

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

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

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 half the time until midnight as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, tonight I wanted to take our Democratic time to discuss the Democrats' education agenda. I have a number of my colleagues who are here to join me. We basically want to talk about what we have accomplished to date in this Congress and what we likely will focus on in the wake of these accomplishments.

First, I think most of my colleagues are aware that in July congressional leaders and the White House reached a historic budget agreement that will balance the Federal budget by 2002. Included in this agreement were a host of tax breaks designed to help the average working American family meet the runaway costs of education in this country. The inclusions of these tax breaks, Mr. Speaker, I believe was a great victory for both the American people, but also for the Democratic Party because the education tax breaks have long been at the center of the Democratic education agenda, and I think it is important to remember as we move toward the next phase of this agenda that Republicans only agreed to the education provisions of the budget because the Democrats basically drew the line in the sand and said that these were the provisions that we wanted. Of course, President Clinton played a major role in that effort.

The problem was that many of the education tax breaks that the Republicans had initially proposed benefited more wealthy Americans than they would have the middle or lower income individual. I just wanted to give an example of that.

In June, the U.S. Student Association, which has been around for about 50 years, wrote that students around the country are registering their disappointment with Republican Chairman Archer's plan for education tax initiatives because that package, the Republican package, would do nothing to expand access to education. They were concerned about the fact that the Republicans were not looking at the President's education tax proposals and that the Republican plan shifted benefits away from middle-income families and basically funneled aid to those with greater resources. But I do not want to keep prolonging this debate. Essentially the Democrats won and we are happy with the result.

One of the most important tax benefits included by the Democrats was the

HOPE scholarship, something again that President Clinton pushed for. As a result, students will be eligible for 1,500 dollars' worth of tax credits to help pay for the first 2 years of postsecondary education. But the HOPE scholarship, even though it received a lot of acclaim, was by no means the only initiative that was included as a result of Democratic efforts. Also included is a tax credit covering 20 percent of tuition costs, up to \$5,000 ceiling through the year 2002 and after 2002 the ceiling rises to \$10,000 for the third and fourth year of college. Under this plan, to basically state it in more human terms, in 2003 a student in a college with a tuition of \$12,000 would receive a \$2,000 tax credit.

Another important provision included in the budget agreement, again as a result of Democratic efforts, was a large increase in funding for the Pell grant, for that program which many students rely on.

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As a result of the Democrats, the fiscal year 1998 education appropriation bill provides a \$1.5 billion increase in the Pell grant program. That is an increase of about 26 percent.

And there are a lot of other programs, I am not going to get into them all, but there are other things that are in the budget that the Democrats pushed for, like the Education Technology Challenge Fund, the America Reads Initiative. Again, these were top priorities of the Democrat's "Family First" agenda and also highly recommended by the President.

I am not mentioning these Democratic success stories on education just to, as my colleagues know, crow about it, but also to say not only that we are happy about what we accomplished, but that we think a lot more needs to be done; I mean, the fight is far from over.

One area where Democrats will be focusing their attention in the weeks to come is the implementation of rigorous academic standards. Indeed, we will be seeking to continue to expand on the progress made in this area through the Goals 2000 program, a program that I should point out has long been a target of the Republican Party. I do not know why Goals 2000 is often targeted for extinction by the Republican leadership, because actually, if you look at it, it was first developed under President Bush. He actually suggested national goals for education, and it was approved by both Houses of Congress under his administration.

But President Clinton really has done the most to try to move Goals 2000 forward, and he signed a bill that basically tries to move Goals 2000 to the next step, provide significant resources for it, but I also have to stress because I know that the Republicans on the other side, even this morning here in the well, started to talk about the fact that the Democrats with their national standards were ignoring the

State and local responsibility for education, and I would say just the opposite is true. The President, when he signed Goals 2000 in 1994, specifically stressed that education is primarily a State and local responsibility.

Democrats understand that, but at the same time we believe that there is a Federal role and that Federal dollars can be used and the Federal Government can basically help State and local governments to implement tougher standards that will lead to better academic achievement.

Essentially what we are trying to do with the Federal Government is to challenge the States and the local governments to do better, and I think that that is a goal that certainly makes sense for the Federal Government.

