

send them there on guard duty, on police duty, and that sort of thing. That is not what they are about.

We need to be loyal to them and pass this legislation and bring the troops home from Bosnia at least by the end of this year, by December of this year.

CHILD CARE FUNDS DROPPED FROM WELFARE REFORM ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOB SCHAFER of Colorado). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands [Ms. CHRISTIAN-GREEN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. CHRISTIAN-GREEN. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the House passed H.R. 1048, to make technical corrections to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, otherwise known as the Welfare Reform Act. While I support H.R. 1048, I rise today to express my strong disappointment about the fact that a Clinton administration proposal to set aside one-half of 1 percent of mandatory child care funds for allotment among the territories was dropped from the bill during the markup in the Committee on Ways and Means because the Congressional Budget Office scored the provision as having a cost to the Federal Treasury.

I am disappointed, Mr. Speaker, because when the Welfare Reform Act was enacted, no mandatory child care funds were provided for over 4 million U.S. citizens residing in the United States non-State areas, even though residents of my district and the other territories have been operating child care programs under section 402(g) of the Social Security Act.

Mr. Speaker, welfare reform is intended to promote self-sufficiency through work. As a result, securing adequate child care funding will be one of our more pressing needs if we are to be successful in our goal of moving former welfare mothers from dependency into our work force.

During the markup of H.R. 1048, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. SHAW], chairman of the Subcommittee on Human Resources of the Committee on Ways and Means, stated that there were several provisions that would be dropped from the bill because they were scored as having a cost and not purely technical in nature. The chairman went further to state that his subcommittee will go back and take a look at those issues that were left out of the bill as it came out of the subcommittee markup.

It is my intention, Mr. Speaker, to work with the gentleman from Florida [Mr. SHAW], the chairman, and the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN], the ranking member, to ensure that low-income parents in the U.S. territories receive adequate child care to enable them to be able to go to work to support their families.

PATHWAY FOR OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, today more than ever our children need us to stand up for them. As a parent and as a grandparent, I simply want to pave a path to the future for our young people. Unfortunately, there are those who want to keep them trapped in the past. There could be no more urgent time than this moment in history to make a difference for our children.

Consider this. Every 5 hours, a child dies from abuse or neglect. There is a connection with the fact that every 32 seconds a baby is born into poverty. From the dawn of life to the dusk of life, from birth to early death, far too many of our children are behind when born, live wretched lives and die before they truly have a chance to live.

We can stop this vicious, downward spiral. We can move our children from under the dark cloud of planning their funerals to the bright sunshine of planning their futures.

That is why I am here, Mr. Speaker, to stand up for WIC, to stand up for the nutritional needs of our country's poorest women and children. This is a time when so many of our children are at their lowest and worst point, and we need to call upon our highest and best effort as a nation.

During this Congress, there are those of us who have carried the commitment to children and we have been able to do so because we have fought for it. We carried our fight on a foundation of faith and belief that our fight for children was a fight for our Nation's future, and through this we have made some gains. The fight goes on.

More than 2,600 babies will be born into poverty this day and each day. We want to make a pathway for our children's future. There are those who would want to keep them trapped in the past. We will win the fight because we dare to fight. That is why we are here, Mr. Speaker, to fight the majority that want to cut the heart of our WIC program, a program that nourished over 7.4 million women and children in the year 1996; to fight the majority, as they have cut \$38 billion out of the WIC supplemental, necessary funding for the one government program regarded by experts to be the single most successful social program run by the Federal Government.

Over 180,000 hungry women and children will be dropped from the WIC program, which has proven to be a successful weapon against low birth weight, infant mortality, and childhood anemia. GAO stated in 1992, for each \$1 invested in the prenatal portion of WIC, the Federal Government saves at least \$3.50 in Medicaid, SSI, and other relevant Federal programs.

I implore the Speaker to fully fund the WIC program at the administration requested level of \$78 million and to

give 180,000 American women, infants, and children the nutritional help that they need. We need to move people out of poverty, not into poverty. The President has said we need a lean but not a mean Government. It should not mean cutting nutrition programs which are essential to the well-being of millions of our citizens, people who in many instances cannot fend for themselves and need assistance for their basic existence. They are not asking for much, just a little substance to help them through the day, WIC and other nutritional programs, which in many cases provide the only food that many of our Nation's poor receive daily.

We are all aware that poor nutrition breeds poor development in children. I come from a rural area, a very poor district. Making cuts in this nutritional program will certainly be adverse to my district and to many of my constituents. Let us stop picking on children. Let us stop picking on the poor. Let us make some cuts, surely, but let us make them to the people who can afford them, not to taking food out of the mouths of pregnant and nursing women, infants, and children.

DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION AGENDA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, tonight I want to talk about the Democrats' education agenda. Before I get into some of the details, however, I wanted to briefly touch on the evolution of our plan to expand and improve the Nation's education system. I think it is particularly important to keep the history behind our plan in mind as negotiations over the budget continue the next few days or the next few weeks.

The Democratic Party has historically been the champion and defender of education in this country. The 104th Congress, in fact, illustrated this observation in very stark terms. Upon taking the majority for the first time in some 40 years, Republican leaders immediately set out to dismantle Federal education programs. Led by Speaker GINGRICH and primarily the freshman Republicans who were elected for the first time in the 104th Congress, the GOP proposed the largest education cuts in history.

A look at the record shows that on August 4, 1995, the Gingrich Congress christened its attack on education when 213 House Republicans voted for the largest education cuts in history, voting to slash education programs by 15 percent, or \$3.6 billion. These cuts across the full spectrum of education were particularly heavy on student loan programs. But the proposed cuts left no stone unturned. They targeted Title I, Safe and Drug-Free Schools, Goals 2000, Head Start, vocational and adult education, as well as student

loans. Two times the GOP shut down the Federal Government because the President and congressional Democrats refused to allow the extremist Republican agenda to move forward. As we all know now in the face of mounting pressure from the American public, Republicans eventually relented and restored most of the billions of dollars that they were trying to cut in education programs.

