

Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of the special order given today by the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PAPPAS].

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

THE PRESIDENT'S OBSESSION WITH EDUCATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. GREEN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GREEN. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the Washington Times reported on President Clinton's obsession with education, when he was at the Maryland State Assembly earlier this week. I am happy to note that he is also obsessed with a competitive America in the future, and obsessed with giving children the opportunity for an education.

Although the Times, I think, meant it as an insult, I would be glad to accept this characterization with honor. I would hope that all Members of Congress, including my Republican colleagues, would be obsessed with education.

During the State of the Union, President Clinton set the tone for the second term by indicating that education will be his top priority. The President's education agenda is ambitious, but I believe we are up to the challenge. Two key elements of the President's plan are already part of the Democrat's family first agenda, the \$10,000 tax deduction for tuition and training, and the 2-year \$1,500 HOPE scholarship. I will continue to work with the President to ensure that college will be made more affordable for working families.

The President also stressed the importance of every child reading independently by the third grade and every child knowing algebra by the eighth grade. Ensuring that these goals are met requires more attention and resources focused on early childhood training and childhood education.

The President puts his money where his mouth is by proposing to expand Head Start to cover 1 million children by the year 2002. The President also recognizes the need to give disadvantaged children the help they need in order to succeed in school. Part of that effort is the President's budget would allow for \$7.5 billion in requested aid for title I funding for elementary and secondary schools. This is an increase of over \$347 million over the funding for 1997.

Title I supplements local school efforts to improve reading and math skills of students who are at risk of school failure. This program serves 6.8 million disadvantaged children annually, and helped the students in my 29th district, that I am honored to represent, to improve their basic skills performance.

In fact, Monday of this week, I was at a school in Galena Park School District and talked with the principal and the teachers and the students about the importance of title I funding at that particular elementary school.

Title I is successful, and even my Republican colleagues on the Committee on the Budget agree. In their analysis of the President's budget, the Committee on the Budget reports the following about title I, the Title I Program. This program, title I basic grants, is one of the most important Federal programs for local schools. I hope my colleagues remember this statement during the appropriations process.

I am especially proud that the President has chosen to use the formula that we developed in the 103d Congress to improve the way title I grants are distributed.

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Our formula provides greater funding levels to counties with high numbers or percentages of children who are living in poverty. Texas and States like ours that have a large population of disadvantaged children will benefit from this formula.

On Tuesday, Secretary of Education Richard Riley will give his state of American education address. I am proud to participate in Houston as a host of the satellite uplink of the Secretary's speech. The fact that we will be able to watch the address via satellite at Channelview High School is a testament to the benefits of one of President Clinton's 10 points he outlined in the State of the Union Address, the value of bringing technology into our schools.

Channelview Independent School District has built a state-of-the-art high school to educate children for the 21st century. That money was local money that they voted themselves to build a state-of-the-art high school for their children to be educated for the next century.

As Americans, we are leading the way in showing how our global classroom is a better educated classroom. The Internet and satellite communications expand learning beyond the classroom, the classroom setting. In Channelview High School they have that. Every school, every room is capable of having Internet capabilities in Channelview High School.

The value of technology is best appreciated when it builds on the foundation of essential skills. I am looking forward to hearing Secretary Riley's state of the America education address and look forward to working to improve our schools based on standards of excellence to help States and school districts cope with the growing elementary and secondary enrollments and to modernize our schools for the 21st century.

Yes, we should all be obsessed with education.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SNOWBARGER). Under a previous order

of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. SAXTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. SAXTON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. LATOURETTE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. LATOURETTE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. FOLEY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. FOLEY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

EDUCATION

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, this evening I want to spend some time discussing the topic of education in the 105th Congress. I just heard my colleague from Texas and the emphasis he put on education, and obviously the President has stressed it as his No. 1 priority. He did so in the State of the Union Address just last week. The Democrats, of course, as part of their families first agenda that they put forth in the last Congress have continued to prioritize education as an issue that the Congress must address that in particular should be addressed as soon as possible.

The President and congressional Democrats have basically developed a very sweeping plan to make investments in every level of the Nation's education. And in so doing, Democrats have also filled the void that I think has existed since the opening days of this session.

I should say by contrast that so far we have seen very little in terms of specifics from the Republican side of the aisle. We really have no indication of whether they are going to be receptive to the President's or the Democrats' education agenda. I was certainly disappointed today when, rather than spend time on a substantive issue such as education, the Republican leadership brought forward votes on the term limits. We spent the entire day arguing over term limits.