Just wanted to say, and I am going to yield to my colleagues who are here to join me tonight, that in my home State of New Jersey we have seen improved academic performance as a result of more rigorous standards. Just to give my colleagues an example, results from the October 1995 and April 1996 administrations of a high school proficiency test that we had in New Jersey for 11th and 12th graders revealed improvements in student achievements in reading, writing, and mathematics.

You can have more rigorous standards, it does work, and the partnership with the Federal Government, the State and local governments, I think, is the way to go.

And I would like to now yield to the gentleman from Arkansas who has joined me before in talking about some of these education goals that the Democrats have put forward.

Mr. SNYDER. I thank the gentleman, and I once again thank the Speaker for being with us here late into the evening.

You know, I went home during the break, and as so many Members of Congress do, and it gives you a good chance to get out in the district, and one of the places that I went to was to northern Arkansas, which is home of the great Arkansas pig-out for those of you who have not been there before. It is also the home, however, of Petit Jean College, and I want to just tell a story, if I could, about Petit Jean College.

I notice that the gentleman from North Carolina is here with us this evening because it is actually a North Carolina connection. Petit Jean had been a VO-TEC in the not too many years ago, and a group of State senators in the early or late 1980s, 1990, decided that we needed to bring Arkansas' VO-TEC schools into the 21st century so that it could prepare our students and our adults for those kinds of activities and skills that they were going to need in the future. And one of the places they went to to study was North Carolina.

I notice the gentleman from North Carolina is with us here this evening. And what they came up with was a

plan of converting a great number of our VO-TECs into 2-year colleges, technical colleges and community colleges depending on what the local community wanted, and this was passed in my first session as a senator in 1991, and it was supported, of course, and signed into law by our Governor who was then Bill Clinton.

And as part of President Clinton's package in that legislative session was HOPE scholarships, giving opportunity for all families to get their kids into college, giving opportunities for all adults to be able to go on to college. And his platform complemented a group of State senators, including one Senator Gordon from the home of the great Arkansas pig-out in northern Arkansas who is a leader in this effort, complemented their activity very, very well.

And over the break I went to visit Petit Jean College, it was my first visit there, and they had just blossomed under this new program. And it was great to talk with the President of that college about what this Congress and President Clinton has done for them with these HOPE scholarships. Their tuition on an annualized basis is about a thousand dollars a year, quite a bargain for a lot of colleges around the country, but our tax credits that we passed, thanks to the insistence of Bill Clinton, are going to really make the difference for a lot of the citizens in that rural county, Conway County, to be able to take advantage of Petit Jean College.

Another campus I visited during the break was Central Baptist College in Conway, Arkansas, which is in Faulkner County. Faulkner County has three colleges, University of Central Arkansas, which is a 4-year State school, Central Baptist College, which has a 2-year associate degree, but its 4-year programs are religious training, musical education afternoon, training folks to go on to become pastors, and we also have Hendrix College, which is a very fine 4-year liberal arts private school. All three of these campuses are going to benefit from the passage of help and aid for families trying to get themselves and their children through college.

I remember talking with one of the fellows in one of the classes at Central Baptist College. He said, "Well, wait. What about us folks that are 27 years old? What about us who have waited to go back later in life? We're not 18 and just out of high school." And I can assure you that the Democratic package, and thanks to the leadership of Mr. PALLONE and the President and others, definitely makes opportunities available for folks that are adults trying to go back to college.

But I think that is what Democrats have stood for, I know that that is what this President stood for in Arkansas and worked so hard on in the last several years, is quality education for all families, opportunities to go on to college, 2-year colleges, 4-year colleges,

VO-TECs, whatever type of higher education. We all need opportunities for all families. And we all know that if it had not been for President Bill Clinton insisting on these educational tax credits and this program for college being in this recently signed budget deal that it would never have come about.

And so I commend the President, I commend the Democrats for taking the lead on fighting for education for all families, and, you know, now it is up to America to take advantage of it. It is up to the good citizens of Conway County and Faulkner County and all the counties across the country to go to the financial aid officers as the weeks go by, understand these new laws, take advantage of them, make them work, and recognize whether you are 18 or 28 or 48, these are meant for you to help in making all families compete in this very robust global economy.

And I thank the gentleman for being here tonight.