Democrats on the other hand did not just fight to prevent Republicans from gutting education programs, we developed positive plans to improve and expand Federal education. That is basically where we are today, trying to convince the Republican majority to incorporate our education agenda in their budget plans.

One of the most important aspects of the Democrats' education program which I would like to dwell on for a few minutes is higher education, and particularly expanding access to college by making it more affordable for middle-class and lower income Americans to attend college. We are essentially trying to accomplish this goal through a combination of scholarships, grants and tax breaks. The President in his State of the Union Address talked about the HOPE scholarship program which has probably received the most attention in terms of higher education programs. This is based on a plan in Georgia and basically what the HOPE scholarship program offers is refundable tax credits of up to \$1,500 to students in their first 2 years of college who maintain B averages and stay off drugs. Our agenda also includes a \$10,000 tax deduction for families with college expenses for every year that they have such expenses. All told, taking the tax credits and the tax deductions for postsecondary tuition and the fees, it would provide \$36 billion of tax relief for working families and students over the next 5 years.

Another component of this higher education agenda that is extremely important is the proposed increase in the Pell grant program. Mr. Speaker, I have to say that the Pell grant program is really the cornerstone, or has been the cornerstone, for a number of years of the Federal student aid program. It provides a means for students who would otherwise be unable to pay for college to get a college education. The plan that the President proposed in his State of the Union address and that he is now pushing in his budget is in fact the largest increase ever in the Pell grant program which would provide \$40 billion of assistance to needy students over the next 5 years.

I just wanted to stress the importance of Pell grants and just bring it back to my home State of New Jersey if I could for a minute. At Rutgers University, which is in my home district and is the largest State university in New Jersey, approximately 20,000 students at Rutgers received Federal assistance in the 1996-97 academic year. Of that 20,000 students, 8,498 received

Pell grants. In other words, close to half of all students who receive Federal aid at Rutgers to help pay their tuition costs are getting it through the Pell grant program.

As we can see, Mr. Speaker, tax breaks and increases in the current programs are the foundations of our higher education agenda, but I want to stress that they are not the only elements. We are also proposing cuts in student loan origination fees that would save \$2.6 billion over the next 5 years. We would continue our programming of injecting competition by expanding the direct lending program. In other words, rather than have the student loan industry, the banks and financial institutions, provide the loans, or as an alternative through competition, we would let the colleges and universities provide the loans directly. Our plan also includes a proposal to provide tax incentives to employers who provide tuition assistance to their employees, to expand those opportunities for higher education as well.

I have to stress that most of these higher education proposals were developed by Democrats in the spring and summer of last year. The American public, I think, has essentially sent a very unequivocal message about education and even about these proposals. They have indicated that we need assistance in meeting the runaway costs of a college education, and I think people in general are eager to see these Democratic proposals become law. I know that in my own district when I talk to my constituents about what they would like to see us do on the Federal level, education and particularly higher education is one of the major priorities. It is my hope that the Republican leadership learns from its mistakes during last year's budget battle and includes some of these Democratic proposals in this year's plan.

Working families, students and average Americans, I think, are counting on Congress to help. We are simply waiting for the Republicans to agree to help us make life a little easier and a little better for the average American.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. PALLONE. I yield to the gentleman from North Carolina.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] for organizing this special order on education. I believe it is one of the most important issues that we will cover in this session of the 105th Congress. Having spent a number of years at the State level as a legislator and the last 8 as superintendent of schools for the State of North Carolina, I know a lot about what we should do and a number of the things we should not do.

□ 1645

I happen to, as I said to some of my colleagues the other day, being the first member of my family to have had the opportunity to graduate from col-

lege, I happen to believe that everyone should have that opportunity, and today we see that college is becoming more and more difficult for more and more people as the cost of higher education continues to rise and the opportunity tends to be farther and farther away for those young people who have the greatest needs.

I guess I might say that one of the reasons I got into politics and really into education, and I think both of them have some of the same things, was an opportunity to help people and really to help young people. I have had the opportunity to work, in the few short months I have been a Member of this Congress, with some outstanding members of the Democratic caucus, working on education, talking about those things that I think are important, and I think it is an issue that people on both sides of the aisle this year can come together on.

Secretary Riley will be speaking with us and has spoken with us on a number of occasions, and I think the President deserves a great deal of credit for putting education at the top of his agenda in 1997. It is one of those issues that everyone can rally behind.

Mr. Speaker, it is the issue that businesses are talking about, parents are talking about, everyone in the State and national level is beginning to focus on. We are talking about raising and having higher standards, that students do need to work harder and be responsible.

Earlier this year my home State of North Carolina earned the distinction which I am quite proud of, and I have called it to the attention of my colleagues before, and I want to do it again today because the National Assessment of Education Progress released the data, and it is called NAEP and it is probably one of the more reliable standards in which students are measured across the country. And our fourth graders in mathematics gained three times the national average of growth in their mathematics scores, and our eighth graders doubled it, and North Carolina was ranked as one of only three States in the Nation to receive exemplary status by the Secretary of Education.

Mr. Speaker, these are the kinds of things we are going to have to do for all children all across this country, set high standards, work with them, provide the resources, help our teachers, help our parents so that they can reach those standards.

As we look to the new century technology is changing the way we work, we learn and the way we live. Here in this body we vote electronically. In our offices we have TVs and electronic machinery and computers. Every modern business office has a computer on their desk, and many are hooked into the Internet, and as we approach the 21st century it is a shame that we have classrooms that have no computers, let alone access to the Internet, and too few schools even have telephones that are accessible by the teachers.

I have said many times as we talk about high technology there are many teachers who just like to have a telephone where they call a parent when they need them, when they have a problem in the classroom, and they have to go down to the office or stand in line for another phone. That is not acceptable in a nation that has the resources that we have, and we are asking our children to meet those standards. We can do better, and I trust that this Congress will do it.