I would say that there are many people in Congress that think term limits are important and certainly it deserves to be debated on the House floor. But I think it borders on irresponsibility to waste time examining term limits when there are issues of true importance awaiting consideration such as

the President's education agenda. Term limits do not teach children to read. They are not going to help repair our decaying schools or meet the rising cost of college.

I would also point out that hopefully we are beyond the situation that we faced in the last Congress where the Republicans were attacking Federal education with unprecedented vehemence upon assuming the majority for the first time in 40 years. Two years ago, the Speaker proposed the largest education cuts in history and voted to slash, basically put forward an agenda to slash education programs by 15 percent or \$3.6 billion. Local school districts across the country braced for and eventually suffered the worst pursuant to that GOP agenda in the last Congress. They actually forced Government shutdowns that delayed the ability of school boards to plan for the coming academic year. Among the billions of dollars that the Republicans wanted to cut from longstanding and successful Federal programs in the last Congress was a \$1.2 billion cut in title I, basic grants.

They of course started to receive a lot of objection from the public about those cuts. Eventually they were restored after, I think, they realized that the American people did not want, did not want to see the kinds of cuts in the title I basic grants program. I thought it was rather interesting that just recently Chairman KASICH's Committee on the Budget praised the very program it advocated gutting in 1996, noting that title I is, quote, "One of the most important Federal programs for local schools."

I guess we have to say at least we are happy that now we see the Republican leadership saying that these education programs are important, and hopefully the kind of cuts and the shutdowns that we saw in the last Congress are behind us.

Let me just say that the President's budget puts forth or the President puts forth a 10-point plan to invest in education, the one that he detailed in his State of the Union Address. It really looks at every aspect of education, whether it is preschool, whether it is secondary school education or college education and the cost of college education.

The new education plan essentially addresses most of the, or many of the pressing problems that face the country today in terms of our educational system. Because some 40 percent of the Nation's fourth graders are reading below the basic level, the President has proposed the America reads challenge to ensure every child can read independently by third grade. Because some 60 percent of the Nation's schools are in need of major repair or outright replacement, the President has proposed a school construction initiative. And because the cost of college continues to outpace the rate of inflation, Democrats have proposed tax breaks to help parents and students pay college tuition.

So if we look at this 10-point plan, which I will develop a little more as we go on this evening, we can see that it is an effort really to address education needs at every level.

Again, I hope that we see the Republican side of the aisle recognize that these initiatives are important, that they can make a difference and that we move forward with this education agenda. Instead, as you know, last, in the last session of Congress, we saw the GOP leadership going so far as to actually not only talk about massive cuts in education and voted for them but even talk about dismantling the Department of Education. Again, I hope that the effort to say that we do not need a Federal Department of Education goes the way of all these massive cuts that they were proposing in the last term. Instead we see some real progress in trying to move on some of these education initiatives.

I would like now, if I could, to yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts, one of the new Members from Massachusetts. I know he is very concerned about the education issue.

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the gentleman from New Jersey for his leadership and for his passion on this issue of education and for arranging this special order today. There is no issue more important facing this country than the issue of education.

I believe, as I know the gentleman from New Jersey believes, and I hope every Member of this House believes that every child in America deserves to have access to a quality education, an education that must be affordable.

Every child in America deserves to go to school in buildings that are regularly maintained and every family needs to know that when their child graduates from the third grade, he or she will be able to read. I commend the President for setting that national standard.

Every family needs to know that when their child graduates from the 8th grade, he or she will be able to do advanced math like algebra. In today's world, every child deserves to go to a school that is hooked up to the internet and has access to electronic information resources.

We are in a global economy. There is no way we are going to be the economic superpower of the 21st century unless we have a well-trained work force. That requires that we have a work force that is literate in computer technology.

Every family needs to know that when their son or daughter graduates from high school, they will be able to afford the rising costs associated with the next stage of their education.

Our President proposed real solutions to each of these challenges in his State of the Union address last week. I strongly support the President's education agenda, and I will fight, along

with the gentleman from New Jersey and so many others on our side of the aisle, we will fight tooth and nail to ensure that this Congress makes that agenda its number one priority.

I want to share with you this evening why I feel so passionately about these education priorities. Education is an issue that touches me on a very personal level. My two sisters are teachers in the Worcester public school system. Through them, I have come to understand the selfless dedication that our Nation's teachers demonstrate every day of the week. I know from watching my sisters how extraordinarily hard our teachers work to keep students engaged and interested in complex subjects and how utterly devoted they are to making sure their students make the grade.