Mr. PALLONE. I want to thank the gentleman from Arkansas, and it is really particularly interesting to note how President Clinton, when he was the Governor, actually implemented a lot of these ideas that now are forming a part of his education initiative on the Federal level as President.

Mr. SNYDER. If the gentleman might yield, you know, it was such a great honor to be here. I was sitting right over there the night hearing my first State of the Union Address, and when I heard the President's list I thought I have heard these lists before on the floor of the Arkansas General Assembly.

Mr. PALLONE. I yield now to the gentleman from North Carolina who, again, is one of the best spokesmen on the issue of education within our Democratic Party.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from New Jersey for organizing this special order and the opportunity for me to participate this evening and to the Speaker and the others for being here, and as he knows I had the distinct privilege before joining this special body, people's House, to serve as the elected Superintendent of Schools for 8 years in the State of North Carolina, a State that has really been actively involved in setting high quality educational standards statewide, and that is really showing some promise in our State, and I know firsthand from having visited with students and their family how important education is and what a major security issue it is for this country and how it will pull us forward, and I am grateful that the President, and I was very pleased to be here in my first session and make it a national priority for our Nation, because I truly believe that education is the one thing that levels the playing field for all young people, and there is still an awful lot of young people in this country who will be the first in their family to attend an institution beyond high school, and I was

awfully pleased that the bipartisan balanced budget, that it contained a significant investment in education.

Truth is, it was the largest investment, as you know, in education for education beyond high school since the GI bill in 1945. Roughly \$35 billion, and that GI bill, of course, in 1945 enabled an entire generation of Americans who came home from the war and others who fought during Korea and other times. It really laid a groundwork for an unprecedented economic growth in this country, and it allowed for upward social mobility, and ushered in an era that has really been called the American century in the world.

And I truly believe that the educational investment that the Democrats helped push, the President laid out, and was enacted will lay the groundwork for providing for a lifetime of learning opportunities for all American citizens as they approach the 21st century and really will make the 21st century, again in my opinion if we follow through with it, the American century again.

And I think this balanced budget package with the tax cuts is good news for middle class families and students. As I said, it contained \$35 billion in tax relief for higher education, and it will help break down the barriers of opportunity for many families because there are a lot of children who would not have had that opportunity.

And as you talked about it a little earlier, the HOPE scholarships, I will not get into them, but \$1,500 will actually pay for a community college education for a lot of children. In our State, we have about 64 of them plus 16 public universities and a large number of private. So it will make a difference there. And the tax credits beyond the first and second year will provide for a lifetime of learning for adults. But they also provide for an opportunity to get good quality jobs because we know an education translates into economic opportunity for the people who have it, and if you do not believe it, just look at the people who have an education and look at their economic opportunity, how it improves the health and quality of life for their children, et cetera.

And according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, three out of five jobs in the 21st century, those jobs that will be created, certainly beyond 2005, are going to require education beyond high school. So I think the passage of this legislation and the commitment the Democrats made in this Congress really continues their legacy of a commitment to education in making sure those who have not had the opportunity will have an opportunity to benefit and realize the American dream and the opportunity for a quality education.

During the recess that we have just completed, I had the privilege of joining Secretary Riley in traveling in my district. We really participated in a forum on quality education, and then

we traveled to a community college, met with students and administrators to talk about the positive difference that these investments will make in the lives of real people, people who are in school, people who want to go to school, and as we met with a number of students and administrators at Vance-Granville Community College outside our capital city in Raleigh, it was really refreshing to hear how this would impact students.

But let me share with you, if I may, Mr. Speaker, what Stacy Marshburn, a 23-year-old mother of two children who is going to college full-time and working part-time, what she had to say, and I quote:

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"The tax cut is wonderful. It will help my family, and me, and many others, at Vance-Granville Community College."

She continued, "I thank the Congress for passing the tax cuts. I think it will really help people who are trying to raise a family and still go to school. Being a full-time student with two small children to support, I feel that these will go a long way toward helping me achieve my educational goals."

The truth is, for Stacy Marshburn, it will allow her to finish her education and get a job and change the lifestyle she is enjoying, but more importantly, it will change a whole generation for her children who will now have an opportunity to enjoy the benefits of a mother who is well educated, the quality of life she can attain from better income.