My district has high-technology firms because of the Research Triangle, an area that we are proud of in North Carolina, and it reaches all the way out to the heartland of our State, where we literally have high-technology firms in a field right next to tobacco. Now, that is a tremendous contrast in the Nation and in the State, but we must win in both those areas. We must win with our agricultural interests, and we certainly must win with our high-technology interests.

High technology in North Carolina is now the second leading industry in our State. It is bigger than furniture, it is bigger than agriculture in terms of the number of people directly employed, with over 100,000 people, and in 1995 the average wage base for people working in technology in North Carolina was \$42,166. Those are the best jobs around, the best paying jobs, and people must have the skills to fill those jobs, and just because a new industry moves in and provides that technology and those job opportunities, you do not automatically gain those skills. Those skills are required over a time, and they are acquired with education, and it starts long before a child shows up at the public schoolhouse door.

We have to start earlier providing opportunities for enrichment for our children so that when they come to school they are ready to learn. We must invest in our children, get them ready to learn. According to a recent Rutgers University study, every dollar, every single dollar that we invest in early childhood education returns us \$7, \$7. That is a tremendous return. That is a great investment, and yet we hear people talking about the expense of this and the expense of that. That is an investment with tremendous dividends for all of us.

And then we have the standards of excellence, as I talked about a few moments ago, in math and reading, the basic foundations that we build everything else on, in my opinion, in public education. We have to have those standards of excellence so parents can know that their children are learning. They know after we adopt those rigorous standards, as we have done in North Carolina, we also need to do the same thing at the national level for every single child in this country so that we know the standards are there and the children are meeting them.

But, more importantly, we no longer deal in an economy that is within the borders of the United States. We do not

compete even with just the people at our borders to the north and south. We have an international economy, and money moves, and so do jobs, and we must have an educated citizenry if we are going to have access to the jobs of the 21st century. And as we do that, my colleagues, we must rebuild the crumbling infrastructure of our schools.

Mr. Speaker, it is appalling to me that we will build prisons nicer than the schools we send our children to every day. I have seen multimillion-dollar prisons next door to crummy, crumbling, decaying public schools, and then we have the gall to tell our children that education is important. They can see the difference in where we put our money. Certainly, we need places to put people who need to be incarcerated. I am all for that.

Last year in North Carolina I used that speech so many times, Mr. Speaker, that we put a \$1.8 billion bond issue on the ballot in our State, the largest bond issue in the history of our State, and to the credit of the business community in our State, the parents, and everyone else, it was on the ballot from November of last year, and it passed by the largest margin that any bond issue has ever passed in our State. The people said enough is enough. We had roughly almost 6,000 trailers where children were going to every day, and even with those trailers they were working toward excellence in academics. So we have to get our infrastructure in order not only in our State but across this country. And I commend the President for proposing resources in this budget to help provide for the process of beginning to deal with that crumbling infrastructure. Certainly it is not enough money, but at least the \$5 billion investment, if we turn it into bonds, will provide about \$20 billion in this country to help with it.

Let me turn to one other issue that, as we talk about education, we cannot talk about it just in education without talking in other areas, and it is an area in a number of States we need to look at. It certainly may be right outside some of our purview, but I read an article recently that there are 63,000 geriatric inmates in our Nation's prisons. Those are inmates that are there because they committed a heinous crime, but they are so old we do not have them anywhere else, and they cost on average; according to the National Criminal Justice Commission, these elderly prisoners cost on average \$69,000 per inmate to incarcerate: \$69,000. We need to find a better way to deal with those elderly inmates than to spend \$69,000 a year when our children have tremendous needs. We are spending it in the wrong place. We need to spend it in preschool, and we need to spend it in our educational system.

Some reports estimate it costs taxpayers seven times as much to incarcerate as it does to educate. Now granted we have got people we need to lock up and keep there, but we need to look at where we are putting our priorities.

Let me touch on one other issue, if I may, in this whole area of education because all of it is important, and when we talk about investment I happen to believe education is an investment. It is an investment in our future, it is an investment in this country's future, and it is really not an expenditure because it pays rich dividends. We do need to spend money on technology, but we need to make sure as we spend those dollars, and this is true in every State, and this becomes as much a State responsibility, I guess, Mr. Speaker, as anything else. Our teachers need to understand technology and be able to use it because, if we put it in the classrooms without them understanding it, it will not be used the way it should be used.

I have said that time and time again. I recommended in our State several years ago that we give every teacher a laptop and let her take it home—him or her—and they learn to use it. Now some have done it, and it works because then it becomes integrated with their lessons and it gets used. No question that young people can adapt to technology much quicker than some of us 35 years of age. We have a little bit of a difficult time dealing with it. We do not want folks to see that we really do not understand it that well. But it is important and imperative, I think, that we provide Internet to our schools. It would be great if it were in every classroom, but certainly will not have that access in schools so that that information is readily available to the children who live in some of the poorest areas of this country, as well as those who live in the more affluent areas, because we are all part of one Nation, the United States of America, as we are of our individual States, and any child deprived of that opportunity, in my opinion all of us lose when that happens.

And we need to help families who are struggling to pay for college. Today we have so many young people who are bright, who want to go to school, and if they borrow the money that is required for them to get through college, they come out with such a debt, and we are working on something, we have introduced a bill. As a matter of fact, the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. PRICE] and I introduced House bill 553 called the Education Affordability Act which will provide for some student—allows the interest on the student loans to be deducted just like we do on the home loans. It seems to me that if we can allow the deductibility on a second home at the beach, at a minimum we can allow for that investment in a young person and their family makes in their children's education; and I want to again commend the President for his proposal to help those struggling families who are really reaching out and trying to help their children get an education because they realize, and there are many young people today who will be the first in their families to graduate from college, and there are

many who may be the second generation that because of the level of income of their families are going to have a difficult time. The President has proposed the HOPE scholarship for those who work hard and do well academically. They ought to have that opportunity and a \$1,500 tax credit expansion of the Pell grants.

