

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I greatly respect the chairman of the committee. I know of his sincerity in dealing with higher education and education in our country, but the issue is pretty simple. Without the continuation of mandatory funding as provided by current law, historically Black colleges and universities and minority-serving institutions cannot rely upon the funding source the chairman is talking about. There are going to be tough decisions that have to be made on infrastructure improvements, tough decisions on staffing, and there is no need for it.

We all agree that mandatory funding should continue. I am all for permanent extension. This UC will give us the 2-year window to make sure we pass the Higher Education Act reauthorization to fund that.

The issues the chairman is going to talk about are all matters that are under discussion and debate that have to be worked out between the members of his committee, the floor, and reconciliation between the House and the Senate. In the meantime, historically Black colleges and universities and minority-serving institutions will suffer.

I fully support what the chairman is trying to do getting matters accomplished, but if I understand the unanimous consent he will be asking for, it doesn't deal with all the issues that need to be dealt with. We have to fully address the challenges students face with college access, affordability, accountability, and campus safety. The chairman's bill does not meet that test and limits what we could do in the future to meaningfully address the cost of attending and succeeding in colleges. The bill continues to let the realities of getting a college degree—the challenges of childcare, housing, food, textbooks—go unaddressed for our country's growing diversity of students, including student veterans, students with disabilities, students of color, and students of low-income families or those who are the first in their families to attend college.

I agree with the chairman. Let's bring the Higher Education Act forward and debate it but don't hold these institutions that have historically been discriminated against hostage to a program we all agree needs to be continued.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, why would we hold hostage bipartisan legislation that would simplify the FAFSA from 108 questions to 18 to 30—the Federal aid that 20 million families fill out every year in this country—unnecessarily? Why are we holding that hostage? Why are we holding hostage the legislation introduced by Senator PORTMAN and Senator KAINE and co-sponsored by CARDIN, GILLIBRAND, HASSAN, KLOBUCHAR, STABENOW, BALDWIN, BROWN—these are all Democrats—here is a Republican, CAPITO, COONS, ERNST, JONES, MORAN, SHAHEEN, SINEMA, SMITH, WICKER, and BRAUN.

This is legislation we all agree on—or at least that many agree on—on short-term Pell grants. Then we have Senators GRASSLEY, SMITH, CASSIDY, ERNST, HASSAN, JONES, KLOBUCHAR, MANCHIN, and RUBIO, who would like to simplify the Federal aid letters so you don't get a letter in the mail, if you are living in Maryland or Tennessee, and think you have a grant you don't have to pay back, when in fact it is a loan you do have to pay back.

We also agree on increasing the maximum Pell grant. We also agree on how to pay for it. We also agree on permanent funding for the historically Black colleges and institutions in a way that the Budget Committee can easily approve, and it can pass the Senate.

If we can agree on all that and it all helps students at historically Black colleges and minority-serving institutions, then why don't we pass it? Why don't we do that? Why do we come up with a short-term, gimmick-supported, House-passed bill that sets up a new cliff? Why don't we take a permanent funding, with a Budget Committee-approved way of paying for it, and do some other things that we have been working on for 5 years in a bipartisan way? This is not an Alexander proposal. This is a package of proposals by 29 Senators—17 Democrats and 12 Republicans. It is ready to pass the Senate; it is ready to be worked on with the House of Representatives; and it is ready to be signed by the President of the United States.

Let me add to this. The Secretary of Education, and people seem to ignore this, has written all the presidents of the historically Black colleges and said there is enough money in the bank to pay for all their funding until next September. So we have nearly a year to do this the right way instead of the wrong way. We are not on vacation. I know everybody is talking about impeachment, but we have lots of students around this country who would like to have a simpler way to go to college. We have lots of historically Black institutions and minority-serving institutions that would like to have a permanent method of funding. We have lots of employers and potential employees who want a short-term Pell grant.