And the president of that community college, Dr. Ben Currin, said, "I think the changes we see in this agreement are perhaps the most important educational changes that we have seen since the Pell grants were started," because, as you know, the Pell grants for our colleges and community colleges are really the dollars for those most-needy students.

We haven't talked about it this evening, but this package, with the President's request and commitment and standing behind it and the Democrats pushing it, we have the largest Pell grant increase in history.

So what we have done is made sure that all students, those in the middle, those at the bottom, those who have the great need, all will be beneficiaries of this legislation.

Let me cover a couple of more points before I turn it back to you, if I may.

As you know, we have an Educational Task Force in the House, and I have had the distinct privilege of having co-chaired that. We met many, many times. We have generated a great deal of ideas and a lot of support, with your help and your sharing the bully pulpit here in the House and others talking about education and the President using the power of his office.

And I am grateful for that this evening, because without him standing up and making it a major issue, as he

did in the State of the Union Address, and sticking by his guns and negotiating for sound, secure educational policy, I am not so sure we would be standing here talking about it this evening.

Democrats can take a great deal of pride in leadership and standing up.

Let me say a word before I sit down on the things we need to do, because I think as we talk about where we are, we need to talk about what we have yet to do. As we move forward in education, I see that there is a lot that needs to be done, and these are some things that certainly are local responsibilities, but we at the Federal level can't walk away from.

I learned, as superintendent, we can stand here and argue about whose role it is, but last time I checked and went into a classroom, a student never asked me who paid for their textbooks or who built the building or who paid their teachers or who provided any of the services they get. A child only knows what they do not get or what little they may get.

I think sometimes those of us in public office get too carried away by whose responsibility it is and forget that it is all of our responsibility.

With that, I am talking about the crumbling schools that we have in some of our inner cities and some of our rural areas across this country; that we have to get beyond the dialog of whose responsibility it is and say, it is all of our responsibility, it is our country and they are our children. We have to deal with that.

There are some communities that cannot do it without some help, without some leveraging. I think that is an issue we have to grapple with, and we had better get on with the business of dealing with it, because if we do not, those are the young people that I think will not get the opportunity they need.

Certainly the issues of providing support for our teachers and our communities who are working to build a strong base for character education in our schools, to help our young people deal with the challenges, that is important. We have to take advantage, I think, of the ground-breaking research on early childhood development. We know what works; we need to get beyond the dialog and get involved. The sooner we have children, the better off they are going to be later on.

They have to come to school ready to learn. I have been there, talked with too many teachers and know the problems, as you do, that we have to help them early, because they are not getting it in many cases.

I think we also must support educational standards of excellence. On another day I would like to talk about that in length, because North Carolina has invested about 8 years, while I was superintendent and they are still in it. And the NAEP scores that came out, National Assessment of Educational Progress and sampling you volunteer for, North Carolina was one of the lead-

ing States in the Nation in terms of growth.

I believe our fourth graders are about three times the national average, and the eighth graders, about four times. It really is a focus. And I think we have to give our children that focus and help our teachers and others.

I have drafted a resolution for a number of these things on educational standards, and a lot of Members have already signed it. We haven't dropped it in yet, but we plan to, because in North Carolina, we have achieved results as it relates to standards, and I happen to believe that it is important. We are one of several States that have already volunteered to do the state-wide, when the nationals come out, because we are on the sampling now.

What we are really talking about in this is extending the sampling to every student. That is really what you are talking about. We do the fourth and eighth grades on a sampling basis. We are talking about doing it for every student.

Let me close by saying that North Carolina was the one State that was singled out this past spring on the national assessment. We are quite proud of it. But the truth is, the people who deserve the credit are the students and teachers, because North Carolina was the one State that received the most improvement award of all the States because of their progress in that over the last several years.

I think it is important. But it is not important that we talk about that; it is important that we go about the business of helping every student in every State and every community, every child, no matter where they live, to be a part of that progress of being part of the most improved as the time goes on. Because achievement is some evidence that raising standards will work to raise performance; if you expect more, you get more.

We must learn that lesson and support educational standards of excellence. I think it is important.

The last time I checked, when we look at batting averages, we measure the batting average of all players against the standard. I played a little bit of basketball in college. They did not lower the hoop because you were shorter, they did not raise it because you were taller. You played against the same hoop at the same height, and the basket is the same size. And the same is true of all our students. We do them a disservice if we do not help them achieve the highest level, because when we do not do that, we do not open the door of opportunity to the whole world.

