

not in our high schools. I am proud to have stood with Senators CHRIS MURPHY and RICHARD BLUMENTHAL on the floor of the Senate for 15 hours calling for congressional action on common-sense gun safety legislation. As a Senator, the safety and security of Massachusetts' schools, neighborhoods, and communities are my top priority.

Our Secretary of Education has the safety of every student in every State in his or her hands, and I do not believe Betsy DeVos is up to that job. I do not stand alone in this conclusion that Betsy DeVos is unfit to be Secretary of Education. I received tens of thousands of letters and phone calls from constituents all across Massachusetts urging me to reject her nomination. These come from teachers and administrators, the people who work on these issues every day. I have a letter here from Todd Simendinger, the principal of Rockport Elementary School in Rockport, MA.

He wrote to me last week and said:

Senator Markey, as a strong supporter of public education, I ask that you oppose the confirmation of Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education. We must have a secretary who can commit to supporting every student in all public schools and provide leadership that will help our neighborhood schools succeed. Betsy DeVos's record in education and her performance at the recent confirmation hearing prove that she is the wrong candidate for the job. As a principal, I have spoken with teachers, parents, students, and community members who agree that America's future depends on a strong investment in our Nation's public schools.

The offices of so many of my colleagues who have spoken on the floor already have, like me, received these kinds of letters and messages literally on a minute-by-minute basis from our constituents. Their passion is born of a deep commitment to ensuring that the very best education for all of the children of the Commonwealth can only be provided if the standard for that education is high. I commend them, and I agree with their concerns. All children deserve that standard.

So, from my perspective, you cannot have a more fundamental issue before us, this privatization of the public school system in America, the voucherization of our public school system in America. There is a model. It is Massachusetts. We do it right now. We are No. 1 in the country. We look over our shoulders at those who are behind us. But it is a standard that basically says: We are going to invest in the public schools and the charter schools. We are going to make sure they have the highest possible standards.

That is a recipe for ensuring that every child, regardless of their national nationality or their income, gets the education they need for a portable passport to a global economy for the rest of their lives. That has to be our goal. What is happening using the philosophy of Betsy DeVos is a failure. It is a proven failure. We already see the results. What is happening in Massachusetts, what happens in imple-

menting the standards of the laws that we already have on the books across our country—it points us in the correct direction.

So with that, I urge a “no” vote on Betsy DeVos and her nomination as Secretary of the Education Department.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONGRATULATING THE NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, American history was made last night. The New England Patriots won the Super Bowl. This triumvirate of Robert Kraft, Bill Belichick, and Tom Brady continues this historic journey to being recognized as the greatest single football team in the history of the United States. Even as the Falcons were ahead by 25 points, even as the rest of the country thought the game was over, we in Massachusetts, we in New England, we have our own motto: In Belichick we trust. In Brady we trust.

We knew it was not over. We knew there was still hope. We knew there was a plan that could be implemented that would ensure that the Patriots once again would prevail.

I thank the Presiding Officer for giving me this opportunity to be recognized on this most important of all subjects. This incredible Patriots victory has brought joy to people all across New England. It has brought dismay to people in other parts of the country. They still continue to be mystified by this incredible team and the incredible leadership those three great leaders provide. But for us, we realize we are in the presence of greatness. We know how spoiled we are to have such a great team.

I just wanted to rise and congratulate the New England Patriots, their leadership of Bob Kraft, Bill Belichick, Tom Brady, but all of this team, because their motto is a very simple motto. It says: Do your job. That is what every Patriot did last night. Because they stuck it out through every single play, at the end of the day, they were able to enjoy that historic victory.

For my part, I can't be more proud of any group of New Englanders. It was just a fantastic victory. As a season ticket holder, when I was 19 years old, when it was seven games at \$6 apiece—\$42 as a season ticket holder at Fenway Park. You can imagine how almost impossible it is to believe that we have reached such a stage where even those who have been critics of the Patriots now are forced to recognize that Bill Belichick is the greatest coach of all time; Tom Brady is the greatest quar-

terback of all time; and the Patriots, led by Robert Kraft, is the greatest franchise of all time. We are very proud that victory last night cemented that place in history.

Once again, I just want to congratulate each and every one of them and especially the Patriots fans who, through thick and thin, have been with that team every step of the way.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise today as a product of New Jersey public schools, the son of Cuban refugees whose parents decided to leave everything behind because they did not like the dictatorship from the right and did not like what they saw in the Sierra Maestra, as the Castros were seeking to overthrow that government from the right, and who fled their own country in order to seek a better life in the United States.