But from traveling throughout my district, I also understand that teachers and students are working against tremendous odds. I have seen teachers working to bring their students into the information age under conditions that are much closer to the stone age.

One morning I asked a teacher in my district what he could do with 20 computers in his classroom. He raised his eyebrows and turned around and looked at me and quietly pointed to the fact that he only had one electric socket in his entire classroom. Buildings in my district and buildings throughout this Nation need significant rehabilitation and in some cases complete rebuilding before our students can hope to be launched into the information superhighway.

This is one of the reasons I was so pleased to hear President Clinton announce his proposal for \$5 billion in subsidies to leverage \$20 billion in school construction. Every Member of this Congress knows firsthand how badly our local school districts need help in bringing our public school buildings up to power.

We cannot ask great things from our students without providing them a safe, stable environment in which to learn and grow. I want you to know that the third district of Massachusetts is blessed with many fine institutions of higher learning. We have some of the finest colleges and universities in the world located in my district. They are the greatest natural resource for both educational and economic renewal that I can imagine.

The key is to make these institutions accessible and affordable to every hard-working family in central and southern Massachusetts and throughout the country. As I have spent time talking to families throughout my district, I have come to realize the rich diversity of our area. Families of all backgrounds and all incomes, young people with every interest and talent each face a similar challenge, how do I pay for college.

Some families seek to send their kids to a four-year university, others a community college, still others a vocational or technical school. Every family I meet is gravely concerned about

the skyrocketing cost of college tuition, the shrinking amount of funds available for student aid and the intense pressure to balance the need for a college education with a host of other pressing economic needs.

I am proud to say that our President, President Clinton, must have listened to the families across this Nation because his call for action on education speaks directly to the needs I hear from the residents of Worcester and Fall River and Attleboro and Medway and Franklin and so many towns throughout my district. As I talk to Members in this Chamber, they are hearing the same message from their districts.

The President has asked Congress to increase both the number and the level of Pell grant funds and to provide tax relief to families with kids in college, either through a tax credit or a tax deduction.

Mr. Speaker, education is a very personal issue for me. It is a critically important issue in my district, and it is now a national priority of the highest order. For our children's future and for the future economic well-being of our Nation, I hope that every Member of this House, regardless of party affiliation, will support the President's call to action on education. We owe it to ourselves, we owe it to our country, and most important, we owe it to our children.

I thank the gentleman from New Jersey again for his leadership on this issue.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I just want to commend the gentleman for particularly making reference to the higher education initiative that the President has put forward. Because as much as I think that all parts of his 10-point plan are significant, the higher education initiative I think is particularly important because all we hear constantly or at least I do, and I am sure you do, from our constituents is how difficult it is to afford to send their children to college, whether it is public or private school or whether it is two years or four years or a graduate or professional school.

Basically what the President is proposing here is building on existing programs like the Pell Grant Program, like the Work Study Program, like the Direct Student Loan Program, and trying to make those programs more accessible to more people, but at the same time coming up with new initiatives in terms of the tax deductions and the Hope Scholarship Program so that there are even more, if you will, opportunities, expanded opportunities to pay for higher education.

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I know that certainly in his first term, in his first 4 years as President, and obviously with the cooperation of the Congress, he was already able to make some expanded opportunities available with the AmeriCorps program, basically allowing students to

work to pay back their student loans. And even with that, we constantly hear the need for more expanded opportunities for higher education.

Right now that is the education issue that I hear the most about, even though the others, I am sure, are just as important.

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, I could not agree with him more. The reality of the economy that we are faced with now is it is a global economy. We are going to need to have a work force that is well educated, that is able to take advantage of higher education, and in that spirit we must make it affordable to families and to young people and to adults who want to further their education.

I was particularly excited about the President's State of the Union Address because he said education is his No. 1 priority. Well, it is my No. 1 priority, and should be the No. 1 priority of everyone in this Congress. We will not be the economic superpower in the 21st century unless we have a well educated work force. We will not effectively combat problems like crime, we will not effectively deal with issues like welfare reform, unless we deal more effectively with the issue of education.

I think if this President's legacy is that he goes down in history as the education President, truly the education President, where he expands educational opportunities for our young people, where he improves the quality of schools at our elementary and secondary level, I think he will go down in history as one of the greatest Presidents we have had. So I am excited about his agenda.