Simplifying FAFSA would actually add, according to the Congressional Budget Office, 250,000 Pell grants, and it would increase the number of Americans who are eligible for the maximum Pell grant. All that is ready to go. All that is ready to go so why don't we do that instead?

I thank the Senator from Maryland for giving me an opportunity and a reason to bring up my package of bills with permanent funding of the historically Black colleges and universities paid for, not by a gimmick, but by a Budget Committee-approved method that President Trump and President Obama both had in their budgets.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 2557

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health,

Education, Labor, and Pensions be discharged from further consideration of S. 2557—that is my bill—and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration. I ask unanimous consent that the bill providing permanent funding for historically Black colleges and universities and other matters be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, in reserving the right to object and for the reasons I have already stated, there will be ample time to bring up the permanent reauthorization of the funding for historically Black colleges and universities and minority institutions. That is why the unanimous consent for which I asked was for 2 years.

My party doesn't control the activities on the floor of the Senate. This reauthorization bill is going to take some time on the floor. We are going to have to deal with amendments, and we are going to have to reconcile the differences between the House and the Senate. There is no other category of expenditures that is mandatory of this nature to underserved and historically discriminated institutions that is being held hostage as we debate a broader bill. I think this is a truly unique circumstance and should not be held hostage.

We need to have a way of debating the issues to make sure that in a reauthorization that occurs only every so often within the Higher Education Act that we deal with the current gaps we have for diversity—for students with disabilities, for students of color, for students from low-income families, and for those who are the first in their families to attend college.

For those reasons, I object to the request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, we have been working for 5 years, for example, on simplifying the Federal aid form that students fill out to go to college—5 years. We have bipartisan support for it in the Senate and in the House. We have families who, in my State, will be discouraged from going to college because of this complex form.

Why don't we pass it? It is important to fund historically Black colleges; that is true. They have funding for another year. So why don't we add to that the simplifying of the FAFSA form, which, I would imagine, 95 percent of the students in historically Black colleges have to fill out every year? In addition to that, they have this verification process that they go through during which somebody catches them telling the IRS one thing and the Department of Education another so that they jerk their aid. They think that is important.

I have the president of a community college in Memphis who tells me he loses 1,500 students a year because of the burdensome nature of the application.

Former Governor Bill Haslam, of Tennessee—our State—has the highest percentage of students who fill out the FAFSA, which is the Federal aid form for grants and loans. He says the single biggest impediment toward there being free tuition for 2 years of college in our State is the complex FAFSA.

I don't think it is unreasonable to say, while we help students at historically Black colleges, that we help those same students by simplifying their FAFSAs. Why don't we give them the short-term Pell grant that Senator KAINE and Senator PORTMAN and a dozen other Senators, including the Senator from Maryland, have introduced? Why don't we increase the size of the Pell grant in a way that we agree in a bipartisan way?

In other words, we don't have to discuss something until we find something we can't agree on. Why don't we take the things we do agree on, which are considered in the package that the Senator just objected to, and pass them?

There are 29 Senators—more Democrats than Republicans—who have formed these bills. If we can add to that other pieces of legislation, let's do it. Yet let's take the permanent funding for historically Black colleges—the simplification of the FAFSA, the short-term Pell grants, and the Pell grants for prisoners—and pass that.

As I said, we are not on vacation. We should be able to do this in the next few weeks or in the next few months. I mean, how long does it take just to pass something we already agree on? It shouldn't take us very long.

I am disappointed that the Senator has objected. I hope to keep coming to the floor and asking for the Senate to approve it. More importantly, I hope to keep working with the distinguished Senator from Washington State on our Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. We have often been able to work these matters out even when they are contentious and offered to the Senate a bipartisan package. I hope we can do that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

TRIBUTE TO MAJOR GENERAL JEFF BURTON

Mr. ROMNEY. Mr. President, I wish to congratulate MG Jeff Burton, a man of remarkable achievement and character, on a career dedicated to public service. After 7 years of serving as the adjutant general of the Utah National Guard, Major General Burton leaves behind a distinguished legacy.

