

spite of all the empirical data that proves otherwise, why not make this coming year productive for America's working families? If we do that, then we can honestly tell the American people that the Senate is working again—not obstructing—because they would be working with us. We have worked with Republicans to pass legislation outlined by the Republican leader and previously filibustered by them.

STUDENT SUCCESS ACT— CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the conference report to accompany S. 1177, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Conference report to accompany S. 1177, a bill to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to ensure that every child achieves.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 10:45 a.m. is equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, the American people have a lot on their minds this week about things happening in our world and in our country, but today we turn our attention to something at home. The Senate and Congress—and I believe the President—by the end of the week will have a Christmas present for 50 million children and 3.4 million teachers in 100,000 public schools across this country, something they have been eagerly awaiting. Today the Senate should pass by a large margin our bill to fix No Child Left Behind.

A lot has been said about how the bill repeals the common core mandate, how it reverses a trend toward a national school board that has gone on through the last two Presidential administrations, and how it is the biggest step toward local control in a quarter of a century for public schools. That is all true.

The legislation specifically prohibits the U.S. Secretary of Education from specifying in any State that it must have the common core standards or any other academic standards—not just this Secretary but future Secretaries. It gets rid of the waivers the U.S. Department of Education has been using to act, in effect, as a national school board, causing Governors to have to come to Washington and play "Mother May I" if they want to evaluate teachers or fix low-performing schools or set their own academic standards. And it is true that it moves a great many decisions at home. It is the single biggest step toward local control of schools in 25 years.

This morning, as we come to a vote, which we will do at 10:45, I would like to emphasize something else. I believe the passage of this legislation—and if it is signed later this week, as I believe

it will be, by President Obama—will unleash a flood of innovation and excellence in student achievement across America, community by community and State by State. Why do I say that? Look at where the innovation has come from before. My own State, Tennessee, was the first State to pay teachers more for teaching well, creating a master teacher program in the 1980s. Florida came right behind. That didn't come from Washington, DC. The Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party in Minnesota created what we now call charter schools in the early 1990s. That didn't come from Washington. The Governors themselves met with President George H.W. Bush in 1989 to establish national education goals—not directed from Washington but with Governors working together, with the President involved in leading the way and providing the bully pulpit support. Then the Governors since that time have been setting higher standards, devising tests to see how well students were doing to reach those standards, creating their own State accountability systems, and finding more ways to evaluate teachers fairly.

My own State has done pretty well without Washington's supervision. Starting with the master teacher program in the 1980s, then Governor McWherter, in his time in the 1990s, helped Tennessee pioneer relating student achievement to teacher performance. Then Governor Bredesen, a Democratic Governor, realized that our standards were very low—we were kidding ourselves—so he, working with other Governors, pushed them higher. Our current Governor Bill Haslam has taken it even further, and our children are leading the country in student achievement gains. So the States themselves have been the source of innovation and excellence over the last 30 years.

We have learned something else in the last 10 or 15 years: Too much Washington involvement causes a backlash. You can't have a civil conversation about common core in Tennessee or many other States. It is the No. 1 issue in Republican primaries, even in general elections, mainly because Washington got involved with it. Now Washington is out of it, and it is up to Tennessee and Washington and every State to decide for themselves what their academic standards ought to be. The same is true with teacher evaluation.

I was in a 1½-year brawl with the National Education Association in 1983 and 1984 as Governor, when we paid teachers more for teaching well. It carried by one vote in our State senate. So when I came to Washington a few years ago, people said: Well, Senator ALEXANDER is going to want every State to do that. They were absolutely wrong about that. The last thing we should do is tell States they must evaluate teachers and how to evaluate teachers. It is hard enough to do without somebody looking over your shoulder. Too much Washington involvement has ac-

tually made it harder—harder to have higher standards and harder to evaluate teachers. I believe we are changing that this week.