They were the lucky ones. They saw the handwriting on the wall, and they got out before the true brutality of the Castro regime took hold in Cuba. When they arrived here, they had nothing more than the promise of a brighter future and, if not for them, then for their children.

In so many ways, it is the quintessential immigrant story; indeed, the quintessential American story. My mother worked as a seamstress in the factories of New Jersey. My father was an itinerant carpenter. We didn't have a lot of money—just enough to live in a small apartment in a tenement in Union City and put food on the table. But that was plenty. It was plenty because my parents knew that living in America gave their children access to a free public education, and they always taught us that an education was the key toward a better life.

Growing up, I was a quiet kid. I was very studious. I got good grades, but I struggled with public speaking. I know some of my colleagues wouldn't believe that today, but it is true.

Unfortunately for me, one of the final requirements before I graduated high school was a public speech class. Again, I did all the work, but I refused to actually stand up in front of the class and speak. I thought I could get away with it, but my teacher, Gail Harper, had other ideas.

She kept me after class. After my classmates left, she forced me to recite short stories and poetry and speeches I had written that were part of the classwork. Eventually she told me that I was going to be the narrator in a school production, which meant that I was going to be speaking on stage in front of the entire student body. I was

petrified—petrified. And I was inclined to refuse.

I am not sure if there would have been a more terrifying thought to me in the world than having to get up in front of my entire student body, but Ms. Harper told me that she knew that I could succeed. If I refused, however, she would have no choice but to fail me. And if you knew my late mother, that was not an option.

So I swallowed my fear, and when I got out there, I found that Ms. Harper's work paid off. Not only did I realize that I could overcome all of that fear and anxiety, but it had instilled in me a hunger to keep working, to get better at speaking in front of people, a skill that I honestly owe my life's work to.

For me, Ms. Harper was so much more than a teacher; she was a mentor and one of the unsung heroes of our public education system. And I am privileged to have had an opportunity to tell her that during her lifetime.

Now, thanks to my parents' commitment and incredible public schoolteachers like Ms. Harper, this product of New Jersey public schools went on to get a law degree from Rutgers University, a State institution, and was able to rise from a tenement in Union City to 1 of 100 Senators in a country of over 300 million people.

I got my start in politics fighting for public schools in my hometown. When I was in high school, I was told that because of my grades and my activities, I could be in the senior honors program but that I had to cough up \$200 for the books. My parents were poor. We lived in a tenement. I didn't have \$200 for the books. And I couldn't understand, for the life of me, if I had the ability and the grades but not the money, that I would be barred from being in the honors program. So I raised such a ruckus that they gave me the books, told me to be quiet, and they put me in the honors program. But I had friends who had the same circumstances; they had the ability and the grades, but they didn't have the money. Unlike me, they didn't say anything, and they didn't get in. So I didn't think that was right.

I petitioned to change the school board from being appointed by the mayor at the time to being elected by the public. Ultimately, I won the fight to change that school board and became the youngest school board member at that time in history when I was 20 years old.

So I understand the promise of public education. I understand the challenges that come with it. I understand the need for parental engagement and the extraordinary impact that good teachers can have on our children's lives.

I understand that our schools need access to adequate resources in order to allow every student to reach their full potential. And I understand that we have a long way to go to ensure that we truly do guarantee every child in America equal access to a high quality public education regardless of

where they live, regardless of the happenstance of where they were born, regardless of their station in life.

Most importantly, I understand that our public education system has formed the foundation upon which the American dream has been built for generations. It is the great socializing factor of our Nation, and there is no substitute for it. At its core, it is an all-taker system. It does not care whether you are wealthy or poor, whether your family predates European settlement, came on the Mayflower, or is first-generation American. It does not care whether you are White or Black or Hispanic or Asian or Christian or Jewish or Muslim. It does not care whether you struggle with learning disabilities or autism or Down syndrome.

Our public education system welcomes you with open arms and adheres to the fundamental principles that all are welcome, all are equal, and all deserve a chance to learn and earn a better life for themselves and their families.

While we work to improve public education and renew our commitment to our children, we need a partner in the Federal Department of Education that also understands these challenges and shares our values. Unfortunately, I do not believe that Betsy DeVos is that candidate.

While I do not question her intentions, her limited experience and advocacy for policies that fundamentally undermine public education make her unqualified to be the Secretary of Education.