Mr. PALLONE. I want to thank the gentleman, because I think that you really bring forth the practical problems that we face. You have been in the trenches in your home State, and you understand what needs to be done.

One of the reasons that we are here tonight is because we really believe that we need to move to the next phase on education issues. We have done the

budget, we are done with the tax breaks, and a lot of the impact of the budget affects, I would say, college and university training.

But we need also to address secondary schools. We need to go from preschool right up to graduation from high school.

One of the things that you kept stressing is that if you look at this practically, you understand that there has to be a Federal role as well. There is a Federal role, there is a State role, and there is a local role.

The two things that the Democrats have been talking the most about in the last couple of days since we got back here, one is the issue of raising education standards across the country, because Democrats really would like to see education standards so that students from Maine to Alaska can master the basics of reading and math. That is what they need, those skills, to succeed.

The other thing you mentioned, which I think we have also been stressing as Democrats, is the need to rebuild crumbling and overcrowded schools. As you remember, during the budget debate, we actually proposed an initiative, I think a \$5 billion initiative, to help localities rebuild schools and to address overcrowding. That was something that the Republicans, unfortunately, did oppose, and so it did not get into the final budget bill. But I think that is an issue also that is across the board, not only in urban and rural areas, but suburban areas.

It is interesting, because suburban areas probably face more overcrowding than any other localities because so many new students have gone into those suburban areas, and they do not have the facilities for them.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. If the gentleman will yield, you touched on a point that is important, because when you think in terms of standards, I certainly agree and understand where we are headed. When you think in terms of facility quality and where people go to work every day, I have been into buildings where teachers worked. We forget, they are our employees. We are paying them Federal and State moneys, depending on how you look at it, or local funds.

I say to Chambers of Commerce, I have said to any group I speak to, when they say to me, the quality of building does not make any difference, I say, well, if that is true, then the next time you invite an industry in and you really want to impress them, take them down to the docks down here or down to one of the warehouses that you have closed up, and say to them, it really does not make any difference, the quality of the building you make your products in, and we want you to move in here, and see how many of those industries you get to come to your business. They will not come.

I think it is important that children see the quality, that you do care about where they go, and that they do have the quality of facility they need, be-

cause it does have an impact. I know. I have seen it, I have been there. It has an impact on their attitudes, their learning. There is a whole list of things we do not need to go to.

But you are absolutely right, and I think that is one we should revisit. I plan to be a part of that. I think we should. That, in conjunction with standards, is an important place.

I thank the gentleman for taking the time to be here.

Mr. PALLONE. I appreciate the gentleman's comments.

I yield to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. GREEN].

Mr. GREEN. I would like to thank my colleague from New Jersey for taking this special order this evening. Also my colleague from North Carolina [Mr. ETHERIDGE], who again was the State superintendent, in talking with him, since he is a first-termer, about educational opportunity.

Also, having played basketball with the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. ETHERIDGE], I think they need to lower the hoop for me and maybe raise it for him, because he is quite a bit taller. But thank goodness he has always been on my own team, so we will keep the hoop the way it is.

What the gentleman said is right and what our colleagues said was correct, in that over a month ago we reached a bipartisan agreement on helping parents and helping students in college, whether it be the Hope scholarship program, the tax deductions for parents with children in college, or the Pell grants for children who are too poor to be able to benefit from tax cuts or the scholarship programs.

We addressed that in a bipartisan effort, although I have to admit before July 30, if you would have told me in June or May it would have been bipartisan on the quality, or the total amount of the tax cuts that had been provided for education, I would not have believed it. But I think on a bipartisan basis, and I know one of our colleagues got a lot of press saying we were all breaking our arms patting ourselves on the back for it. It was a bipartisan agreement that I supported, and because it was bipartisan, it addressed higher education needs in our country.

As our colleague said, we need to think about tomorrow and the future of our country, the college graduates, the assistance for those students. That is why it is so important. Again, I was proud of this Congress for addressing that in a bipartisan way.

My concern here is, and here today we debated the Labor-HHS appropriations bill and up until today the biggest concern we heard was there was an amendment by our colleague from Pennsylvania to take away the national test.

