



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 110th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 153

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, JULY 19, 2007

No. 116

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MARK L. PRYOR, a Senator from the State of Arkansas.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Lord of Life, as Senators deal with today's challenges, purge their hearts of anything that does not honor You. Remove from them a spirit of division, uniting them in the common task of doing what is best for our Nation and world. When they are tempted to doubt, steady their faith. When they feel despair, infuse them with Your hope. When they don't know what to do, open their minds to a wisdom that can change and shape our times according to Your plan. Replace any cynicism with civility, empowering them to trust You more fully, live for You more completely, and serve You more willingly.

You are our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable MARK L. PRYOR led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, July 19, 2007.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable MARK L. PRYOR, a Senator from the State of Arkansas, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. PRYOR thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Today we will be on H.R. 2669, the education reconciliation measure. There are 10 hours of time remaining for that matter. Two amendments were offered yesterday, one by Senator MURKOWSKI, another one by Senator KENNEDY. We will vote on those amendments at around 12 o'clock today.

For this bill, we have two of the most competent managers we could have, Senators KENNEDY and ENZI. It is a great picture for the country: one Senator from the State of Massachusetts, who certainly is known worldwide, and Senator ENZI, who may not be known worldwide, but the Senator from Wyoming is one of the most gentle, competent people I have ever worked with. He is a wonderful man. I know the relationship he and Senator KENNEDY have developed will make it possible to get through this with a minimum amount of strife. I admire both of those men and how they have worked on this bill.

The managers expect other amendments to be offered. As Members are aware, once all time is expired, Mem-

bers can still offer germane amendments with no debate time and have them voted on. I am hopeful there will not be a vote-arama at the end of the time and Members who have amendments will work with the managers to get those amendments considered during the time limit.

There is no reason we cannot complete this bill by sometime this afternoon.

On the Homeland Security appropriations bill, it is hard to comprehend, but I had to file cloture on that bill, a bill to fund homeland security for our country. There was an objection to our moving to that bill. I hope an agreement is reached where we would not have to vote on cloture tomorrow, which is set. I hope we can complete action on this bill early next week.

SCHIP. I heard on the radio this morning—I had not read the President's letter to the Finance Committee members that he was going to veto the bill. The statement of policy on vetoing bills, it seems they all fit the same pattern. Anytime it helps people who are incapable of helping themselves, then the President is anxious to step in.

I heard on the radio today he wanted to veto this legislation because he felt it should be all handled by the private sector. We would not need this legislation if things were handled by the private sector. We have millions of children in America—not in some other country—millions of children in America who have no health care. That is what SCHIP is about.

So I appreciate the work being done on a bipartisan basis by Senators GRASSLEY and BAUCUS and HATCH and ROCKEFELLER, the senior members of that committee and respective subcommittee. They have come up with a bipartisan bill. It is not a bill that everyone is elated about, but it is a good bill that will help provide health insurance for as many as 6 million children. It is too bad that I assume we are going

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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to have to file cloture on that. But we are going to work on SCHIP next week. I would hope we could finish Homeland Security, and maybe even move to another appropriations bill. The Finance Committee is meeting this morning to report out a bipartisan bill that we can take to the floor dealing with health care for millions of American children.

Conference reports. The 9/11 conference report is moving along well. The conferees are meeting today. They hope to move this conference quickly so we can finish it next week.

For the ethics conference, we still do not have the appointment of conferees. I am trying to figure out some other way to complete that; otherwise, we will have the necessary cloture votes to get that to finality. It is a shame it is being held up. It was the No. 1 bill we took up this year. Why? Because it was the No. 1 problem people identified when Congress was elected last November. The culture of corruption was so rampant, that was one of the things people focused on.

While it may not be the No. 1 issue today because of Iraq stepping ahead of it, it is still an extremely important issue, and I think it is a shame we have not been able to go to conference on this measure because of objections from the Republicans.

COLLEGE COST REDUCTION ACT OF 2007

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2669, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2669) to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 601 of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2008.

Pending:

Kennedy amendment No. 2327, in the nature of a substitute.

Murkowski amendment No. 2329 (to amend No. 2327), to increase the amount appropriated for the college access partnership grant program.

Kennedy amendment No. 2330 (to amend No. 2327), to amend the amounts appropriated for Promise grants for fiscal year 2014 through 2017.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I yield myself such time as I might use.

