

until that process is over. They need action now. They have all had to overcome enough hurdles every day in order to educate their students. The U.S. Senate should not be one of those hurdles. We need to pass the FUTURE Act now.

Accordingly, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I see the Senator from Maryland, but I would like to take a few minutes to describe the proposal to which Senator BROWN just objected.

I appreciate the Senator from Ohio in his saying that he hopes that Senator MURRAY and I can do what we usually do, which is to take issues within our Education Committee and work them out and present them to the Senate as a whole, but that is not the way this came up. This came up suddenly, and no one talked to me about it. Here we are when, for 5 years, we have been in the midst of reauthorizing higher education. Permanently funding historically Black colleges has always been an important part of that discussion when suddenly here comes this bill as if there were an emergency.

What I heard my friend from Ohio say is that he objects to my proposal as a microproposal, as a small proposal, but he is suggesting an even smaller proposal. He is suggesting a 2-year fix that, in my opinion, can't pass the Senate because of the way it is funded.

Plus, why would you want a 2-year fix when you have the chairman of the Education Committee working for the permanent funding of historically Black colleges and minority-serving institutions? This is what I have offered on the floor, and that is what has just now been objected to by the Democrats.

At the same time, he mentioned a number of bills that he thought needed some changes. The request I made that was objected to also included simplifying FAFSA, which is the Federal aid application form that 20 million students fill out every year. Let's put a human face on that.

The President of Southwest Tennessee Community College in Memphis, which is a largely minority institution in terms of its students—I see my colleague from Tennessee is presiding today, and she knows this institution well—told me they lose 1,500 students every semester because of the complexity of this form. There are 108 questions. A bipartisan working group, including Senator BENNET, of Colorado, a Democrat; Senator JONES, of Alabama, a Democrat; Senator KING, of Maine, an Independent; and many others on our side, we have reduced these 108 questions to between 18 and 30. It has the support of the student aid administrators from across the country. It has the support of college presidents who see their students turned away because their parents and their grandparents see this as too complex.

Former Governor of Tennessee Bill Haslam led our legislature to create 2 free years of college tuition in Tennessee, but first you have to fill this out. Governor Haslam has told me the single biggest impediment to low-income Tennesseans getting those 2 years of free education is the complexity of that form.

Why would the Senator object to doing it when we have been working on it for 5 years and have a bipartisan bill to get it done? Why don't we pass it? Why don't we make it the law? What do we say to those 1,500 students who don't get to go to college because of this?

At the same time, at the other end of our State, the president of East Tennessee State University tells me that 70 percent of his student body is subjected to verification. The way this system works is you have to give some information to the IRS and some information to the Department of Education, and if you make one little mistake, they jerk your Pell grant while they figure out what the problem is. Seventy percent of the students were subjected to that verification, and some of them lost their scholarships while that happened. That is totally unnecessary.

People in Tennessee ask me: If that is true, why don't you pass it?

That is the question I am asking my friends because I just asked the Senate to pass it, and the Senator objected. Why don't we pass it? Why don't we make it the law? It is not as if I just showed up one day with this. We have been all the way through our process of hearings. It has been through working groups of Democratic and Republican Senators. It ought to be done.

There is no need for us to come to the floor and say we need to pass a short-term, 2-year fix for historically Black colleges when, at the same time, you could have permanent funding for historically Black colleges and could fix the Federal aid application form that 8 million minority students fill out every year—8 million students. What are the Senators going to say to them about why they are not going to make it easier for them to go to college when we are here, arguing about a short-term, piecemeal fix for historically Black colleges?

In a way, I am glad we are having this discussion because I have been trying to bring this to the attention of my colleagues and if you go home and talk to the families, they will tell you that 20 million fill this out every year. In Tennessee, it is 400,000. And college aid administrators will tell you that.