I had dinner with a Democratic Senator last night who plans to vote for the bill. He said he would have given me 5-to-1 odds at the beginning of the year that we wouldn't be able to pass this bill. Why are we at the point where we are likely to get votes in the mid-eighties today in favor of the bill? No. 1, because we worked on it in a bipartisan way. And I have given credit many times to Senator MURRAY from the State of Washington for suggesting how we do that. I see Senator MIKULSKI from Maryland on the floor. She has been a force for that as well. Our committee worked in a bipartisan way, and so did the House of Representatives as we worked through the conference.

The President and his staff members and Secretary Duncan have been professional and straightforward in dealing with us all year long, and I am grateful for that. We knew from the beginning, when we said to the President: Mr. President, we know we can't change the law; we can't fix No Child Left Behind unless we have your signature. We know that. He dealt with us in a straightforward way.

Then we found a consensus. Once we found that consensus, it made a very difficult problem a lot easier. The consensus is this: We keep the important measurements of student achievement so that parents, teachers, and schools will know how schools, teachers, and parents are doing. There are 17 tests designed by the States, administered from the 3rd grade through the 12th grade, about 2 hours per test. That is not very many tests. Keep those, report the results, disaggregate the results, and then leave to classroom teachers, school boards, and States the decisions about what to do about the tests. That should result in better and fewer tests. That consensus underpins the success we have had.

Six years ago, in December, we had a big disagreement in this Chamber. We passed the Affordable Care Act, with all the Democrats voting yes and all the Republicans voting no. The next day, the Republicans went out and started trying to repeal it, and we haven't stopped. That is what happens with that kind of debate. This is a different kind of debate.

If the President signs this bill, as I believe he will, the next day, people aren't going to be trying to repeal it. Governors, school board members, and teachers are going to be able to implement it, and they will go to work doing it. They will be deciding what tests to give, what schools to fix and how to fix them, what the higher academic standards ought to be, and what kind of tests should be there. It will be their decision. They will be free to do it from the day the President signs this bill. It lasts only for 4 years until it is supposed to be reauthorized, but my guess is that this bill and the policies within

it will set the standard for policy in elementary and secondary education from the Federal level for the next two decades.

It is a compromise, but it is a very well-crafted piece of work. It is good. It is good policy.

There are some things that are undone. Senator MURRAY has her list of things that couldn't get in the bill, and I have mine. I was glad to see us make more progress on charter schools. I have watched that go from the time I was Education Secretary in the early 1990s, when I wrote a letter to every school superintendent asking them to try at least one of those Minnesota start-from-scratch schools. I watched it go from there to today where over 5 percent of our children in public schools go to charter schools. That is a lot of kids—almost 3 million children—going to schools where teachers have more freedom and parents have more choices.

What we haven't made as much progress on is giving low-income parents more choices of schools for their children so they have the same kind of opportunity that financially better off parents do. My Scholarship for Kids proposal got only 45 votes here. I thought it was a very good idea that would give States the option—not a mandate—to turn all their Federal education dollars into scholarships for low-income children. That would be \$2,100 for each of those children, and it would follow them to the school their parents chose under the State's rules, not Washington's rules. That is not a part of this bill, but we can fight about that and discuss that another day, and I intend to try to do that.

Today I think we celebrate the fact that we have come to a very good conclusion. We are sending to the President a bill I hope he will be comfortable with. While it does repeal the common core mandate and it does reverse the trend to a national school board and it is the biggest step toward local control in 25 years, what excites me about the bill is I believe it will unleash a flood of innovation and excellence in elementary and secondary education that will be a wonderful Christmas present for 50 million children in 100,000 public schools being taught by 3.4 million teachers.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I rise in support of the Every Child Succeeds Act. Today will be a great day for the Senate because we will actually pass a bill that is a result of a bipartisan effort led by two very able and dedicated leaders, Chairman ALEXANDER and Ranking Member PATTY MURRAY. They have done an outstanding job in guiding the committee and encouraging open debate with extensive hearings, consultation with Members, and committee markups that were long, hard, and sometimes quite feisty to say the least. That is the way the Congress ought to be, and I thank them.