We continue the debate and discussion on the legislation that has been reported out of our Education Committee, which has strong bipartisan support. This legislation is being considered under a time limit, but certainly there is sufficient time to debate any of the kinds of issues or questions dealing with education this morning. We will have the two votes, as the leader has pointed out, at noon-time. Senator ENZI and I are both here ready to discuss, debate, and work with any of our colleagues on this legislation. But we are very strong believers in this legislation.

This is the largest assistance to middle-income and working families that we have had since the end of World War II and the GI Bill. This is very substantial help and assistance. I think all of us, when we go home to our States, hear from families who talk about the increased cost of school, the increased cost of tuition, and the increased cost and burden associated with going to college.

We are also very much aware of the necessity of providing additional educational opportunities that are so essential for families, so essential for communities, so essential for States, countries, and the United States in a world economy.

Education is the equivalent, effectively, of hope and opportunity for the young people of this country. We are making a strong downpayment to help and assist the sons and daughters of working families.

My State of Massachusetts is blessed with many fine schools and colleges. About 80 percent of all those who go on to college get some kind of help and assistance over the course of their time they are in college, whether they go to one of our community colleges, one of our fine public colleges, or one of our fine private colleges.

So when we say we are providing help and assistance, through scholarships or through Pell grants, we are making a difference in the opportunities for our fellow citizens.

Our future depends on education. The future of our economy depends upon having educational opportunities. We are building on excellent legislation that was completed in the Congress earlier this year.

The COMPETE Act came through our committee, with the great leadership of Senator BINGAMAN and Senator ALEXANDER. Our bipartisan effort gave additional focus and attention to enhancing the opportunities for young students to study math, science, engineering, and other areas that are particular needs for our country in the future.

This legislation builds upon that legislation in a very important way in terms of opportunity. That is what we wish to talk about briefly again this morning. By enhancing educational opportunities, we are going to strengthen our economy, we are going to be more effective in dealing with globalization, we are going to be more effective in terms of our national security because we are going to have better trained, better equipped personnel and better technology for those who serve in our military forces.

We also will equip the next generation with the ability to ensure that our democratic institutions at the local, State, and Federal levels work more effectively.

So education is the key. We are proud of this legislation and the difference it will make.

This legislation will provide a historic increase in the need-based grant aid. That is the enhanced help and assistance in the Pell program.

We will have better repayment options that cap a borrower's monthly payment at 15 percent of their discretionary income. That means all those who are going to be out there working are never going to pay more than 15 percent of their discretionary income on their student loans. That is particularly important in terms of what we call the public-sector jobs, where there is an enormous need in this country—enormous need. Our society needs more teachers, more emergency management and law enforcement professionals, more public health doctors and nurses, more social workers, more librarians, more public interest lawyers, and more early childhood teachers.

This bill also offers loan forgiveness program for borrowers in public service jobs: After they work as a school-teacher for 10 years, paying no more than 15 percent of their discretionary income during that time, all their debt—all their debt—will be forgiven.

These are the key elements of this legislation. We want to show what how we have tried to ensure that educational opportunity will be available to all of our fellow citizens here in America—including middle income and particularly the low income families. We know from experience the challenges that are out there.

This chart gives an idea about the increases in tuition at public and private colleges. There have been enormous increases in tuition. We have tried to address that with our increase in Pell grant funds.

I want to take a few moments this morning, though, to talk about the focus we have given to the Pell program. Over 5 million Americans—5 million Americans—all across this country participate in the Pell program. With the commitment we had back in 1965 when we passed the Higher Education Act, we wanted to make education available to all Americans—all Americans and we understood that those who had particular financial needs were from working families. We developed this under the leadership of Senator Pell of Rhode Island, our leader and then-chairman of the Education Committee. His name will be associated with this program for as long as it exists, along with other very worthwhile programs, including the National Endowment for the Humanities programs, the National Endowment for the Arts, and others.

This chart shows the help and assistance in the Pell area. The program targets families who are generally making \$50,000 or less. Individuals with moderate income still can gain some benefit, but they are not the target.

Let's look at this chart here. What does it show us? It shows that too few low-income students are prepared to attend college. This shows low income, moderate income, middle income, and high income. You see that those who are completing high school in the higher numbers, they are dependent on income. You see the higher income students are prepared to attend college,