I agree with the gentleman especially on higher education. I have talked to countless families who say to me that they have a couple of kids of college age who are looking at various colleges, and they are looking at the costs of tuition and the cost of board and the cost of books, and they cannot figure how they are going to finance it.

The gentleman knows know as well as I do there are a lot of families out there now that are just basically surviving, people working two or three jobs just to make ends meet, who do not have much of a savings, and they welcome this kind of tax relief, the grants the President has proposed. They welcome it because it will open up opportunities for their kids.

I think every parent wants the very best for their children. I think if we enact the President's agenda here, we will help a lot of families realize that dream for their kids.

Mr. PALLONE. The other two issues that I hear so much about, again from constituents, one is with regard to school construction and modernization, because there are so many schools now that really do not have the funds or they have to raise property taxes or whatever in order to pay for new construction or modernization.

We know that it is very difficult to learn if one is in a building where the

infrastructure is such that the ceiling is leaking or it is not properly ventilated or whatever it happens to be. I think that the President brought forward the need for that in ways that maybe a lot of us on the Federal level have not really been aware.

Essentially what he is proposing, from what I understand, is sort of a Federal-State-local partnership so more of that modernization can be done. But I know even in my district, which is pretty much a suburban district, there are a lot of schools that have the need for upgrading and modernization and the school boards simply do not have the funds to pay for it.

Mr. McGOVERN. Absolutely. I agree with the gentleman. The fact of the matter is that when I go around talking to schools, they welcome any Federal assistance to help them recognize some of their goals, whether it be bettering the quality of the classrooms or trying to hook the schools up to the information superhighway.

I gave an example in my opening remarks of talking to a teacher who, when I asked, "Would you like 20 computers? What would you do with them?" he said, "I could not use them. I do not have enough electric sockets in my classroom to be able to utilize them."

Part of the problem is making sure we have the computer technology available so that our young people can take advantage of it, but the other part of the problem is making sure that the school building, the infrastructure, can handle it. Computers without plugs do not make much sense.

So, again, I agree with the gentleman. I think the President is doing the right thing here and, again, I do not know of a single school district in this country who would not welcome that kind of Federal assistance. It is a wise investment.

I hear a lot of people say, about investing in education, that we are trying to balance the budget; we cannot invest any more in education. Well, I say every time we have invested in education this country has been better off. Look at history. Go back to the GI Bill of Rights. It cost us a little up front to launch that program, but I do not know of a single person today who would say, well, the GI Bill of Rights was a bad idea; we should not have invested in the education of a whole generation of young people.

Likewise, I think the investments we make today, 10, 20 years from now we will look back and people will say that was a wise thing to do, that our country is going to be stronger and better off as a result of it.

Mr. PALLONE. The other thing that surprises me is we have already received some criticisms to the President's suggestion of national standards. One of the 10 points, in fact, I think it is the first of his 10 points, that we set rigorous national standards, with national tests in 4th grade reading and 8th grade math to make

sure our children master the basics, this has been criticized already, that it is a bad thing to establish Federal standards.

I think the President made it clear he was not mandating these standards. He was basically saying the Federal Government can establish these standards and create incentives, if you will, to have the schools meet those standards. Again, that is the way I see the Federal role. The Federal role can well be, let us establish the standards and then the various school districts in the States on a voluntary basis try to meet them.

I was kind of shocked to see some of our colleagues on the other side suggest that somehow that that was interference and that was a bad way to go. I really believe that, as much as the decisions about education will continue to be made and should continue to be made by the local school boards, there is nothing wrong with the Federal Government trying to help out and provide some kind of a basic standard.

Mr. McGOVERN. I agree with the gentleman. The fact of the matter is the President is not advocating the Federal Government take over the role that has historically been a local role with regard to education. He is not saying that by any means, but he is utilizing the bully pulpit, he is utilizing his position to challenge school districts, schools all across this country, to meet certain minimum standards.

I do not know how anybody could object to a national standard that by third grade every young boy and every young girl has to be able to read and write. That is certainly not a controversial goal, I think, to be set. I think it is something that we should applaud.

It should shock us all that so many of our young kids at that age cannot read or write. The President has set that goal out there, he has challenged us to meet it, and we need to find ways to meet it.

Part of his call to voluntarism is that to the extent that people can, that they volunteer to help tutor young kids so they can read or write by the time they are in third grade. This is a part of the solution, again, and I applaud that.