The Utah National Guard provides military forces that are ready to assist both State and Federal authorities in times of emergency and in times of war. It is comprised of 7,300 soldiers and airmen from the Utah Army National Guard and the Utah Air National Guard.

As adjutant general, Major General Burton oversaw the training and military preparation of soldiers and airmen throughout the State. He is a principled and dedicated leader who has set a high standard of conduct for the men and women under his command.

Major General Burton and his wife, Charn, have always cared for and supported Guard members and their families, particularly in the tragic times of loss. Their devotion to the servicemen and servicewomen of Utah cannot be overstated.

Major General Burton's life of service extends beyond his time as adjutant general. He was an assistant professor at both Brigham Young University and Utah Valley University, where he taught military science.

He was awarded the Bronze Star for his exceptionally meritorious service as the commander of the 1457th Engineer Combat Battalion during Operation Iraqi Freedom, during which his unit played a significant role in the initial ground war. Under his leadership, his unit also helped to rebuild the country after its having been devastated by conflict.

Our great State of Utah owes Major General Burton a debt of gratitude for his decades of service. We wish the honorable general all the best in his next chapter.

Thank you, Major General Burton, for your service to our State and to our Nation.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

IMPEACHMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, last week, the House of Representatives voted in favor of a set of procedures to govern its impeachment inquiry, laying out a formal process to examine the facts in a deliberate and fairminded process.

Our Republican colleagues keep changing their arguments as to why they are opposed to what the House is doing. First, there needed to be a vote. There was a vote. Second, make it public. Now it is public. Third, there is no quid pro quo. Now there is a quid pro quo, they even admit.

So now they are saying it is not impeachable. The shifting stands of the Republicans' argument in the House and Senate, which seems to shift all the time, indicates they don't seem to have a real interest in following the facts to where they lead but rather just defending Trump, regardless of the facts. That is a huge mistake for the Republic and for the Senate and how we should conduct ourselves.

So let me elaborate. For weeks, congressional Republicans criticized House Democrats for not scheduling a vote. As soon as the vote was taken, the same Republicans criticized the process once again.

Republicans criticized House Democrats for conducting classified hearings, even though the material discussed concerns our national security and Republicans readily participated in those hearings. Then once the House voted on the plan for open hearings, predictably, the same Republicans kept criticizing the process, coming up with a new argument: The idea that there was no "quid pro quo," which the President himself stated, although he was contradicted by Mr. Mulvaney, and that seemed to be the linchpin of their defense of the President in the last few days and weeks.

But now, all of the sudden, knowing maybe what is coming out, all of the sudden, our Republican colleagues are saying: Yes, there was a quid pro quo, but it doesn't matter. It is not impeachable. Some of them even think it is not even wrong, which is absolutely absurd.

So instead of the shifting sands of defenses of the President on a near daily basis, my Republican friends should let all the facts come out and make their judgments based on the facts. Instead of changing their argument every third day when faced with new facts, they should remain dispassionate and say we are going to look at the facts, instead of just jumping to find a new defense of the President no matter what the facts.

If you are defending the President because there is no quid pro quo and there is quid pro quo, maybe you should be saying: Maybe something is going on here. But, no, a new argument pops up.

The investigation is not yet complete. Jumping to conclusions before all the facts come out is misguided. It is unbecoming of a Senator's role as judge and juror of a potential impeachment case.

Now, last night, the President held a political rally in Kentucky with several Republican elected officials, including the junior Senator from Kentucky who publicly and explicitly urged the media to expose the identity of the Federal whistleblower. The President, of course, quickly praised the Senator's idea.

I cannot stress just how wrong this is. We have Federal whistleblower laws designed to protect the identity and safety of patriotic Americans who come forward to stand up for the Constitution. There are Members on the other side of the aisle, including senior Members and chairs of committees, who spent their entire careers defending whistleblowers and the laws that protect them and their families.

So where are they now? I was pleased to hear that my colleague, Senator THUNE, spoke out and said that whistleblowers must be protected. I believe