

reverse these unnecessarily restrictive policies at the earliest opportunity.

I might also say it has been disheartening to read some press accounts that have attributed the U.S. response as a shallow move to win better public relations in Islamic countries. Some of this nonsense, regrettably, appeared in American publications.

America is and always has been and always will be a force for social justice and humanitarian relief. It is notable that we are not challenged when we provide assistance for AIDS victims in Africa or elsewhere around the world, and I hope people will understand the genuine outpouring of American concern in this instance.

At churches in Washington, DC, and in my hometown of Mexico, MO, as well as in comments and discussions with many Americans here and at home, I have heard nothing but genuine expressions of great concern, sympathy, and willingness to assist. Voluntary charitable contributions of individuals, corporations, and other organizations have been to date overwhelming.

When I was in Kansas City and St. Louis on Monday of this week, I heard that the American Red Cross is seeking to raise \$400 million, which is greater than the \$350 million pledged by the U.S. Government for assistance. I believe the figures, when you take in the amount provided by many different avenues through matching grant programs from employers, corporations, to their employees, the number of dollars going voluntarily will significantly exceed the initial commitment of the U.S. Government aid.

I might also add that the U.S. Government spends \$5 million to \$6 million a day in addition to that just operating its carriers in Indonesia.

As far as expressions of aid and commitment and compassion, I can tell you the marines and soldiers laboring in the oppressive heat of Aceh to put rice and clean water on helicopters to deliver to suffering people were not doing it to gain better public relations for the United States. Neither were the USAID or the charitable organization workers who had to overcome tremendous obstacles to bring relief to people in isolated areas of Aceh and northern Sumatra. They were not worrying about anything more than coming to the aid of suffering human beings.

With respect to the grievances of the Free Aceh Movement, President Yudhoyono, in his previous position in the Megawati administration, had begun negotiations with leaders in the region, but these negotiations were called off by then-President Megawati.

Prior to the disaster, negotiations had been started by the Yudhoyono administration, and it is my understanding these negotiations are continuing in Sweden currently. President Yudhoyono appealed to the free Aceh

rebels to respect the humanitarian weapons and disavow use of arms.

Minister Shihab told me they had gone further and sent the message that his government wanted not just a cease-fire but a reconciliation. President Yudhoyono even met with Western diplomats to discuss ideas for finding a solution. Aceh is a rich region that has many resources, as well as a long tradition of antipathy toward Jakarta. But with the proper spirit on both sides, I have hopes that coming out of this tragedy in Aceh can arise a negotiated settlement that will recognize and respect the culture, views, and wishes of the Acehanese and keep them in the country of Indonesia.

It is also my hope that the immediate emergency relief effort that will come to a close soon will not signal the end of American interest and commitment to the region. Truly, I hope that the attention that has been brought by the very extensive media coverage of the tsunami will keep more attention in this body and the American public at large on the importance of good relations with the people in Southeast Asia.

There is much more that needs to be done over the long term to meet what I view as an exciting but challenging relationship in Southeast Asia. I will be addressing in the future the extent and the importance of this challenge in Southeast Asia, how it has importance—not just for the humanitarian interests which I described today but for political, economic, strategic, and national security concerns.

The tragedy of the tsunami has brought an unparalleled opportunity to invite more Americans to pay attention to an area of the world where we have vital interests. I hope when the tsunami relief efforts have passed, our friends and neighbors will keep in mind the need to strengthen our relationships in a very critical area of the world.

I thank the Chair and my colleagues. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for up to 15 minutes as in morning business.

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

#### QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL ACT

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, we are in the very early days of this 109th Congress, and one of the items we are all working at is identifying what the agenda should be for this Congress, for this country, and what issues should be given priority and attention, and what issues should be given priority in our funding.

Along those lines, we have tried to introduce some bills early in the Con-

gress to highlight priority concerns and priority issues for consideration by our colleagues, by the country as a whole, and by the administration. One of those bills is S. 15. This is a bill that I introduced along with Senator REID and many other cosponsors on the Democratic side. It is called the Quality Education For All Act of 2005. This legislation represents a major step forward in advancing educational opportunities for millions of students around the country.

There is no question that we have made progress in recent years in advancing educational opportunity, but we still have very far to go. We need to look at ways to increase that opportunity and also to improve the quality of education in a meaningful and comprehensive manner.

This bill is about making sure that we are doing all we can in the 109th Congress to increase and improve educational opportunities for three different parts of our educational system. The obvious three are: Early childhood education; second, the education of people from kindergarten through the 12th grade; and third, higher education. Those are the three areas I want to briefly discuss today.

Beginning with early education, the foundation for learning begins very early in life. Early education provides critical opportunities to promote children's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development.

We know that quality early education improves school readiness and fosters greater academic achievement and motivation in later years. Particularly this is true for children from low-income families.

Early education also provides a great return on our investment. The benefits include lower rates of grade retention, placement in special education, and juvenile delinquency, and higher rates of educational attainment and skilled employment.

These positive outcomes for children are not a guarantee when access to quality education is limited, and unfortunately lack of funding has limited access to quality early childhood education in our country.

To illustrate what I am talking about, I will refer to New Mexico, my home State. There are approximately 28,000 children under age 5 in New Mexico living in poverty who are eligible, by virtue of the income level of their families, for Head Start services, but due to inadequate funding of Head Start, New Mexico can only provide services for around 7,600 of those 28,000 children. An additional \$186 million is required just to serve the other 20,000 or so eligible New Mexico children. This is without making any quality improvements, just expanding the services we are currently providing to the 7,600 to another 20,000.