It is important that we do set some sort of national standards and some sort of national goals, again, not to interfere with local jurisdictions or State jurisdictions, but as a Nation we should want these things. So I applaud the President on those things.

Mr. PALLONE. If we look again at every one of the initiatives in his 10-point plan, every one of them basically is organized so that the Federal Government is basically providing an incentive to local school boards.

It is not only the national standards we talked about, but the idea of a talented and dedicated teacher in every classroom, the 100,000 master teachers through some sort of national certification, a teacher for every student to

read independently and well by the end of the third grade, expand Head Start.

Head Start, I hope, has gotten to the point now where everybody on both sides of the aisle recognizes its value, but I guess like everything else it is a question of how much we will provide for it. In my district—again, I have been to many of the Head Start programs—most of them have waiting lists. Most of them have a lot of kids that really cannot take advantage of the program, and it works very well. We need to expand it.

What he is basically saying is that his budget would expand Head Start to cover one million children by 2002 so that essentially every child who is eligible would have the opportunity to participate in Head Start.

Mr. McGOVERN. And I would just add that these proposals, while I welcome them and applaud them, one could argue they are modest in some respects. Some of us wish they would go farther.

On the Pell grants, the President, to his credit, advocates increasing the maximum award to \$3,000. I think they should be increased to \$5,000 to reflect inflation over the years since the Pell grants were first initiated. We must make sure there are opportunities for those who are from lower income families so that they can take advantage of a college education as well. These are reasonable, modest proposals.

I want to tell you, what the President has outlined is going to test whether this Congress is truly committed to making education its No. 1 priority or whether this Congress is not. It is that simple.

I hope, anyway, that we can have some bipartisan cooperation here. The President said that education should be a nonpartisan issue. I agree with him. I hope that all of us here can join together and enact all of these proposals. Maybe we can make them a little bolder, because I think that is what is needed.

If we truly want to see this country be the economic superpower into the next century, if we truly want to make sure we are dealing with all these other social and economic problems that we debate here on this floor every single day, then education has to be a priority and we are going to have to invest in education.

So, again, I am going to do what I can to try to advance his agenda forward. I know the gentleman from New Jersey is going to do the same thing. Clearly, education is the number one priority, and the President deserves a great deal of credit for drawing the lines in his State of the Union address.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman, and I also want to say that obviously, for both of us, this is the beginning of our effort to try to continue to bring our colleagues' attention to the fact that the President's education program needs to be enacted, and that we need to move on it as quickly as possible.

Obviously, we feel very strongly that that is the case. Most of what is in the President's program was basically put forward with the Democrats' family first agenda last year. I think it is really crucial that we keep making the point that we need to move on it; that we cannot waste any time, because it really can make a difference in terms of investing in our future and that bridge that we keep talking about to the next century.

So I thank the gentleman again and yield back the balance of my time.

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PEACE FOR AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SNOWBARGER). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. ROHRBACHER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Mr. Speaker, as I ran back and forth today trying to cast my votes on this very important issue of term limits, I was visited by four individuals who have trekked halfway around the world in order to visit this capital of the United States of America in an attempt to bring peace to their own country. Those individuals represent one of the factions that continue to struggle in Afghanistan. Those individuals 10 years ago were engaged in a struggle to defeat the most powerful enemy and the most powerful dictatorship in the world, the Soviet Union. The people of Afghanistan rose up against their invaders and it was their courage and their determination that helped bring an end to the cold war. Yes, it was the little Mujahedin 110-pound man with a turban on his head and a beard who jumped from behind a rock and faced a Soviet tank and said: You shall not impose your will on Afghanistan. You will not destroy our faith in God. You will stop here. You will not control my country. I will die before you succeed.

It was that bravery and that courage of that perhaps uneducated man from Afghanistan who was willing to give everything that eventually brought the expansion of the Soviet empire to an end and reversed the course of the cold war. The United States has a lot to be grateful and all the people of the free world have a lot to be grateful for to the people of Afghanistan. Yet the struggle goes on. For the last 3 hours, I have been speaking with these gentlemen who have trekked halfway around the world in order to find peace for their country, in order to find a peace for Afghanistan. The American people owe a great debt of gratitude to Afghanistan. We would still be in a cold war today. There would still be nuclear missiles aimed at the United States of America by a belligerent power from the Soviet Union had not the people of Afghanistan risked everything in order to defeat the Soviet empire and to defeat the Communist thrust into their country. For this, the entire world and