I think their dedication showed that in the Senate—we acknowledge the work of Chairman KLINE and Ranking Member SCOTT in the House, but here, we were led by two educators: Senator ALEXANDER, the former president of a university and former Secretary of Education and Senator MURRAY, a teacher herself, who has taught us many lessons in our caucus on how to do the right job in the right way.

Today we come with the rewrite of a bill that started 50 years ago, when Lyndon Johnson wanted to have a war on poverty and passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It was the first time the Federal Government was going to be involved in education and wanted to be sure there were Federal resources to help lift children out of poverty.

Many of us agree with what the great former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said, that education is the civil rights issue of this generation because education is what opens doors today and opens doors tomorrow. The legislation we pass today will make sure that we correct the problems of the past and do the right thing in the future.

When I knew that the committee was going to be serious about the doing the bill, I crisscrossed Maryland consulting with parents, teachers, and administrators of our school system to get the best ideas. The first thing I asked was, what are we doing right, what are we doing wrong, what do you want us to do more of, and when do you want us to get the heck out of the way?

They said to me: Senator Barb, the problem in Washington is that you have a one-size-fits-all mentality. Washington wants to take the same rules that apply in New York City and apply them to Ocean City, MD. You cannot have a one-size-fits-all for every school district in the United States of America.

The second thing they said is, yes, you need accountability; yes, you do need metrics. But what we have come up with is overtesting that still does not result in high performance.

I worked on a bipartisan basis with the leadership to do what we could to get rid of the excesses of one-size-fits-all, all decisions that are made in Washington, and the fact that we shouldn't be racing to the test, we should be racing to the top.

My first rule in working on this legislation was to do no harm. I was deeply disturbed that there was an effort to change the formula—the formula that meant what Federal funds do come in the area of title I. We worked very hard to make sure the formula was fair and equitable, along with the rules of the game now and the groundwork for the rules of the game for the future.

What that meant was that initially Maryland would have lost \$40 million and Baltimore City and Baltimore County would have each lost \$6 million. In Prince George's County, which is experiencing a new wave of immigrant children, we would have lost \$7

million. We were able to make sure the formula works the way it should.

We also made sure our teachers have the support they need. Our teachers have been overregulated. They have had demands placed on them to solve problems that are not theirs when a child comes to the classroom. Their job is to teach the child, but they can't solve every problem the child has. Many of our children come to school with significant and severe health problems. Some have peanut allergies. Some have asthma. Some are challenged by autism. The school system needs help with supportive services.

I am so proud of the effort I led to make sure we have opportunities for school nurses to be in those schools; to make sure Federal funds can be used for the coordination of the services that will be needed to provide and oversee the health needs of our children, such as vision screening, hearing screening, and important mental health services—this is what we need to be able to do; also, to make sure that while we maintain testing in reading and math, we make sure we get rid of the overtesting and the race to the test.

The Every Student Succeeds Act is good for all of Maryland's students. There are 874,000 boys and girls in school today. Some are from at-risk populations. What we do here is get them ready for school. We make investments in preschool education, which is so important. We have afterschool programming because children don't learn only during the school day but through structured afterschool programming. Children continue to learn all day while they are in a safe and secure environment. We empower families, we empower teachers, and we empower the local level.

I think this is a very good job in what has been done here. What we hope to be able to do is to make sure our children are ready for the 21st century. I believe this bill is a downpayment on our children's future and therefore on our Nation's future. When we spend money on education, the benefit not only accrues to the child, it accrues to our society. Every time a child can read, every time a child can participate in the demands and the knowledge of what the 21st century requires, we are going to be in a better place.

I congratulate Senator ALEXANDER and Senator MURRAY on a great job.

I urge adoption of the conference report.