I talked today, Mr. Speaker, with a college president of a university where he said if there is one thing I could do for these young people and others we are recruiting, give us Pell grant moneys, raise that level because the cost has gone up and we have not kept up with inflation over the years.

□ 1700

Also, we ought to allow parents who have saved and been frugal to reach into their IRA's without penalty and apply those dollars to their children's educational opportunities. They saved that money for an investment. What better investment can you make than an investment in your child's future, in their education that will allow them to provide for their families in the years to come?

We have to remember, and I remember growing up, people talked about education as if it were a destination: "I received a high school diploma," or "I graduated from X college with a degree," or "I have a Masters or a Ph.D." Today, we cannot talk in terms of education as a destination. It is a journey that lasts all of our lives. It is lifelong learning, and it starts when a child is born and it is never-ending until we cease to draw our last breath.

If we are going to be involved in the economy of the 21st century, and it really does not matter whether we work for a high-tech firm in Silicon Valley or the Research Triangle Park in North Carolina, or if we work in the tobacco fields of eastern North Carolina or the wheat fields in the Midwest, the technology of the jobs that we do, whether it be in textiles or wherever, requires education, education, education, and business firms in this country understand it. They have been investing for a long time.

We all need to get together and make it an effort where we do not just talk about it. Preschool education, K through 12 education, university education, education on the job, it is an education of lifelong learning, and we need to work together so that we can make it happen. It is a journey, it is not a destination.

I thank the gentleman for these moments, and let me thank the gentleman for organizing this time.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. ETHERIDGE] for participating in this special order.

The gentleman mentioned a number of things that I thought were really important. I just want to reiterate, if I could, two things that the gentleman mentioned, because I think they are so true.

One is the juxtaposition, if you will, of the amount of money that we spend on prisons versus education. Of course, we all know we have to have prisons and the Federal Government, of course, has been providing funding to build more prisons. But the bottom line is that I think that our whole reason why we think education is such a priority is because it builds a foundation for the future and is essentially preventive.

People that are well educated, it is less likely that they are going to have to be committing crime or going to prison. If we leverage the amount of money that we would spend, for example, on school construction and compare that to what would have to be spent on prison construction down the road, clearly there is no comparison. That is why it makes sense to spend Federal dollars on school construction and renovation.

I yield to the gentleman again.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I think the point the gentleman is making, talking about an expenditure versus an investment, is a good one. Any good businessman wants to invest, any person does. Certainly when we invest in our children, the point the gentleman made about as young people get an education, we break a lot of cycles when the educational opportunity is there, because what we have done is enriched the next generation, allowing them to earn more money, obviously. They are better able to look after their children and the members of their family. They are less likely to follow a life of crime, and they are able to move up in society into the middle class.

As we move people into the middle class, all of us benefit. So the gentleman is absolutely right. As we enrich and broaden that base, that is how we become a richer and a fuller Nation. We have done that over generations as a result of education.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, the other thing the gentleman mentions is the emphasis on early childhood education. I guess in the last couple of weeks we have heard a lot about that in the media. I think the President, and Mrs. Clinton in particular, have been going around the country talking about the need for early childhood education. The First Lady was actually at Princeton University in my State, I believe just a couple of days ago.

Reading some of this material that has been coming out over the last few weeks, it is just amazing to me. I have two small children, one is 2 and the other is 3½, and I have listened to what some of the educators are saying and I can just see how true it is, that we need to spend more time. A lot of it of course is just the family, that the family spends time reading to their children or spending time with their kids, but also in terms of resources as well, on very early childhood education, because so much happens in those formative years.

That is why I think programs like Head Start, which really do not even

start that early, but start fairly early, and that has been a very successful program. One of the things that we have been talking about as part of the Democratic agenda is expanding Head Start and early childhood education, because it is so crucial.

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. The gentleman's point is well made. They are now talking about that more has been learned in the development of the brain in the last 5 years than in the last 30, 35 years, and we are beginning to realize that zero to age 3 is such an important period for our children. But even with that, if we look at Head Start and the young people who need to be there, we are still serving less than half of the young people that need to be served in that area.

I was in Durham just 2 weeks ago, and they served somewhere in the neighborhood of over 700 children in an old abandoned school that they moved out of several years ago, but they have moved into it and done a lot of work. Certainly they need new facilities. But if one meets with those children and sees what is happening in their lives, and I visited twice in the last 10 days and met with the children, the bright eyes and the flow of enthusiasm.

I have often said to folks, if you really want to see where we are headed in this country, go into a classroom of little folks, 5-, 6-, 7-year-olds, and ask them if they can dance and ask them to raise their hand, they will all raise their hands. If you ask them if they can sing, they will all raise their hands. Ask them anything, they will agree, they can do it.

Then wait as they get older, into high school, and ask that same question, and they have qualifiers. I only slow dance, I can only sing this, et cetera.

What I am saying is that we have the opportunity I think in 1997 in this Congress to link up all of these folks who are reaching out there, the business community and others, with the President's leadership, and make a difference as we move to the 21st century like we have never made in this country before, and provide a springboard for democracy to be here for our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren, if we do the right things in providing educational opportunities for our children.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield now to the gentlewoman from Texas [Ms. JACKSON-LEE], who I know has been involved again with these education issues and promoting the need for the Federal Government to do more on education.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] for his leadership and raising the importance of this issue; and I thank the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. ETHERIDGE], my colleague and friend, who made some very valid points.

It was interesting to hear him speak about his visits to his respective

schools in his district. I too can attest to the fact that if you want to see America's promise, as has been discussed over these last couple of days, then you need to be in your schools throughout this Nation.

