

On Senator MCCONNELL's staff, I would like to thank Sharon Soderstrom, Don Stewart, Jen Kuskowski, Katelyn Conner, Erica Suares, John Abegg, Neil Chaterjee, 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	Hoover	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	Markley	Warner
Cotton	McCain	Warren
Donnelly	McCaskill	McConnell
Durbin	McConnell	Whitehouse
Enzi	Menendez	Wicker
Ernst	Merkley	Wyden
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

States to find ways to make sure all of our students achieve. We have put them on that, we expect them to live up to that, and that is the promise of this bill.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—  
S. 1774

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I am going to ask for a unanimous consent request but speak for a couple of minutes, engaging in some discussion with my dear friend, the senior Senator from the State of Utah.

First, I thank him for coming to the floor today on this issue. I am heartened that he has expressed interest in working with us to get something done to help our fellow citizens in Puerto Rico. I also thank my friends, the Senators from Connecticut, New Jersey, Oregon, Washington, Illinois, and my colleague from New York who is here for their steadfast support for helping Puerto Rico in this time of crisis.

I rise deeply troubled by the dire economic, financial, and health care situation in Puerto Rico. The island is facing a financial crisis, a health care system on life support, and the situation grows more dire each month.

Puerto Rico is \$73 billion in debt already and large bond payments will continue to become due next month and in the months to come. Sadly, as Puerto Rico's economy and health care system has floundered, residents have started to flee their homeland. As the economic situation worsens, the population shift from the island to the mainland will continue until the only ones left are those who don't have the resources to move. At that point we are going to have a humanitarian crisis on our hands, if there isn't one already.

There are 3.5 million people, Puerto Ricans, living on the island today and another 5.2 million living in the United States, including over 1 million in my State of New York. We have a basic American responsibility to aid all American citizens in times of crisis, no matter where they live. Beyond that basic imperative, if we fail to offer Puerto Rico assistance now, the problem will not be contained to the island.

We need to be concerned with these issues, not only because Puerto Ricans are part of the American family and deserve the quality of life we all expect but also because our failure to act now could result in a Puerto Rican financial crisis that becomes a drag on our entire economy. I want to underscore this point. Congress must intervene before the crisis deepens and widens. We have the tools to fix this problem. They are sitting in the toolbox. The problem is Puerto Rico isn't allowed to use them.

Similar to chapter 9 protections offered under the Bankruptcy Code, every State in the United States can

access chapter 9 protections for municipal and public corporate debt, but Puerto Rico, because it is a territory, cannot. Providing Puerto Rico the ability to restructure its debt is absolutely necessary if Puerto Rico is going to get out from this financial crisis.

Senator BLUMENTHAL and I have introduced legislation along with many of my other colleagues who will join us today that will put Puerto Rico on an equal footing when it comes to chapter 9. At the very least we should pass it right away. There are other proposals as well. We could widen bankruptcy protections. There are health and economic issues as well and we have to look at those.

I stress to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle that giving Puerto Rico the restructuring authority in our bill isn't a bailout and will not require any additional spending. It will not cost the taxpayers one plug nickel, but it will do a whole lot of good to our friends in Puerto Rico.

On the health care front, I have introduced a bill with many of my same colleagues to address several aspects of the health care crisis, issues such as Medicaid funding and fairness, appropriate reimbursement rates, and equitable physician payments. Disparities in how the Medicare and Medicaid Programs treat Puerto Rico and our other territories are significant and need to be addressed.

In conclusion, I am going to be the first to admit that neither of these bills is a silver bullet to solve all of Puerto Rico's problems, nor are they the only potential solutions. We are more than willing to work with the chairman of the Finance Committee, a good friend who I know cares about the Puerto Rican issue, to find other solutions and craft bipartisan legislation so long as it provides help to Puerto Rico, but the clock is ticking. We are running out of time. Congress must act now to address these issues that are stifling Puerto Rico's economy and way of life. We must give them the tools they need to solve these problems.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Judiciary Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 1774 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration, the bill be read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I want to say first that I appreciate what my colleague is trying to do with regard to Puerto Rico. I think it is fair to say that we all share his concerns, and I don't know of anyone in this Chamber who is indifferent to the issues facing our fellow American citizens in Puerto Rico. I agree with the senior Senator from New York that Congress should act to

address these problems and we need to act very quickly. However, a number of Senators, myself included, have some concerns about the specific policy in the bill he has brought up today on the floor. Setting aside those concerns, there are a number of questions about whether this approach would effectively address Puerto Rico's problems.

I want to work with my colleagues and especially my colleague from New York to find a path forward on this issue. Once again, there is bipartisan agreement that something needs to be done. I have been working closely with the ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee on this issue. He has been a great help. I have also been in some pretty involved discussions with the chairs of the Judiciary and Energy and Natural Resources Committees, which also have jurisdiction in this matter, as we have been working to draft a legislative proposal to address a number of these concerns. In fact, we are planning to introduce our bill later today.

I am sure I will have more to say on that piece of particular legislation in the coming days. For now I will say I would be happy to engage the senior Senator from New York on this matter as well and would hope that he would be willing to do the same with me. Going forward, I hope we can work together to make sure we have all the information we need about the situation in Puerto Rico in order to craft informed policies and effective solutions and do so in short order, in the interest of helping the people of Puerto Rico.

As of right now, I think we need additional deliberation on this matter rather than simply deeming any piece of legislation to be the correct approach. For these reasons I must object to the good Senator's request at this time, but once again I will commit to working with him and others to address these important issues.

I do object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from New York.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, just briefly. I thank my colleague from Utah for his remarks. I want to work with him, as I know Senator WYDEN, Senator GILLIBRAND, Senator MENENDEZ, and so many others on the floor want to get this done. We have to work together quickly and I appreciate him acknowledging that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I want to express my strong disappointment that we are unable to do this legislation now. There is a grave sense of urgency for the people living in Puerto Rico, so I share the goals of my colleagues to get this done sooner than later. This has to be moved forward. No American parent or child should have to face economic stress simply because of where they live. Congress has the responsibility to actually help these families. The economic situation in Puerto