I yield the floor.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today I wish to celebrate a truly bipartisan, bicameral accomplishment. For the first time in 14 years, Congress is on the precipice of reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, ESEA. First enacted 50 years ago as a part of the civil rights era, this legislation sought to ensure all children, regardless of ZIP code, were able to obtain a high-quality education. The latest reauthorization of ESEA was signed

into law in 2001 as the No Child Left Behind, NCLB, Act. Due for reauthorization since 2007, an entire generation of students have matriculated through our Nation's public school system under this Federal education policy while reforms have been desperately needed. I am proud of the compromises that Senate HELP Committee Chairman ALEXANDER and Ranking Member MURRAY were able to craft together starting back in January and for the tireless work of their staffs to get us to this point we are at today.

Ensuring access to a high-quality education is one of the most important duties of Federal, State, and local governments. While Congress enacted the NCLB Act with the best of intentions and a comforting name, in reality the red tape and overreliance on the Federal assessments it codified have left far too many children behind since its passage. In the years leading up to today, I have heard from parents concerned about the pressure their children feel when taking certain assessments, I have been disheartened to hear educators in my State say that they are falling out of love with teaching with consistently changing mandates and the unpredictability of high stakes testing, and I have met with education leaders who are trying to make the best of an untenable situation. All of those involved in education—from students, parents, educators, school support personnel, education leaders, volunteers, and organizations which hold our schools accountable to ensure every child obtains a high-quality education—deserve to move on from the failed NCLB Act.

I have often heard from educators in my State who stress that a child is more than a single or collective set of test scores. I am pleased the Every Child Achieves Act, ECAA, will replace the Federal, one-size-fits-all “adequate yearly progress” accountability system and allow States to design their own accountability systems to identify, monitor, and assist schools. Rather than relying on a collective set of test scores to determine student performance, accountability systems will be able to take into consideration student growth over the course of a school year. States will be able to consider multiple measures of student learning, including access to academic resources, school climate and safety, access to support personnel, and other measures which can allow for differentiation in student performance. All of this will be done while ensuring that students are held to the high yet achievable standard of being college- and career-ready upon completion of high school.

I am proud that the ECAA recognizes that, to support a successful student, schools should support the whole child, both physically and mentally. The approved bill includes a provision I coauthored with Senator ROY BLUNT that will allow schools in low-income areas to use Federal resources under title I to provide school-based mental health

programs. School-based mental health programs have been proven to increase educational outcomes, decrease absences, and improve student assessments. The ECAA also makes an effort to ensure students in our Nation have a deeper understanding of how our government functions, and I would like to thank Senators CHUCK GRASSLEY and SHELDON WHITEHOUSE for working with me to modify the American history and civics title of ECAA to accomplish this goal. Our provision allows evidence-based civic and government education programs that emphasize the history and principles of the U.S. Constitution, including the Bill of Rights, to receive Federal funding for expansion and dissemination for voluntary use. For too long, a singular focus on assessments pushed out other important subjects like these which ensure a student receives a well-rounded education.

My home State of Maryland has made a commitment to funding education adequately over the past decade that has allowed Maryland to be a consistent national leader in student performance and student outcomes. Each day, our State's nearly 875,000 students make their way to the classrooms of more than 60,000 educators and thousands more support personnel and education leaders in nearly 1,446 Maryland schools. I appreciate the service of educators not only from the perspective of a lawmaker, father, and grandfather, but also as a husband of a teacher. I appreciate my colleague Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI, for standing with me to prevent a proposal from Senator RICHARD BURR from being included in the final conference report which would have harmed Maryland's hardest to serve low-income students. Senator BURR's proposal would have reduced Maryland's share of title I-A funding for educating low-income children by \$40 million per year, punishing States like Maryland that have made the decision to make proper investments in funding education for our children. Thanks to the work of Senator MIKULSKI and a strong coalition of members from similar States, the final conference report does not include this provision.