Well, frankly, I supported that amendment, because I do not know if we need a national test. I know we might need some voluntary national standards, and for my two terms pre-

vious to this in Congress I have worked for some national standards that the States could voluntarily adopt. I am proud to say, Texas is one of those who adopted those goals, with a bipartisan legislative effort, a Republican governor and Democratic legislature, who did that.

But now we need to address on a bipartisan basis pre-K through the 12th grade, because again, as our colleagues said, we know what is wrong with the system. We know we need to have a standardized test.

Texas has a standardized test. It has taken us a number of years to get to that point. A student in our high schools, unless they pass that exit level exam, they do not receive a diploma. That is tough, because I have had parents and students who have said, wait a minute, I worked 12 years, maybe 13 years to get that diploma, but they could not pass that test that supposedly is on basic skills.

It is a little tougher than basic skills now, because over the last few years it has been made tougher because the course level is harder now.

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But we have gone through that. So we do need some type of test instrument. I am not a big proponent of tests because I worry about how they treat students who may not have the same opportunity.

Last night I was using a special order to recognize a school district that my two children graduated from that were recognized in the State of Texas, and in my own county. It is an urban school district with easily a majority minority district, but they were recognized because of their increase in their test scores, their low dropout rates, and also their high attendance records; that they had to have a 94 percent average attendance record. They were recognized for that, and because of the quality education.

What we need to do though, is to say, now we need to do for kindergarten or pre-K through 12, what we did bipartisanship for higher education. We need to talk about a voluntary national standard, because again, the child may be educated in the Alvino School District in the State of Texas but they very well may move to New Jersey. Frankly, New Jersey or Texas wants to know if a student is educated in the other State, that they have a certain level of educational quality; again, not that we want to set those standards, but we want to have a nationwide standard that districts and States all across the country will say, yes, we measure up to those standards. But they will be adopted locally by that State board of education, that State superintendent, however the State structures it.

So we can do it. But again, we need to make sure it is not the Federal Government turning our backs on the future of our Nation.

We talk on this floor a lot of times about the defense of our country. We

need to look to the future and see how we can defend our country in the future, where the best way we can defend our country is not just by additional bombers and additional troops and better trained troops, but it is a better educated populace. It is an educated populace who can go into military service and maybe make a career out of it, since we have career military, and are educated to the point that they can defend our Nation. But again, an educated Nation, high skills, higher education, is what will make our country powerful, even in addition to our military power. That is what is so important.

The voluntary national standard issue is not whether to implement a national test, the issue is to set a national standard for students, and we need to focus on providing quality education for students. We know the system is not working as best it should. That is why we need to put our shoulder to the grindstone with those school board members, with those State school board members, with those legislators, and with the parents and those teachers who are providing that education every day.

I learned as a State legislator in Texas for 20 years that we did not educate students in the halls of the State legislature. We do not educate students here on the floor of the Congress. The education of those students is by those teachers in that classroom. Any help we can give with whatever power we have, whether it be funding, whether it be assistance to those teachers, to have smaller class sizes, to have more adequate books, to provide that assistance; and again, through title I, that is a great program that has been with us since the 1960's. I would like to see it continued. We expanded it in 1994 when we reauthorized title I funding, Federal help for schools. But we need to do more of that.

The crumbling school buildings, we know even if we had gotten the \$5 billion that was talked about, that again, leveraging that across the country, we could spend \$5 billion in the State of Texas alone and it would not have helped that much. But again, it is the effort, and that little bit of Federal assistance to the local taxpayers who have had to vote those bonds to build those schools, to some of the States who provide building assistance. But mainly, it is also saying, we are all in this together and we are all Americans, whether you are from North Carolina, New Jersey, or from Texas. That is what is so important.

The question is, are we providing children today the best education and the best learning environment, with the best facilities? Of course not. We would not see the problems we are having. That is why we need to make it even better.

This year specifically we have 52 million students who have entered school this fall. This is a record number, surpassing those of us who are the baby

boomers. There are 52 million students. Are these children going to receive the best quality education to take our place here as Members of Congress, or as doctors, lawyers, engineers, whatever profession they may go into, or whatever trade they may have? Obviously, we cannot say yes tonight.