How sad, in contrast to my visits. This past week I visited Turner Elementary, Cullin Middle School, and Pole Middle School, and will be visiting some others in my return to the district in the next couple of days. But there certainly was an excitement and a brightness in those children's eyes.

We happen to have been visiting them and presenting them trees to plant. This month, of course, is the month that we celebrate Earth Day. It is a time to emphasize our environment. It happens to be beautiful outside today, at least in Washington, DC, and it is important to instill in children the reality of education, the real necessity of a tree and how you plant a tree. So I was very delighted to be able to go and meet with my students in my district and present to them in fact seedlings from Martin Luther King trees in Selma, AL.

But I say that to point out that that joyous occasion was in sharp contrast to our Nation's Capital and the announcement of the closing of some 5 to 10 schools in Washington, DC.

This is not to say or to have someone who might hear my voice, "Well, that is Washington, DC." No, that is a statement on education, that here we have in America in 1997 schools being closed because there are not sufficient enough dollars for their upkeep and the teachers and the educational programs.

If I might just diverge for a moment, because I think all of this is intertwined, and the gentleman has been a leader on the issues dealing with Medicare and Medicaid. Many times we think that these are not issues that sort of impact on each other, and in particular, the women and infant children program that we have just discovered Republicans voted to eliminate some 130,000 women and children. That is a nutrition program. That is the early beginning of giving children the support basis that they need to begin the learning process.

On the WIC program, as related to us by Robert Greenstein, executive director of the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, the WIC program is currently regarded by researchers as the single most successful social program the Federal Government runs, with an impressive array of medical evidence showing the program reduces low birth rate, infant mortality, and child anemia, all leading to the kind of healthy child we would like to have, taking them toward the educational system. I just wanted to add that because then that mounts, if you will, that creates additional problems.

If we are to be serious about education, we must begin at the early stages. So I think it is extremely important that we look at WIC, because WIC ultimately impacts Head Start.

We must, as the President enunciated in his State of the Union, we must come up to the bar, if you will, ante up and recognize that in fact Head Start, a healthy child coming into Head Start really sets the tone for the kind of vehicle, what that child will be, what you can put into that child, giving that child the kind of educational start that he needs. I hope that we will not overlook the value of Head Start.

So I wanted to sort of take education from the very stage of birth, bring it to Head Start and then begin a very brief discussion on some crises that I see, and how it is important for this to be bipartisan and for Republicans to join us in emphasizing that this not be an education President or education Congress, but an education Nation that reinforces our commitment.

We talk about tax cuts. I think I heard someone discuss the other day on the floor of the House, it was a Republican colleague, the percentage of increase in college tuition is unbelievable, unbelievable for the working family in terms of that cost that we have seen occur in our college increases, and not just our private institutions at the top level of rating but across the board.

Therefore, bringing it to our attention that the HOPE scholarship is an important part of what we should be looking at to allow people to get their first step in the door, the first 2 years of college, help those working families counter some of these increases in college tuition. Pell Grants, that have been over the years a mainstay for many of our young people who are today now leaders in the Nation's Capital, leaders in industry, they should be on the front of our burner in terms of continuing.

As I went to our different schools, I do not think there is one of us that cannot find an aging school in our district. Now we have talked and talked about school repair and school construction. I tell my colleagues, we have a problem. Schools are crumbling across the Nation. It is extremely important that we get down to the business of addressing school infrastructure.

The President announced a program in his State of the Union. I am sorry that we are still, now April going into May, have not really attacked this problem head on. Would it not be shameful for our children and teachers to return in the fall to crumbling schools? This is something that we need to address almost immediately.

I have heard the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] raise this question and this issue about school infrastructure. I am told that over 60 percent of U.S. public elementary and secondary school facilities need major repairs. The gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. ETHERIDGE] started citing different regions. That means in Alaska, in the Silicon Valley, that means in Houston, TX; in parts of New Jersey, it means in parts of Pennsylvania; it means down in the deep South, Ala-

bama, Mississippi, and Georgia; it means in the Midwest. Wherever we go, there is not a you problem, your problem, not my problem; it is an us problem.

□ 1715

The average school nationwide needs \$1.7 million to repair and upgrade its facilities to an acceptable overall condition. Last fall I had one of my schools collapse, so the children had to be dispersed. One of the ceilings collapsed. They had to be dispersed through other schools.

Do we understand what it means to have a neighborhood school, and the feeling of community; even in times when our children have been bussed there is a sense of community and familiarity with the school you go to. How distracting to have you dispersed throughout other schools when your school is not functioning.

I think we need to put at the top of our responsibility educational infrastructure. Then we need to be assured that our teachers have the right kind of training, that our reading teachers have the right kind of training for them, so we need to provide dollars for programs that would enhance the Opportunity to Learn Program, to enhance those standards.

I think it is likewise important, coming from the community that I have, to not taint bilingual education in a negative fashion. We have been successful with bilingual education. What that simply means is to allow those students who come in speaking only their language to be able to be taught while they are learning the English language.

Can we simply understand what bilingual education is? It has worked in Texas, and I think it is extremely important that we not abandon that because of misconstruing and characterizing bilingual education in the context of English only. That is a tragedy and a shame and a sham on what it actually is.

Let me also say that we have seen such progress with our work with individuals with disabilities, from President Bush signing, and the Democratic Congress then, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the work that has transpired with helping those with disabilities reach their full promise. Let us not, in this educational effort, abandon those individuals and not provide them with the resources that they need to in fact become independent, to transition from dependence into independence.

We have a crisis in education. There are a myriad of things that we need to confront. I believe that we will get nowhere by holding hostage the budget, by refusing to recognize that there will have to be some major sacrifices. The defense spending has to be closely looked at, because we will not have a Nation, in essence, to defend. We will not have the kind of qualified men and women rising up to join the Armed Forces, with their intellect, without

providing the basic necessities of education.