The legislative process is about compromise. In many respects, this bill is a vast improvement over the No Child Left Behind Act, and the hard work of HELP Committee Chairman ALEXANDER, Ranking Member MURRAY, House Education and the Workforce Chairman JOHN KLINE, and Ranking Member BOBBY SCOTT have led us to this point. However, work remains to address a current lack of protections to make our schools safer places for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, LGBT, students. In addition, Congress must not repeat the same mistakes we learned from under the NCLB Act by underfunding our Nation's public schools. I stand ready to work with Members from both parties to ensure that all Americans can obtain a high-quality education.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, Duncan Taylor is the parent of a second grader in Highline public schools in my home State of Washington. Like so many parents in my State, he got a letter in the mail saying his son's school was failing.

Last year, Washington State lost its waiver from No Child Left Behind's requirements. Not only did that mean most of the schools in the State are now labeled as failing, it meant Washington State lost flexibility over how to spend some of its Federal funding.

As an active member of the PTA, Duncan volunteers in the classroom. So he knew that the label of “failing” did not reflect the kind of education his son was getting, but as an education advocate, he also knew that losing out on that funding—in effect punishing schools that serve students from all kinds of backgrounds—was not going to help. Like so many parents and teachers across the Nation, Duncan has been following our work to reauthorize the Nation's elementary and secondary education bill. We cannot let them down.

I thank Chairman ALEXANDER for working with me since February on a bipartisan path to get us to this point today. This process started when Chairman ALEXANDER and I agreed that No Child Left Behind is badly broken and needed to be fixed. He has been a great partner, and I am thrilled we have reached this point together.

I also thank all of our colleagues on the HELP Committee for their work and dedication in moving this bill forward. In particular, I thank my committee Democrats for their tireless work on behalf of families, schools, and communities in their States. This is a stronger bill thanks to their commitment and effort.

I thank the two leaders, Senator MCCONNELL and Senator REID. In particular, I thank Senator REID for his guidance and support.

We would not be where we are without Chairman KLINE and Ranking Member SCOTT in the House. While Chairman KLINE and I do not see eye to eye on everything, he has been a great partner on this bill, and I look forward to getting more done with him before he retires next year. Ranking Member BOBBY SCOTT has been a partner in getting this deal done. Without him and the passion he brings around dropout factories and creating a real accountability system for our schools so all children can succeed, we would not have been able to get this bill to a place where Democrats and the President could support it.

There have been many late nights and weekends for our staff this year. I want to take a moment now to recognize their extraordinary efforts and service. On Senator ALEXANDER's staff, I want to particularly acknowledge and thank his staff director, David Cleary,

as well as Peter Oppenheim and Lindsay Fryer, his education and K-12 policy leads, who worked closely with our staff over many months. I also want to acknowledge and thank Jordan Hynes, Bill Knudsen, Lindsey Seidman, Hillary Knudsen, Bobby McMillin, and Jim Jeffries, who all did great work on this important bill.

In the House, I was proud to work with Chairman JOHN KLINE, and I recognize and thank his staff director, Julianne Sullivan, as well as Amy Jones, Brad Thomas, Mandy Schaumburg, Leslie Tatum, Kathlyn Ehl, Matthew Frame, Sheariah Yousefi, Krisann Pearce, and Brian Newell.

I was glad to work with my friend, Ranking Member BOBBY SCOTT, and I truly appreciate all of his hard work and dedication to this bill. I want to recognize and thank his staff director, Denise Forte, along with Jacque Chevalier, Helen Pajcic, Alex Payne, Christian Haines, Kiara Pesante, Brian Kennedy, and Rayna Reid.

In addition, I thank our committed floor staff, who provide outstanding guidance to us every day. In particular, I thank Gary Myrick, Tim Mitchell, Tricia Engle, and Daniel Tinsley.

Finally, I cannot say enough about my own incredible staff, who have put their time and talents into this bill from the word “go.” In particular, I want to thank my staff director, Evan Schatz, and my public education policy director, Sarah Bolton, for their extraordinary efforts on this legislation.

