is a problem, and there is lack of clarity—I have this week introduced legislation to amend the Social Security Act to clearly state—to clarify—the intent of the law that prohibits fugitive felons from receiving Social Security retirement and disability benefits. My bill would clarify this law and return the implementation of the policy to its original intent.

Now, let me be clear. The government should not be providing benefits to those avoiding prosecution, custody or confinement for a crime or attempt to commit a crime that is considered a felony. But we are not talking about individuals who get speeding tickets or make a mistake on their taxes. This legislation applies only to those with an arrest order for felony charges.

The crime must be of enough serious magnitude to carry with it a minimum sentence of 1 or more years in prison.

So we want to be careful here that we are not imposing this restriction of receipt of benefits on someone who doesn't qualify under the law, and that is another clarification that we want to make.

Furthermore, the bill retains the ability of the Social Security Administration to continue or restore benefits if the individual can show good cause—such as that they were exonerated of the crime or perhaps were victim of an identity theft or other legitimate reasons to not lose benefits.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, this commonsense fix could save taxpayers \$4.8 billion over the next 10 years alone.

So the bottom line is this: We pull out our chart with our ever-growing gauge of money that has been wasted through fraud and abuse within the Federal Government. We are climbing very quickly to \$100 billion. I thought it would take a year to get there if I did one a week. We are going to have to make a major extension to this chart or redo this because we are closing in on \$100 billion of wasted taxpayer money documented by Federal Government agencies in investigations. So passage of this bill would add \$4.8 billion to our chart.

We have come across so many instances of bloat, waste, fraud, and abuse. I could be down here every day the Senate is in session. I could be down here every hour the Senate is in session—such is the staggering amount of dysfunction occurring through this

bloated bureaucracy called the Federal Government.

Here we are, trying to protect taxpayers of our States who are stretched to the gills in terms of what they have to pay not only in Federal but State or sales—you name it—or real estate taxes that roll up and consume so much of everybody's weekly pay.

The least we can do—while we need to make major fixes to our fiscal problems here—is take those that have been identified by legitimate neutral organizations—inspectors general of the United States, various agencies—bring those to light, and then do something about it and not just come down here and make a chart and add some red ink, but actually introduce legislation, which I am trying to do on some of these pieces so that we can remedy this problem.

So meanwhile we have an administration here that has refused over and over to sit down and work out a long-term fiscal debt reduction program, which this country desperately needs because the debt clock is still ticking away like crazy.

If you want to see it, go to my Web site at coats.senate.gov. We have the clock right there. We haven't talked about it much down here lately. We made a big push earlier. Too many people have thrown up their hands and said that under this administration it is not going to happen. That probably is right. But the least we can do then, until we get new management in the White House, is to find these issues of waste, fraud, and abuse, and do something about it now. So that is what we are trying to do.

I look forward to being back here next week with the latest edition of "Waste of the Week."

I thank my colleague from Maine for her patience.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASIDY). The Senator from Rhode Island.

OLDER AMERICANS ACT

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, the Senator from Maine is about to speak I believe on the Older Americans Act.

While she is here on the floor, I wish to take a moment to express my personal appreciation to her and to Chairman ALEXANDER for an issue that arose during the course of the Older Americans Act.

I have a very strong concern that older Americans, particularly as they approach the end of their lives, are not getting their wishes honored. In fact, very often nobody even knows what their wishes are about how they would like to be treated at the end of their lives. Do they want to be at home? Do they not particularly care about using all the medical apparatuses available to them? Do they want to be in the hospital and have everybody take every available measure? That should be their choice. It should be an in-

formed choice and a choice that we should honor.

I sought language within the Older Americans Act to try to empower that. There were difficulties with it, and those difficulties were resolved by the willingness of Chairman ALEXANDER to ask Chairman COLLINS to hold a hearing on this subject in the Select Committee on Aging and for all of the chairmen and ranking members on the two committees to send a letter to the Government Accountability Office to lay out the case and put a factual brief before us for that hearing.

This would not have happened without the courtesy of Senator COLLINS. This is an aging committee thing that she has been willing to do to resolve an issue that actually started in the HELP Committee. It was very gracious of her. She has been a leader on these end-of-life issues for a long time. I didn't want to miss this chance to express my appreciation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, before the Senator from Rhode Island leaves the floor, let me thank him for his kind comments. I have enjoyed working with him on issues such as hospice care and advanced planning. I know these issues are very important to him, as they are to me. I am happy we are able to collaborate on a GAO request and also on a hearing later this year.

So I thank him for his efforts in resolving this issue so that the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act could go forward.

EVERY CHILD ACHIEVES ACT

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, before I begin my comments on the Older Americans Act, I do want to add to the accolades that have been given today to the chairman and the ranking member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, on which I am pleased to serve.

They have worked as a team, providing tremendous leadership that brought us to a tremendous accomplishment today, and that is the passage of the Every Child Achieves Act. It would not have happened without the extraordinary leadership of Chairman ALEXANDER and Senator MURRAY, the ranking minority member. I thank them for their hard work in this regard.

OLDER AMERICANS ACT

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, as the chairman of the Senate Special Committee on Aging and as the cosponsor of the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act, I also commend the chairman and the ranking member of the HELP Committee for their hard work over the past 2 years in developing a bipartisan consensus bill to reauthorize and strengthen the Older Americans Act. It is my hope that the

Senate later today will unanimously pass this important legislation.

The programs authorized by the Older Americans Act are tremendously important in the State of Maine and across the country. Maine is the oldest State by median age in the entire country. Probably, if I asked most of my colleagues, they would guess it was Florida, but in fact it is the State of Maine.

Maine's network of five area agencies on aging provides invaluable supports and services to more than 100,000 seniors living in my State.

In just the past few months, I have received almost 700 letters from seniors across Maine urging that we pass the reauthorization bill. I look forward to letting my constituents know that the Senate soon will do just that.

While funding has been provided on a continuing basis through the appropriations process, the fact is that legislation reauthorizing the Older Americans Act is long overdue. The authorization expired in 2011.

It is particularly significant that the Senate pass this legislation this month, for July marks the 50th anniversary of the Older Americans Act.

This law funds critical services in communities across our Nation that help to keep our older adults healthy and independent. Its funding supports some of the most vital and successful Federal programs for our Nation's seniors.

Nearly 12 million older Americans receive services through this law, such services as Meals on Wheels, senior centers, transportation, legal services, and caregiver support.

Moreover, these programs are operated through a national network of area agencies on aging that stresses local decisionmaking regarding what services are most needed for older adults in a particular community. It is a flexible program that allows local needs to be met.

Older Americans Act programs also help to relieve the financial pressure on the Medicare and Medicaid Programs, because they help seniors to stay healthy, independent, and living right where they want to be—in the comfort, security, and privacy of their own homes.

AARP's surveys consistently reflect the fact that aging in place is the preferred option for seniors who want to continue to live independently and avoid expensive nursing home and other institutionalized care as long as possible.

This bill also includes important provisions to strengthen the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program and to help protect our vulnerable seniors from financial exploitation and abuse. Financial exploitation of our seniors is a growing epidemic that cost them an estimated \$2.9 billion in 2010. It is so disturbing that in 90 percent of these cases, the financial exploitation abuse is perpetrated by a family member, a trusted individual, a caregiver—someone whom the senior knows well. The