Then I would like to say that out of education comes training for dislocated workers, and most of all our young people. How do we get young people to see the advantage of staying in school? We fully fund the summer youth program, the jobs program that I have heard some of my Republican colleagues call a babysitting job. It is not. It translates academics, education, to our young high school students to understanding what work is all about, going on these summer jobs and being able to get the gratification of translating book knowledge into work knowledge.

The summer jobs program has been an eye-opener. It has been a divine intervention, if you will, for those individuals that want to give up, that come from neighborhoods that might not encourage perseverance. The summer jobs program has changed lives.

I tell this story frequently, when I was in local government participating in the summer youth program, hiring one of those students and having them call me to say that they did not have the proper clothing to wear downtown to an office building; and telling that youngster, regardless of what you wear, come down to this office, let us work with you; and seeing that youngster go on to greater and bigger things because they were able to be exposed in an office setting and develop the confidence and the appreciation for work.

I would simply say to the gentleman who has organized this very vital special order that hopefully that will be the lightning rod to get us moving on supporting education for our Nation, and in fact in restoring the WIC funding to not deprive 180,000 women and children from that first start, and then of course making it so very, very crucial and such a very, very strong commitment to educating our youngsters.

I might inquire of the gentleman from New Jersey, we make a good pair, because he is on the East Coast, far to the east of me, and I am here in Texas, and it would be certainly presumptuous to suggest that all my problems are the gentleman's problems. I tend to think they are the Nation's problems.

Must we not confront this infrastructure crisis in our country that so many preceding the gentleman, and I remember the gentleman from Illinois, Mr. DICK DURBIN, I remember Senator CAROL MOSELEY-BRAUN on the other side has been a leader on this issue, Cleo Fields, who used to be in this body, so many have spoken about this issue.

When will we address this question of infrastructure, for our children to be in safe and secure places of learning? Is that a problem in New Jersey, or is that a problem that is a national problem?

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I would say to the gentlewoman, there is no question that it is a national problem. I know in my district in New Jersey we

have a variety of schools, inner-city older schools, growing communities that are operating with portable classrooms because they cannot find the funding to build new schools. In the last few years in many of the communities in New Jersey there has been an expansion, a huge expansion in school enrollment. I guess there is sort of a new baby boom that is coming along now. The school districts simply cannot afford to spend the money on renovations or new construction.

I do not know that we actually brought it out tonight, but the gentlewoman and I are certainly aware, as well as the gentleman from Massachusetts, that the President has called for this \$5 billion to be spent over the next 4 years to help pay for up to half the interest that local school districts incur on school construction bonds, or for other forms of assistance that will spur new State and local infrastructure investment. Basically this financing assistance, this \$5 billion, can help to spur \$20 billion in new resources for school modernization, a 25 percent increase above current levels over the next 4 years.

What we are saying basically is that we want the Federal Government to get involved with the school infrastructure, which they have really not been in a significant way, and even though \$5 billion may not sound like a lot over 5 years, it can really be leveraged with what the State and local governments can do to make a difference to address some of these needs. But it is clearly national, it is not just in New Jersey or Texas, it is all over, and there is plenty of information from the General Accounting Office to verify that.

Mr. Speaker, I notice the gentleman came on the floor, and I would like to yield some time to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to. That would certainly be a sparkplug for getting the infrastructure built. I think the President is certainly on track on these leadership issues. I am delighted to see the gentleman from Massachusetts has joined us on this issue.

Mr. PALLONE. I want to thank the gentlewoman for being here.

I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. MCGOVERN].

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Massachusetts for organizing this special order on education. As the gentleman knows, no other issue before this country, in my opinion, is as important as the education of our children.

Like a number of my colleagues, a couple of weeks ago I attended the conference at the White House on early childhood development. As the gentleman knows, this conference focused on new scientific research that confirms what many parents have suspected for a long time, that those very first few years of a child's life are critical to that child's social and intellectual and emotional development. I

think the President and the First Lady deserve enormous credit for taking a lead on this issue, and raising awareness on this issue.

I have taken to this well many times to speak of my support for improving the scope and quality of American education. But we must never forget, as I said, that a child starts learning long before they enter the first classroom. If one believes, as I do, that education is truly the key to this Nation's economic future, we must begin early.

I would just like to highlight the fact that I have joined with the gentlewoman from Connecticut, Ms. ROSA DELAURO, and the gentleman from Maryland, Mr. STENY HOYER, in introducing a bill that kind of addresses some of the concerns that were raised at that White House Conference on Early Childhood Development. The bill specifically would increase funding for Head Start and the Early Start Programs. It would also expand the Family and Medical Leave Act, and it would provide competitive State grants for child care and family support services.

I think it is vital and it is crucial that this Congress address this issue of early childhood development. Again, anybody who attended that conference at the White House could not help but be moved by the testimony from scientists and academics and parents who talk specifically about how important some of these programs are.

Earlier today I joined with a number of my colleagues at a gathering that was entitled a "Head Start Day Hearing" in the U.S. Congress. I sat down and had lunch with a bunch of Head Start kids. I am convinced more than ever that this is a very important program and deserves the support of this institution. But supporting those kinds of programs I think is vital if we truly are serious about education.

Mr. Speaker, I might add one more issue that I think is very important for this Congress to address. That is the issue of expanding the amount that we grant currently for Pell grants and the eligibility. The cost of higher education continues to go up, and yet State and Federal grants continue to go down. The way people right now tend to finance their education is almost exclusively on loans. The idea of providing more money for Pell grants, I think this is the time to do it. I think parents would appreciate that kind of movement. Certainly college presidents and those associated with various universities and colleges would appreciate it.

I get concerned when it appears that many people who would like to go to college do not go to college simply because they cannot afford to go to college. I think anybody in this country who wants a college education should be able to get one, regardless of where they are in terms of economic status.