I want to acknowledge the long and hard work of Amanda Beaumont, Allie Kimmel, Leanne Hotek, Jake Cornett, Aissa Canchola, Sarah Rosenberg, Aurora Steinle, Leslie Clithero, Eli Zupnick, Helen Hare, Mary Robbins, Jeff Crooks, John Righter, Beth Stein, Beth Burke, Sarah Cupp, Melanie Rainer, Stacy Rich, Emma Rodriguez, and my chief of staff, Mike Spahn. I noticed all of your long, hard work on the unwavering commitment.

As a former teacher, I want to thank you for standing up for the best interests of our students, our educators, and our communities in Washington State and across the country. We would not be where we are today without all of your efforts. Thank you.

Every Senator here has heard from teachers, parents, and students in their home State about how No Child Left Behind is badly broken. For one thing, the law overemphasized testing, and oftentimes those tests are redundant or unnecessary. It issued one-size-fits-all mandates but then failed to give States the resources to meet those standards. I have seen firsthand how this law is not working in my home State of Washington.

Thankfully, we were able to work in a bipartisan way on a solution. Together, we passed our bill through the HELP Committee with strong bipartisan support. We passed our bill here on the Senate floor with strong bipartisan support. We got approval from

our bicameral conference committee with strong bipartisan support. Last week the House passed this final legislation with strong bipartisan support. Today I hope our colleagues here will approve this final bill with the same bipartisan spirit that has guided our progress so far.

The Every Student Succeeds Act will reduce reliance on high-stakes testing. It will invest in improving and expanding access to early learning programs so more kids start kindergarten ready to learn. It will help ensure that all students have access to a quality education regardless of where they live, how they learn, or how much money their parents make.

With today's vote, I am looking forward to going back home and telling teachers and principals that we are on their side. I am looking forward to showing the American people that Congress can actually work when both sides work together.

I am looking forward to making sure this bill is implemented in a way that works for Washington State students, parents, teachers, and communities, but first we have to clear this last legislative hurdle before we can send it to the President's desk. I urge my colleagues to vote yes to pass the Every Student Succeeds Act. Vote yes to fix No Child Left Behind. Vote yes to prove Congress can break through gridlock, work together, and get results. Vote yes to pass this bill for students, parents, teachers, and communities across the country.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following the vote on the adoption of the conference report, the Senate be in a period of morning business until 6 o'clock p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, yesterday I extended my appreciation to Senator MURRAY's staff and to mine—some she noted yesterday. Some of them have been working on this bill for 5 years. I am deeply grateful to them. I have deep appreciation for their hard work, their ingenuity, and their skill in helping us come to this result. Without their hard work and tireless effort, we wouldn't have been able to reach the successful conclusion on the passage of this important bipartisan, bicameral bill.

On Senator MURRAY's exceptional staff, I would like to thank Evan Schatz, Sarah Bolton, Amanda Beaumont, John Righter, Jake Cornett, Leanne Hotek, Allie Kimmel, and Aissa Canchola.

On my hardworking and dedicated staff, I would like to thank David Cleary, Peter Oppenheim, Lindsay Fryer, Bill Knudsen, Jordan Hynes, Hillary Knudsen, Jake Baker, Lindsey

Seidman, Allison Martin, Bobby McMillin, Jim Jeffries, Liz Wolgemuth, Margaret Atkinson, and Taylor Haulsee.

I would like to thank some of my former staff who participated in this multiyear effort, but have moved on to other endeavors, including Marty West, Diane Tran, Matthew Stern, Patrick Murray, and Haley Hudler.

On Chairman KLINE's staff, I would like to thank Julianne Sullivan, Amy Jones, Brad Thomas, Mandy Schaumburg, Leslie Tatum, Kathlyn Ehl, and Sheriah Yousefi.

