

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-7012

November 12, 2008

Dropout Prevention Summit
Hosted by Nevada Partners
710 West Lake Mead Boulevard
North Las Vegas, Nevada 89030

Dear Friends:

It is with pleasure that I welcome you to the Ready for Life Nevada Dropout Prevention Summit, sponsored by the Nevada Public Education Foundation, America's Promise Alliance, State Farm, United Way and Nevada Partners. I commend the Ready for Life Coalition for recognizing the need to bring community members from all walks of life together to identify Nevada's areas of need and work together to solve them.

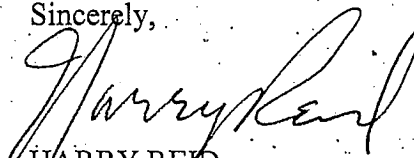
We all know the statistics – Nevada ranks near the bottom in both graduation and dropout rates, and our schools alone are overwhelmed, underfunded, and ill-equipped to deal with this crisis. All of the elements of our community, local, state and federal government, business, non-profits, faith-based organizations, parents, educators, and youth need to come together to fix this problem. That is why I have sponsored and supported a number of measures in the Senate to help to deal with the crisis. Earlier this year, along with Senator Bingaman, I co-sponsored the Graduation Promise Act. This legislation would create grants to develop, implement, or replicate effective dropout prevention programs to schools with high dropout rates.

In the 110th Congress, we passed several pieces of legislation aimed at improving wrap-around care for children, and ensuring that they have all the tools they need to succeed in school. Last year, we passed a law expanding and improving the Head Start program, which has been proven to raise student achievement levels. Last September, I led the charge to reauthorize and improve the State Children's Health Insurance Program, because healthy kids are better prepared to succeed in school. In September, the Congress reauthorized the Higher Education Act, which included strengthening and expanding key programs such as TRIO and GEAR UP. And as we look to improve No Child Left Behind, I will continue to fight for additional funding for our schools.

All these pieces of legislation will help improve graduation rates in Nevada, but legislation alone is not enough. We as a community all need to come together to address this challenge; if we all work together, I am sure that we can effect meaningful change in our community and state.

I wish you all a wonderful conference and I look forward to working with you to ensure our children get the education they deserve.

Sincerely,



HARRY REID
United States Senator