If we are truly serious about building that bridge into the 21st century that the President talks so eloquently

about, if we truly want this Nation to continue to be the economic superpower in the next century, then education is the key. Education really is the key to almost everything: Economic stability, economic development, as well as dealing with so many of the social and economic problems that we talk about often on this floor.

I want to commend the gentleman from New Jersey for organizing this special order, and I will certainly join with him and the President in the initiatives that he has outlined here today.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's comments. I just wanted to mention, if I could, and develop a couple of things the gentleman has mentioned. When he talked about the Pell grants, one of the things we need to stress, and the gentleman did so, is that the Democratic education initiative does put a lot of emphasis on the need to expand the Pell grants, as does the President's.

I think a lot of the media focus or attention has been on the HOPE scholarships and the tuition tax credits, but I think we all understand that if we do not expand Pell grants then the neediest, if you will, of students that really depend on Pell grants in order to finance their college education will not be able to continue.

Throughout this debate about whether to provide tax credits versus scholarships or Pell grants, we just need to continue to focus on the fact that if we do not expand these Pell grant programs, then the needier students will not be able to go to college, because I know that the cost of tuitions and fees has gone up so much, and that Pell grants basically have not kept up with it, even though the Democrats have continued to stress the need to expand those Pell grant programs.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's comments. I would just point out that the bill that I have introduced would actually increase the maximum Pell grant award to \$5,000 from a current level of \$2,700, bringing the award to the level at which it was created, adjusted for inflation. I think this is the kind of bold measure the American people would appreciate.

I applaud the President for adding or increasing the amount of Pell grants in his proposal. I think we could even do better, quite frankly. I think Pell grants, from when I talk to parents, when I travel throughout my district, grant money is something they would very much appreciate. I would also say it is a wise investment of our Federal resources.

After World War II we had something called the G.I. bill of rights, which educated a whole generation of veterans coming back from World War II. I do not think anybody today would argue that that program was misguided or not a proper use of Federal resources. One of the reasons why this country is as powerful as it is today, and contin-

ues to be an economic superpower, is because of the fact that we made a commitment to education. We need to make a similar commitment now to education for this new generation, and I think Pell grants is one way to do that.

Mr. PALLONE. I agree, and I thank the gentleman for his comments and for the legislation he has introduced.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New York [Mr. OWENS].

Mr. OWENS. I, too, want to commend the gentleman for this special order on education, Mr. Speaker. I have been listening and heard us cover a lot of territory, as is the case with the President's comprehensive program, this little booklet that came out, "A Call to Action for American Education," which ranges all the way from early childhood education to higher education and lifelong learning.

That is as it should be. I have served on the Committee on Education, and the name has changed lately, but it has been the education committee, basically, for the 15 years that I have been here.

□ 1730

This is a time for great rejoicing among people who care about education, and that includes the overwhelming majority of Americans. Most Americans care about education. Most Americans, every adult American, thinks he or she is an expert on education, too. That is part of the problem and also part of the strength of trying to bring about improvement in our schools. Everybody cares, and I think we ought to hunker down and understand that we have a President that is ready to take a comprehensive approach, he is ready to cover the whole spectrum, and that in covering that spectrum, he has made a quite a number of commitments.

I think when we add up the commitments over the next 5 years, we are talking about \$50 billion at a time when everybody is afraid of being accused of being a tax-and-spend liberal. The commitment is there for education because it is absolutely necessary.

I commend the President and I commend everybody involved. I am very optimistic about the bipartisan spirit that is available to help push this education agenda. I think it is real. I think that both Republicans and Democrats want to see education improved in some significant way as we go into the 21st century.

I just want to take this opportunity to talk about one piece of this comprehensive approach. It is a piece that is bound to generate a considerable amount of controversy. It is a large amount of money. It involves expenditure for public works. And already I fear that we have some divisiveness setting in, even among Democrats, and disagreement on the construction part of the package.

Construction a lot of people feel should be left up to the States and the

local areas and the Federal Government should not even get involved. But I am here to tell you, we have a real emergency. In our big cities, we have a great emergency with respect to the basics of providing a safe place, a conducive place for young people to study, a safe and conducive environment for study. That ought to be the first and most basic thing that we are concerned with, just to have them have a place to sit with decent lighting, with enough comfort to be able to concentrate on their studies, with no fear of asbestos contamination, no fear of lead poisoning.

It is amazing how old some of our schools are in the big cities. This is a plea for the construction component. It is a plea for us to be very broad-minded and understand that a proposal for \$5 billion at the Federal level, with the hope that it will stimulate additional money at the State and the local level, is not an extreme proposal at all.

Let me just give an example of New York City, which many people will say, well, New York City should take care of its own needs. But that has not been the case. And why penalize children. We had a bond initiative that passed, I am happy to report, on the environment. And in that initiative it talked about providing money to rehabilitate some schools' boilers in New York, boilers that were still using coal, were still burning coal in a city that has one of the highest asthma rates in the country.

The asthma rate, number of children with asthma, is a scandal. Coal burning in schools is not the only contributor. There are other factors. But that is one we should eliminate. Now I am a public official in New York, and I thought, great, this bond issue talks about putting gas burning boilers in 39 schools to eliminate the coal burning boilers; and I thought, well, that is wonderful and that solved the problem.

In a little more digging, I found we do not have 39 schools that have coal burners, we have 200 and some schools, almost 300 schools that still have coal burners. I know when we start throwing statistics, people outside of New York get dizzy. We have approximately 1,000 schools. One-third of those schools are still burning coal, one-third.

That is a shock to me. So I am sure it is hard to understand when you get outside of New York that New York City has one-third of its schools still burning coal. We have schools that have asbestos problems to the point where we cannot wire the schools. If you start boring holes, the costs go up astronomically because when asbestos is present, you have to have a certified contractor, you have to have a place for that contractor to store the asbestos, and it is very costly to transport it and store it and we run into all kinds of problems with our net day because of the physical condition of the schools.