On Congressman SCOTT's staff, I would like to thank Denise Forte, Brian Kennedy, Jacque Chevalier, Helen Pajcic, Christian Haines, Kevin McDermott, Alex Payne, Kiara Pesante, Arika Trim, Rayna Reid, Michael Taylor, Austin Barbera, and Veronique Pluviose.

I would like to thank the hard-working staff of our Senate HELP Committee members and conferees, who played important roles in reaching this agreement, including Steve Townsend with Senator ENZI, Chris Toppings with Senator BURR, Brett Layson with Senator ISAKSON, Natalie Burkhalter with Senator PAUL, Katie Brown with Senator COLLINS, Karen McCarthy with Senator MURKOWSKI, Cade Clurman and Natalia Odebralski with Senator KIRK, Will Holloway with Senator SCOTT, Katie Neal with Senator HATCH, Josh Yurek with Senator ROBERTS, Pam Davidson with Senator CASSIDY, Brent Palmer with Senator MIKULSKI, David Cohen with Senator SANDERS, Jared Solomon with Senator CASEY, Gohar Sedighi with Senator FRANKEN, Juliana Hermann with Senator BENNET, Brenna Barber with Senator WHITEHOUSE, Brian Moulton with Senator BALDWIN, Mike DiNapoli with Senator BALDWIN, Eamonn Collins with Senator MURPHY, and Josh Delaney with Senator WARREN.

Much of the hard-working staff from the White House and Department of Education also provided great help in getting this conference agreement completed.

From the White House, I would like to thank Chief of Staff Denis McDonough, Domestic Policy Adviser Cecilia Muñoz, James Kvaal, Roberto Rodriguez, Kate Mevis, Don Sisson, and Mario Cardona.

From the U.S. Department of Education, I would like to thank Secretary Arne Duncan, Emma Vadehra, and Lloyd Horwich for their technical assistance.

The Senate legislative counsel staff work long hours on the many drafts of this bill and the amendments we considered on the floor in July, so I would like to especially thank Amy Gaynor, Kristin Romero, and Margaret Bomba.

We always rely on the experts at the Congressional Research Service to give us good information in a timely manner, so I extend my thanks to Becky Skinner, Jeff Kuenzi, Jody Feder, and Gail McCallion.

On Senator McCONNELL's staff, I would like to thank Sharon Soderstrom, Don Stewart, Jen Kuskowski, Katelyn Conner, Erica Suarez, John Abegg, Neil Chatergee, and Johnathan Burks.

On the Senate floor staff, I would like to thank Laura Dove, Robert Duncan, Chris Tuck, Mary Elizabeth Taylor, Megan Mercer, Tony Hanagan, Mike Smith, and Chloe Barz.

On Senator CORNYN's staff, I would like to thank Monica Popp, Emily Kirlin, and John Chapuis.

From the Republican Policy Committee, I would like to thank Dana Barbieri.

Finally, I would like to thank some in the education community for their persistent help with this bill, including Mary Kusler with the National Education Association, Tor Cowan with the American Federation of Teachers, Chris Minnich, Peter Zamora Carissa Moffat Miller, and Jessah Walker with the Council of Chief State School Officers, Stephen Parker and David Quam with the National Governors Association, and Noelle Ellerson and Sasha Pudelski with the School Superintendents Association.

Mr. President, as I said earlier—and I am speaking mainly to my colleagues on the Republican side now—Senator MURRAY's preference for a large early childhood program is not in the bill. My preference for a large program to give parents more choices of schools is not in the bill. We are not voting on that today.

Today we are voting on one of two things: the status quo or the change. You are either voting yes to repeal the common core mandate or no to keep it. You are either voting yes to get rid of the waivers through which the U.S. Department of Education has been operating as a national school board for 80,000 schools in 42 States or a vote no is saying: I like the national school board. Your voting yes means the largest step toward local control of schools in 25 years or no means you are voting against the largest step toward local control in 25 years. A vote yes means you like the fact that this bill should produce less testing; no means you like the testing the way it is. Those are the choices. We are past the time when each of us has a chance to offer an amendment. We all offered our amendments. I have offered mine. Some of mine got 45 votes, and I needed 60 votes, so they are not in the bill, but the choice today is a choice to unleash a flood of excellence in student achievement across this country the way it should be—State by State, community by community, classroom by classroom.