I will give another example. I was in West Tennessee a couple of weeks ago at an event that was sponsored by the Ayers family. For 20 years, they have given money to help rural kids succeed in college. What the Ayers have discovered is that instead of spending their money on scholarships, they are spend-

ing it on counselors because counselors help students more than the money does. They have found there are lots of scholarships, but it is the counselors who make the difference. Yet what do the counselors spend their time doing? They help students answer these unnecessary questions.

So we are blocking and impeding the very students the Senator is claiming he wants to help when he objects to this bill I offered today.

I want to make it clear that I will come to the floor every day, if I need to, and offer legislation for the permanent funding of historically Black colleges and minority-serving institutions, which will be fully paid for, and a bipartisan proposal to simplify the FAFSA from 108 questions to 18 to 30 questions, which is estimated by the Congressional Budget Office to allow for 250,000 new American students to receive Pell grants as a result of the simplicity of what we have done.

I am disappointed that we haven't come to a bipartisan result on that. My friends who are here today know very well that this is the way I like to work. I believe it is hard to get to the U.S. Senate, that it is hard to stay here, and that while you are here, you might as well try to accomplish something. That is what I want to do. I hope we can do it on higher education.

When we accomplish it, I hope we can say we have agreed on the permanent funding for historically Black colleges and that we have elevated the importance of this complicated FAFSA to the attention of Senators on both sides of the aisle so that we say: Let's get this done. I don't want to go home any longer and have people ask me: Why don't you pass that? Why do I have to give the same information to two different parts of the Federal Government? Why are you discouraging the very low-income students who ought to be going to college?

I am disappointed in this result today, and I intend to continue to work for the permanent funding of historically Black colleges.

My last sentence will be this: I want all of the presidents of the 97 institutions to know that the U.S. Department of Education has said there is full Federal funding for historically Black colleges and minority-serving institutions for another year. Another year ought to be plenty of time for us to reject this short-term fix and to adopt a permanent solution as well as to simplify the FAFSA, have short-term Pell grants, and take up a variety of other proposals that ought to be a part of the Higher Education Act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

REMEMBERING SERGEI MAGNITSKY

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, November 16 was the 10th anniversary of the tragic death of Sergei Magnitsky.

Sergei Magnitsky was a Moscow-based lawyer who represented an investment company, known as Hermitage Capital, whose American-born founder was Bill Browder. In the course of Mr. Magnitsky's representation of his client, he discovered a major tax fraud issue—\$230 million of taxpayer moneys being funneled through shell companies with business ties to President Putin. Mr. Magnitsky did what any good lawyer would do in discovering corruption and reported it to the local authorities. As a result, he was arrested and tortured. Ultimately, he died in prison. He was in prison for nearly a year without having a trial.

Unfortunately, this is not a unique circumstance in Russia, but we in the global community decided that we could not let this injustice go without taking action. Those responsible needed to be held accountable. Yet, in Russia, those responsible for this tragedy were promoted and received awards.

So there needs to be accountability for those who violate basic human rights and their government will not take action.

I first learned of the Magnitsky tragedy in my role as a member of the Helsinki Commission. I was the chair and ranking Democrat on the Helsinki Commission. The Helsinki Commission is the way we enforced the Helsinki Final Act that was passed in 1975, and it adheres to basic principles of human rights. It gives every member-signator of the Helsinki Final Accords the right to challenge what is happening in other states. Russia is a signator to the Helsinki Final Act. The United States is a signator, and we raised the Magnitsky issue.

Then, working with the late Senator John McCain, I authored legislation known as the Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act. It was enacted into law in 2012, and what it does is it says that those who were participating in gross human rights violations in Russia—related to what happened to Sergei Magnitsky—that those who were responsible would not be allowed to visit the United States by being granted visas or to use our banking system. Why was that so important? Because these corrupt officials like to have their assets in dollars, not rubles, and they like to visit the United States, and they like their families to visit the United States.

What is unique about the Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act is that Congress can initiate the executive branch taking up particular names.

It is interesting—I have heard from many Russians who fully support what we are doing. We are giving them an opportunity for their voices to be heard.