We need a massive program to renovate churches and schools to make

them safe. We need a program just to build new schools because some are so old that you cannot do anything with them. It is more efficient to just tear the schools down and build new schools.

Now this is the big city of New York that has this problem. I am here to talk about it. I assure you it does not take much imagination to know that Chicago, St. Louis, Los Angeles, the problem exists in most of our big city districts. Large numbers of young people, we have a million students in New York City, and as of last September, 91,000 of those students did not have a place to sit.

So I thank the gentleman and I just wanted to highlight, we are moving into the process now where we are going to talk in detail about this comprehensive agenda of the President. Construction is on the agenda. I understand certain proposals have been made that a certain percentage of the money go to inner city districts. Some people are worried about too much going into inner city districts. It cannot be too much. The problem is grave. The problem is an emergency.

If we are going to do anything about young children, the first thing we should do is think about safe places that are conducive to learning. Physical facilities are basic, and I hope they get a lot of support from the President's construction program in his comprehensive education program.

Mr. PALLONE. I want to thank the gentleman from New York [Mr. OWENS], and I again assure him that what he is talking about in New York City is throughout the country. We had some statistics about the General Accounting Office that says one-third of the Nation's schools needs major repair, outright replacement, 60 percent need work on major building features, sagging roof, cracked foundation, 46 percent lack even the basic electrical wiring to support computers, modems and modern communication technology.

My colleague talked about the magnitude in New York, but it is true throughout the country. I think that is why the school construction program the President is talking about has so much appeal because it really affects every district, every congressional district in this country, as do so many of these proposals the Democrats have put forward on education.

So I am just hopeful that our colleagues on the other side, the Republican leaders, who are in the majority, take heed of this because I think there is no question that education is a priority and that there is a lot more that can be done on the Federal level, and we as Democrats have put forward those proposals and we would like to have our Republican colleagues join us in passing those in this Congress before we adjourn. So thank you again, I appreciate the gentleman's comments.

THE AFRICAN GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOB SCHAFER of Colorado). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. JEFFERSON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1432, the African Growth and Opportunity Act, on which the Trade Subcommittee of Ways and Means Committee conducted hearings yesterday. I am a proud co-author and original cosponsor of this important and historic legislation which will start the process of bringing African and United States economic interests together in the global marketplace.

The African Growth and Opportunity Act has been coauthored and received in an enthusiastic bipartisan spirit, led by our distinguished chairman of the Subcommittee on Trade, PHIL CRANE, as well as Congressmen RANGEL, MCDERMOTT, HOUGHTON, MATSUI and many others.

Yesterday we heard declarations of support from the Clinton administration, Speaker GINGRICH, former House Secretary Jack Kemp, former Mayor Dinkins and a host of other trade, investment, development, and diplomatic officials for this landmark legislation. It was, Mr. Speaker, an exciting day and exhibited the great inspiring unity the Congress is capable of when it puts aside party and strife and employs the talents of all of us to deal with national and international issues.

Mr. Speaker, the African Growth and Opportunity Act would establish as U.S. policy the path from developmental assistance to economic self-reliance through trade and investment for African countries committed to economic reform, market incentives, and private sector growth.

In addition, H.R. 1432 will establish several new initiatives to promote trade and investment in Africa, a few of which I will briefly outline. First, H.R. 1432 would direct the President to develop a plan for trade agreements to establish a United States/sub-Saharan Africa free trade area by the year 2020.

Second, H.R. 1432 would establish a United States/Africa economic forum to facilitate annual high-level discussions of bilateral and multilateral trade and investment policies modeled on the highly successful APEC forum that has worked so well to spur U.S. trade and investment in Asia.

Third, it directs OPIC to create a \$150 equity fund and \$500 million infrastructure fund for Africa, which will help lay the groundwork for private sector development. And fourth, H.R. 1432 proposes a market access initiative which would redirect an enhanced generalized system of preferences program to qualifying African countries, assisting the least competitive countries in Africa to access United States markets.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this legislation is important for four principal reasons. First, the development of a trade

policy with sub-Saharan Africa is important because the United States does not currently have a trade policy with this part of the world. So while many Asian and Latin American economies have flourished as a result of the influx of private investment and international trade, Africa has been almost exclusively relegated to developmental assistance.

Thirty years ago, the standards of living of Korea and Ghana were nearly equal. Today, Korea is a vibrant, industrial powerhouse, while Ghana is still a nation very much in economic transition. While there are numerous reasons to explain this difference, the critical distinction between Asia's and Africa's development has been Western investment and trade.

H.R. 1432 places our Government's imprimatur on trade and investment in Africa, a crucial catalyst for attracting further private sector investment in the region and on the continent.

Second, this bill lays the groundwork for enhanced private sector and infrastructure development in Africa, which will improve standards of living for the people of sub-Saharan Africa. Mr. Speaker, this is in the interest of our country, the United States.

Africa represents 10 percent of the world's population and possesses enormous untapped natural and human resources. Amid a dizzying array of mining, petroleum, and agricultural resources are an industrious and entrepreneurial people who yearn to compete in the global marketplace and represent an important future market for U.S. exports and thus for the creation of U.S. jobs.

But right now, many people in sub-Saharan Africa lack the basics: telephone and electricity service; clean running water; and essential medical technologies. Fortunately, we can help, and H.R. 1432 takes a giant step, through infrastructure development, free trade agreements, and market access initiatives, toward improving the standard of living for millions in sub-Saharan Africa.

It would promote foreign, direct investment in Africa through the two funds that I mentioned earlier. These funds are vital to Africa's development because of the 1,160 privately financed infrastructure projects around the world, only 6 percent occurred in Africa. And between 1984 and 1994, only 2 percent of the world's foreign investment was made in Africa.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues, Democrat and Republican, to support the African Growth and Opportunity Act, a bill that is good for America, good for Africa, and good for the cause of international economic development.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 2.