My colleagues and I believe we need to increase access to early education.

We need to strengthen the quality of those programs as well. The first thing this bill does is expand access to early Head Start for our youngest children. It also increases access to Head Start for children and families living at 130 percent of the poverty line. The current law says if a person's family income exceeds 100 percent of the poverty line, they are not eligible to have their children participate. We would like to see that increased to 130 percent. Too frequently the working poor are left out of these types of programs in that they are not poor enough, but clearly these same families do not have the resources to provide quality early education to their children.

The bill also seeks to strengthen the quality of these early education programs by making significant improvements to the quality of the teaching workforce. We provide grants to States to attract and retain highly qualified teachers, including grants to tribal colleges and universities to increase the number of postsecondary degrees earned by Indian Head Start staff. Plus, the quality set-aside in childcare will be increased from 4 percent up to 6 percent. With access to quality early education, children can enter school ready to learn, and that is in everyone's interest.

I will move on to the issue of educating our children from kindergarten through grade 12. The main legislation that we have passed at the Federal level related to this, of course, is the No Child Left Behind bill. It is intended to deal with this problem. Unfortunately, we cannot expect States to meet the challenges of the No Child Left Behind Act without providing sufficient resources and guidance to them in how to do that.

The administration assured us that we would be able to fully fund the No Child Left Behind bill when it was enacted. The program in the current fiscal year is underfunded by about \$7 billion. There are more than 2.5 million fewer children who are being served through that law than the law promised to serve. In this legislation I have introduced, we provide that the No Child Left Behind bill should be fully funded.

This issue is becoming critical for our schools for the simple reason that we are now in our third year after the enactment of No Child Left Behind, and there are a number of schools that are failing to meet the criteria set out in that law that has to be met, the adequate yearly progress number. They have failed to meet that AYP, adequate yearly progress number, for 2 years in a row. They are in a position now that sanctions will be applied to them for failing to do so.

At this point, Federal resources to help them avoid those sanctions are absolutely critical, and we give this a very high priority in our legislation.

The bill makes a number of changes to the law to ensure that the No Child Left Behind bill is implemented in the manner that Congress intended. It would give schools the option of recalculating their AYP scores from last year and do so by applying the administration's newly issued rules. This would save thousands of schools from inappropriate sanctions that were caused by the delay in publishing the rules that are called for in that act.

There is a particular provision in our legislation that I know Senator REID from Nevada feels very strongly about, as do many of us, and that is a provision to assist rural school districts with the resources they need to have good schoolbus transportation for all their students. There are many school districts in this country where the schoolbuses are antiquated, where they need to be replaced and modernized, and we provide some assistance to those school districts under this legislation to do that very thing. We call for full funding of the No Child Left Behind bill. We call for full funding of IDEA.

In the final area I wanted to talk about we call for greater access to higher education for all of our students. It is clear that we have many people who would like to be in college, many students who would like to continue with their college education but because of the inability to pay, they are not proceeding with that education. The estimate we have is that there are 180,000 of our young people in this country who are not going to college, to a university, because of their inability to pay.

This is a time when we are worried about too much of the work being done overseas that needs to be done to support our economy. We are worried about outsourcing. We are worried about the immigration of people into this country to take good-paying jobs. The reality is, if we do not educate and train our own young people to take these jobs that outsourcing will continue and will grow over time. So it is very important that we increase resources for higher education.

We are requesting additional Pell grant funds so more students can receive Pell grants. We also need to ensure that students who graduate from high school are ready to go to college, and we have funds for the TRIO Program and the GEAR UP program as well.

There are various provisions in this legislation, some of which were included in legislation introduced in the previous Congress. The truth is, we are trying as a Congress in these early weeks to determine what is going to be given priority, what will we, in fact, decide to fund, and what will we decide to neglect.

A week from this coming Monday the President will present to the Congress

his recommended budget for the year. I hope very much that the commitment we are advocating in this legislation for educational funding, for increased access to education, and for improved quality of education, that that same priority will be reflected in the administration's budget we receive on February 7.

I do believe this is an important issue. It is one that has not been talked about a great deal in the last weeks and months. We hear the administration's agenda of what they want to get done in this Congress—with regard to privatizing Social Security, with regard to reforming the Tax Code, with regard to prosecuting the war in Iraq. There is not always much mention of education as a continuing priority. Our legislation tries to correct that. Our legislation tries to ensure that education is a continuing priority.

I commend it to the consideration of all of our colleagues, and I hope very much we will have a chance to enact many of the parts of this legislation as we proceed through the 109th Congress.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARTINEZ). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as if in morning business.

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

#### STOP GOVERNMENT PROPAGANDA ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this morning's Washington Post contains a story about yet another case of the Bush administration apparently using taxpayer dollars to try to buy favorable news coverage of their most controversial proposals.

In a column she wrote for the National Review Online, the conservative columnist Maggie Gallagher wrote that the administration's marriage initiative could "carry big payoffs down the road for taxpayers and children." In fact, the big payoff so far appears to be to Ms. Gallagher herself.

According to the Washington Post, Miss Gallagher received \$21,500 from the Federal Department of Health and Human Services in the year 2002 to promote the Bush administration's marriage initiative. She received an additional \$20,000 from the administration for writing a report entitled "Can Government Strengthen Marriage?"

Last year, Miss Gallagher defended the administration's proposal for a