I urge my colleagues to vote yes.

I yield back any time we have remaining.

I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is on the adoption of the conference report.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) and the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO) would have voted "nay."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) is necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 85, nays 12, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 334 Leg.]

YEAS—85

Alexander	Fischer	Murkowski
Ayotte	Franken	Murphy
Baldwin	Gardner	Murray
Barrasso	Gillibrand	Nelson
Bennet	Graham	Perdue
Blumenthal	Grassley	Peters
Booker	Hatch	Portman
Boozman	Heinrich	Reed
Boxer	Heitkamp	Reid
Brown	Heller	Roberts
Burr	Hirono	Rounds
Cantwell	Hoeven	Schatz
Capito	Inhofe	Schumer
Cardin	Isakson	Sessions
Carper	Johnson	Shaheen
Casey	Kaine	Stabenow
Cassidy	King	Sullivan
Coats	Kirk	Tester
Cochran	Klobuchar	Thune
Collins	Lankford	Tillis
Coons	Leahy	Toomey
Corker	Manchin	Udall
Cornyn	Markey	Warner
Cotton	McCain	Warren
Donnelly	McCaskill	Whitehouse
Durbin	McConnell	Wicker
Enzi	Menendez	Wyden
Ernst	Merkley	
Feinstein	Mikulski	

NAYS—12

Blunt	Lee	Sasse
Crapo	Moran	Scott
Daines	Paul	Shelby
Flake	Risch	Vitter

NOT VOTING—3

Cruz	Rubio	Sanders
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The conference report was agreed to.

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, today the Senate voted on the adoption of the conference report to accompany S. 1177, the Every Child Achieves Act. The conference report is commonly referred to as the Every Student Succeeds Act. While the Every Student Succeeds Act takes important steps in restoring some control over education decisions back to the States, it does not go far enough. Unfortunately, the bill does not grant States autonomy in all education decisionmaking, expands the Federal Government's role in pre-K, and fails to include important measures that broaden school choice. Due to these shortcomings, I am unable to lend my support to this bill. •

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS BILL

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, today the U.S. Senate, by a vote of 85 to 12, has sent a Christmas present to 50 million children across this country. First, it has to go down Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House, where we hope President Obama will wrap a big red bow around it, sign it, and send it to the children and the 3.4 million teachers who are looking forward to it.

This is a bill that is so important that the Nation's Governors gave it their first full endorsement of any piece of legislation in 20 years. It has the full support of the Chief State School Officers, it has the full support of the school administrators, and it has the support of the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association.

This is very good policy, and the reason it is, is it is bipartisan, it is a consensus, and instead of arguing about it after the President signs it—which I hope he will—classroom teachers, school board members, Governors, community by community, State by State can go to work implementing it, and making their plans to make their own decisions about what kind of tests to give, how many to give, what the standards should be, how to fix failing schools, how to reward outstanding teachers. We have created an environment that I believe will unleash a flood of excellence in student achievement, State by State and community by community.

I thank the Members of the Senate. I especially thank the, members of the Health Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee who have worked so well together—all 22 of them. I especially thank Senator PATTY MURRAY of Washington for her leadership and her effectiveness in helping to get such a remarkable event.

To take an issue this complex and difficult and have a vote of 85 to 12 proves that when the Senate puts its mind to it, it can do some very good work. We have done that today.

ORDER FOR RECESS

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate recess today from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS BILL

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, let me echo the words of our chairman and thank him, our staff and everyone who has worked on this and everyone who has supported this in a bipartisan way to send it now to the President to be signed into law.

It is a great step forward. As the chairman, Senator ALEXANDER, just said, the work must now begin in our schools, in our communities, and in our