

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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 Co-operation 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	Hoover	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	
Durbin	McCain	Tillis
Enzi	McCaskill	Van Hollen
Ernst	McConnell	Warner
Feinstein	Menendez	Warren
Fischer	Merkley	Whitehouse
Franken	Moran	Wyden
Gardner	Murphy	Young
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

wealth and using those resources to advance the privatization of our K-12 education system. She did not attend a public school either for grade school, high school, or college, and nor did her children. She has never worked as a teacher, principal, professor, counselor, or in any other formal role in our education system.

Her confirmation hearing before the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee clearly demonstrated how little she knows about Federal education law and policy. It was startling to see her ignorance about critical measures like the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or the debate over growth versus proficiency as a measure of student achievement. Betsy DeVos has demonstrated that she has neither the knowledge nor the experience in education that would allow her to be a successful leader of the Department of Education. Mrs. DeVos has worked to advance a vision of K-12 education that is fundamentally hostile to our public education system.

My home State of Wisconsin has a long and very proud tradition of support for public education. Back at the founding of our State, we wrote the guarantee that every child should receive a free public education into our very founding document, our State Constitution. Wisconsin had the first kindergarten in the United States. Wisconsin is proud of something that we actually call the Wisconsin idea in higher education; that the walls of the classroom should be the borders of the State, if not the borders of this Nation or the entire world.

Mrs. DeVos's experience in education, however, has been a decades-long effort to privatize it. Her record of support for vouchers as well as charter schools that lack adequate accountability and oversight is very troubling and could lead to diversion of public dollars in even greater amounts out of public education.

Regardless of any vision or experience on education, Mrs. DeVos is a nominee with, let's say, complex and opaque finances. She has a very opaque record of financial dealings and political giving, including on matters directly related to the work that the Department does which she seeks to lead. Given her and her family's investments in companies that benefit directly from Federal education programs, I remain very concerned about what we simply still don't know.

I am also troubled by Mrs. DeVos's and her family's long history of contributing to organizations that have been hostile to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community, even promoting the discredited idea that sexual orientation or gender identity can be changed through conversion therapy.

While she told me and several of my colleagues at her hearing that she believes all students should be treated equally, I really remain concerned

about how this long history of support for these anti-LGBTQ organizations will influence a Department which, over the last 8 years, has shown some tremendous leadership in supporting LGBTQ students and parents in the education system.

The Federal Government's primary role in elementary and secondary education is to promote equity. I am not convinced that Mrs. DeVos will be the leader the Department needs to do just that. Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965 as a civil rights measure. It was designed to ensure that every student, regardless of ZIP Code or parents' income, has access to a quality public education.

We continued that important tradition in reauthorizing this law, which is now in the form of a very strongly bipartisan bill, the Every Student Succeeds Act. The next Secretary of Education will have to implement that act.

I fear that Mrs. DeVos, as a vocal proponent of State and local control, will not be the strong voice we need to hold States accountable for serving all students, particularly those who have been historically left behind.

When we passed the Every Student Succeeds Act, we made sure there were strong Federal guardrails to assure that we never forget why there is a Federal role in education to begin with, for equity and civil rights and to make sure that every child can succeed. Furthermore, I am very concerned that Mrs. DeVos would not commit to robustly supporting the Department's Office for Civil Rights or enforcing the very guidance that protects transgender students from discrimination.

Betsy DeVos lacks knowledge about and commitment to the Federal laws that ensure students with disabilities have access to the various supports that they need to receive and benefit from a quality public education.

As I noted, she has demonstrated a complete lack of understanding about our Federal obligations to these students. I have heard from numerous parents in Wisconsin, parents of students with disabilities who were appalled by her inadequate answers to questions at our education panel hearing. She was unprepared to answer questions about the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and these parents have written to express their distress about what her filling the role of Secretary of Education could mean for their children if she were to be confirmed.

One Wisconsin mother of three special needs children wrote to me about how this Federal law provided the legal rights that she needed to advocate for them, to advocate for the best possible educational environment for her three sons with special needs.

I heard from another mother, Melissa from Beloit, who detailed how the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act makes it possible for her daughter, Rowenna, who has Down Syndrome and

autism, to actually thrive in a public education setting, along with her peers.

Finally, as a strong proponent of making college more accessible and affordable, I do not believe that Mrs. DeVos has the experience or vision that will allow her to successfully lead the Department in supporting higher learning.

There is a student debt crisis in this country, but Mrs. DeVos doesn't have a plan to address it and has even expressed skepticism about a Federal role.

While she has acknowledged that there are some bad actors in higher education, she has also refused to commit to enforcing regulations that help students who are defrauded by dishonest schools like Corinthian Colleges. We need a Secretary of Education who is an advocate for those students, not one who is looking for ways to shirk that responsibility.

Despite the fact that the Department oversees billions of dollars in grants and loans that allow students to pursue higher education, she has expressed skepticism about any Federal role in making college more affordable. She has even refused to oppose cuts to a program that helps students who commit to a career in public service or to support efforts to ensure that the value of the Pell grant keeps pace with the cost of college.

For all of these reasons and many others, Betsy DeVos is not the right choice for Secretary of Education. I call on my colleagues to defeat her on the question of confirmation and to afford this new President the chance to send us a nominee who is prepared to be an advocate for all students and public education in this country.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida is recognized.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I yield the remainder of my postclosure debate time to Senator SCHUMER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right.

The Senator from Florida is recognized.

CHINESE POLITICAL PRISONERS JIANG TIANYONG AND TANG JINGLING

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I know that we are in the middle of an important debate about a topic of education in our schools. One of the topics I hope young Americans will learn more about is the state of affairs across the world when it comes to human rights.

We are a vibrant society engaged in a heated debate, as we often have been throughout our history, about items of political matters. If you look here today, there are people standing up to speak on different sides of an issue. You see that the Republican Party today controls the White House, the Senate, and the House, and yet you have people with the freedom in this country to be able to stand up and oppose that. We have seen that across the country with demonstrations and speeches and all sorts of other protected speech. We are very fortunate