Mrs. DeVos has never participated in the public education system that she would be tasked with overseeing either as a student or a parent or a teacher or an administrator. I don't see that fact in and of itself alone as disqualifying but, coupled with the policies that she has advocated for in her home State of Michigan—pushing for more charter schools while simultaneously working against accountability for them, even as they profit off the backs of children while showing little improvement in student outcomes; advocating for voucher schemes that put public funding into private schools even for families that do not need the additional assistance, while depriving public schools of vital funding that they depend upon to provide a quality education to every student—it becomes clear that Mrs. DeVos does not understand that fundamental commitment to American children.

My concerns about Mrs. DeVos were compounded by the answers she gave in her confirmation hearing before the HELP Committee. Guns have no place in our schools—at least in my view—except in the hands of trained law enforcement personnel tasked with keeping our children safe, yet when asked if she would do away with gun-free school zones, if told to do so by the President, Mrs. DeVos, after trying to avoid the question with a nonanswer about grizzly bears attacking schools, said she would “support the President.”

I do not believe that it is the role of a Cabinet Secretary to simply and blindly support the President, regardless of how misguided or dangerous an idea might be, nor do I believe that it is reasonable or responsible to make it easier to bring guns in and around schools, where they endanger our children. We must do a better job of securing universal background checks and treating mental health issues, but more guns is not the answer.

Mrs. DeVos also said in her testimony that she believed that compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act should be left up to the States. IDEA, as the act is known, guarantees a “free, appropriate public education” that is individualized to meet the needs of every student with disabilities.

When Congress first passed IDEA in 1975—though it was called then the Education for All Handicapped Children Act—it came with a promise that the Federal Government would cover 40 percent of the cost to educate those with special needs. Unfortunately, we have not met that obligation, providing less than half of that funding in recent history.

IDEA is Federal—not State—law. It is Federal law that needs increased funding and attention from the Federal Government. And when this was pointed out to Mrs. DeVos, she said simply that she “may have been confused.”

Our children with disabilities deserve a real Federal partner that understands the challenges they face and is committed to getting them the resources they deserve, not a Secretary of Education who is confused about the Federal role in education.

These are only a few examples of how Mrs. DeVos has shown herself to be unprepared and unqualified for the very serious position to which she has been nominated.

If confirmed, Mrs. DeVos would take over a multibillion-dollar Federal student aid and student loan program that helps American families afford the skyrocketing cost of higher education.

I, myself, was a recipient of Pell grants and other Federal student aid and would not have been able to afford the cost of a college degree without them. Yet not only does Mrs. DeVos have no experience with student loans or managing such a program, she has very little, if any, engagement with any policy issues pertaining to higher education.

At a time when trillions of dollars of student debt are acting as a barrier to obtaining a higher education, hindering a generation of graduates from entering the middle class, and acting as a drag on our economy, we deserve a nominee who understands these issues.

As we continue to struggle with the best ways to measure student progress and achievement, we deserve a Secretary of Education who understands basic concepts like the difference between proficiency and growth.

So let me just say, my own experiences have given me an incredible faith

in the power of public education systems, while Mrs. DeVos has worked only to undermine them. I believe that the Federal Government can be a strong partner in ensuring a free, quality public education for all students, especially those with disabilities, while Mrs. DeVos seems to think that the Federal Government should not be involved in these endeavors.

I believe that guns must remain out of our schools, but Mrs. DeVos seemed to indicate that they could have a place there. Most importantly, I believe that our students, parents, teachers, and educators should be able to trust the person tasked with overseeing them. And the 50,000 New Jerseyans who have reached out to me to oppose her nomination have clearly shown that she has not earned that trust.

Here is one example of a constituent who reached out to my office.

Dear Senator,

My name is Beth More and I live in your great State of New Jersey in Fanwood in Union County. I am writing today to express my deep opposition to the appointment of Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education. As a mother of two boys in our public school system, and one with special needs, I am deeply concerned and troubled by Mrs. DeVos's lack of public school experience. In fact, the thought of her steering money and funding away from public schools is not only a threat to my children, but a threat to the 50 million other children currently receiving a public education. She lacks understanding in even the most basic issues that affect our schools, and that, my Senator, is scary. I urge you to strongly oppose this and tell your other colleagues in the Senate the same.

So I implore my colleagues to put politics aside, to examine Mrs. DeVos's qualifications closely, and to be open to the input that you all are receiving from your own constituents, like Beth More.