Mr. Putin lobbied against its passage, but it passed Congress by an overwhelming vote. To date, 54 individuals have been sanctioned under the Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act of 2012, and it has been very effective. We have been told through press

accounts that in the summit meeting between Mr. Putin and President Trump, it was one of the first subjects that Mr. Putin raised in regard to the Magnitsky sanctions. And I must tell you, it provided U.S. leadership a way to stand up and hold human rights abusers and corrupt individuals accountable for their crimes. As a result of our action, other countries acted—Canada acted; European countries acted—and we were able to get much more effective use of this sanction against human rights violators.

The Magnitsky legacy is not limited to Russia. Unfortunately, there are powerful, corrupt, and dangerous human rights violators globally, where countries do not hold these violators accountable for their actions. So once again partnering with the late Senator John McCain, I authored the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, which was enacted in 2016, and we have used that act. We used it in Saudi Arabia to deal with the tragic death of Jamal Khashoggi. Over 100 individuals have been sanctioned under Global Magnitsky, including those in the DRC, Nicaragua, and Burma as result a result of the Rohingya tragedies. Once again, U.S. leadership was there. As a result of our action, we saw action in Canada, and we saw action in the European Union.

As we commemorate the 10th anniversary of Sergei Magnitsky's tragic death, let us recognize that Sergei's life and legacy have led to two of the most significant human rights accountability laws that exist today. Because of Sergei Magnitsky, the United States and many of our allies now have the tools available to hold human rights abusers accountable and to deter would-be perpetrators from committing such crimes in the first place.

I urge my colleagues to continue to honor Sergei Magnitsky through our actions. Let us stand by our values and continue to ensure the protection and defense of human rights around the world.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

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

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

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I know people are waiting to see what might happen around here. We will have before us a continuing resolution to fully fund the Federal Government through December 20. I wish this was not necessary, and that we would have just passed all of our appropriations bills. But while I wish the step was not necessary, I would urge all Members to vote aye.

I wish we were further along in our work, but it is not for lack of trying. It is no secret what is holding up negotiations—the President's demand for \$8.6 billion more for his vanity wall along the southern border. This is a wall the President gave his word to the American people that Mexico would pay for it, and now he is telling the American people: No, I want the American taxpayers to pay for it.

I should point out that he already has \$10 billion on hand. He could not possibly build that much of his wall, anyway, over the next fiscal year with the eminent domain that would have to be done in Texas and elsewhere. And, of course, the wall they have built, at a cost of millions of taxpayer dollars a mile, can be defeated by a \$100 saw at the local hardware store. The President was talking about how they will make it so high that it will be hard to get over it, but you can just kneel down and cut a hole to go through it. But he has \$10 billion on hand for his wall. It could not be spent in the next year no matter how much the government is overcharged for the wall.

He stole \$6.3 billion of that from our troops and their families, and despite the fact that the vast majority of that money has yet to be spent, he wants more.

If we hadn't had this issue, we would have had our work done by now. To quote one of the most famous baseball players, "It's deja vu all over again." The President is once again putting his own personal interests ahead of the interests of our country.

I would like to remind the Chamber what is at stake in the annual appropriations bills. These are the things that are being held up because the President wants us to forget his promise that Mexico would pay for this wall.

What is being held up? Well, education for our children. Cutting-edge medical research. Anybody who has a family member with cancer or diabetes or any other disease wants their tax dollars being spent on medical research. Support for our Nation's farmers, medical care for our veterans, addressing the opioid crisis, environmental programs to keep our air safe to breathe and our water safe to drink—all of these things are being held up, all are being put on autopilot because the President cares about his wall—his symbolic wall—far more than he does about medical research or medical care for our veterans.

So we find ourselves at a critical juncture. We could pass another continuing resolution to allow us to continue to negotiate in good faith, which I am committed to do, or shut down the government. Well, that is really not a choice.

The continuing resolution before us is a good bill that will allow us to continue our bipartisan, bicameral negotiating on the fiscal year 2020 appropriations process. I hope all Senators will support it.