I hope that if you are open in your mind in that regard, you will oppose Betsy DeVos's nomination to be Secretary of Education, as I will.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

APPOINTMENTS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, on behalf of the Vice President, pursuant to Public Law 94-304, as amended by Public Law 99-7, appoints the following Senator as the Chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki) during the 115th Congress: the Honorable ROGER WICKER of Mississippi.

The Chair, on behalf of the President of the Senate, pursuant to Public Law 106-286, appoints the following Members to serve on the Congressional-Ex-

ecutive Commission on the People's Republic of China: the Honorable MARCO RUBIO of Florida (Chairman), the Honorable JAMES LANKFORD of Oklahoma, the Honorable TOM COTTON of Arkansas, the Honorable STEVE DAINES of Montana, and the Honorable TODD YOUNG of Indiana.

The Chair, on behalf of the President of the Senate, pursuant to Public Law 85-874, as amended, reappoints the following individual to the Board of Trustees of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts: the Honorable ROY BLUNT of Missouri.

QUORUM CALL

Mr. MCCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll and the following Senators entered the Chamber and answered to their names:

[Quorum No. 2 Ex.]

Cantwell	Grassley	McConnell
Capito	Isakson	Menendez
Cornyn	Kaine	Murphy
Donnelly	Lankford	Tillis
Fischer	McCain	

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORAN). A quorum is not present.

The clerk will call the names of absent Senators.

The senior assistant legislative clerk resumed the call of the roll and the following Senators entered the Chamber and answered to their names:

[Quorum No. 2 Ex.]

Barrasso	Gardner	Murray
Cotton	Moran	Schumer

The PRESIDING OFFICER. A quorum is not present.

The majority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to instruct the Sergeant at Arms to request the attendance of absent Senators, and I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the motion.

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 Arizona (Mr. FLAKE), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. SASSE), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) is necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 91, nays 4, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 53 Ex.]

YEAS—91

Alexander	Barrasso	Blumenthal
Baldwin	Bennet	Blunt

Booker	Graham	Nelson
Boozman	Grassley	Paul
Brown	Harris	Perdue
Burr	Hassan	Peters
Cantwell	Hatch	Portman
Capito	Heinrich	Reed
Cardin	Heitkamp	Risch
Carper	Hirono	Roberts
Casey	Hoeven	Rounds
Cassidy	Inhofe	Sanders
Cochran	Isakson	Schatz
Coons	Johnson	Schumer
Corker	Kaine	Scott
Cornyn	Kennedy	Sessions
Cortez Masto	King	Shaheen
Cotton	Klobuchar	Shelby
Crapo	Lankford	Stabenow
Cruz	Leahy	Sullivan
Daines	Lee	Tester
Donnelly	Manchin	Thune
Duckworth	Markey	Tillis
Durbin	McCaIn	Van Hollen
Enzi	McCaskill	Warner
Ernst	McConnell	Warren
Feinstein	Menendez	Whitehouse
Fischer	Merkley	Wyden
Franken	Moran	Young
Gardner	Murphy	
Gillibrand	Murray	

NAYS—4

Collins	Rubio
Heller	Wicker

NOT VOTING—5

Flake	Sasse	Udall
Murkowski	Toomey	

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. A quorum is present.

The Senator from Tennessee.

(The remarks of Mr. ALEXANDER pertaining to the submission of S. Res. 50 are located in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, I rise to urge my colleagues to join me in opposing the nomination of Betsy DeVos to be Secretary of Education. Simply put, Betsy DeVos is completely unqualified to serve as Secretary of Education in this great Nation.

Many others share this view. I have heard from thousands of parents, teachers, and other citizens of Wisconsin who are concerned about the future of our education system urging me to oppose Mrs. DeVos and certainly opposing her vision for America's students. As of today, over 20,000 Wisconsinites have emailed me, and we have had over 7,000 phone calls opposing the confirmation of Mrs. DeVos, and Senate Democrats are unified in our opposition to Mrs. DeVos serving in this capacity. Even two Senate Republicans have announced that they cannot support Betsy DeVos. If just one more of my Republican colleagues were to announce their opposition and were to vote no, we could do the right thing and tell President Trump that he really needs to find a new candidate, a new candidate for Secretary of Education who is qualified to run that Department.

While Betsy DeVos has spent decades advocating for a particular vision for education, she has never actually worked as a teacher or as an administrator. Her career has involved investing hers and her family's considerable