Students from kindergarten to high school need a good learning environment, an environment where students feel comfortable asking questions, where teachers are accessible for individual tutoring if needed, and where teachers want to teach, and more importantly, where students want to learn.

Students are not receiving enough personal attention. We need to lower the pupil-teacher ratio. In Texas in 1984, when we went through our reform in public education, we lowered our class size in kindergarten through fourth grade to 20 students, 22 students per teacher. That has been a tough standard. In fact, we have had to grant waivers because of the growth. In every session, we will have administrators come back and say, we need to take that away.

But we learned that the lower, the smaller class sizes—in fact, the ideal class size is 15 to 1, but we could not afford it. But we did say 22 to 1, to those most important years of K through 4.

I introduced a bill as a State senator to make 22 to 1 from K through 12th grade. Of course, the cost of that was astronomical, but it made us talk about it. So whatever we can provide on the Federal level to make sure those teachers can work with those students in smaller class sizes. But again, it is a Federal concern and it is a State responsibility, but it is our job as Members of Congress to make sure we are planning for tomorrow.

The schools are overcrowded. Buildings are unsafe. Even as we stand here tonight, in the District of Columbia we know that the schools have not reopened because of the hazardous conditions that they have. But that is not just in D.C. It is easy to pick on D.C. when you are around the country, and sometimes they give us very fertile ground to pick on them. But it is not just in the District of Columbia, it is all over the country that we have problems with buildings and deteriorated conditions.

As the gentleman said earlier, it is not just in the urban areas, it is not just in a district like I represent. It is also in my suburban districts that I represent, but it is also in the rural facilities. That is why I think whatever bill we can craft needs to address both the rural, the suburban, and the urban needs to provide that leverage that will help that local school boards and those local taxpayers to approve a bond election, maybe, or that State to provide a little extra money for building and construction that a lot of States do not provide.

Teachers are stretched to their limits. Like I said, some teachers have 40 students in their classroom. My wife is

a high school algebra teacher. Last year she had over 40 students in an algebra class. How do you teach algebra students? I had enough trouble when I sat through geometry twice during the day to learn. Obviously, that is why I became a business major and a lawyer.

But you cannot teach students when you have 40 in a classroom, and that is what is so sad. You have to have smaller class sizes and buildings to match that, so teachers can do it. A lot of our schools are going through a building boom, if their taxpayers support the bond elections. Again, using the Alvino School District as an example, they passed the bond election that provided for a great many more classrooms for our school. Selena Park ISD in my district passed a bond election, the voters did. The Houston Independent School District, over 200,000 students every day attend. The bond election failed, so we have problems there, but they are trying to come up with facilities.

I have a high school that is in ISD that I went to high school with. Years ago they decided to do away with the library because they needed the classrooms, so they use the city library across the street. They do not have a cafeteria at that high school. They use a junior high cafeteria that is a block away. That is wrong. We ought to provide those facilities for the high school students and junior high students without them having to use a city library. I at one time thought that was great because we could leverage the funding. The problem is that city library is not equipped like a school library would be, particularly a middle school library or a junior high and a high school library. So we have problems with buildings, we have problems with pupil-teacher ratios, and we in Congress need to do something bipartisanship. That is why we are talking about this.

Let us just not talk about tests, and say the President wants national tests, let us be against that. Let us talk about what we can do constructively, and that is why we can have some voluntary national standards, and also put our money where our mouth is. That is why I was proud of this Congress in July, and I hope I will be proud of this Congress when we address putting funding in the kindergarten through the 12th grade for public education, so we can prepare those students for tomorrow.

I will close, I say to the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE], thanking him. Some of us in 1992, we heard Fleetwood Mac too often singing "Don't stop thinking about tomorrow," but if we as Members of Congress stop thinking about tomorrow, then we are not doing our job. Our job is to make sure our country is as great tomorrow if not greater than it is today.

If we are derelict in our duty in not providing for educational opportunity and better opportunity for our children, then we are doing a disservice to our Nation and we are doing a disservice to those students, those 452 million

students, who started school this year. That is not what I came to Washington to do.

Again, I want to thank the gentleman for allowing us tonight to give this special order. I know we have taken up most of his time, it seems like, but the gentleman has heard a lot of accents tonight, from North Carolina to Texas to the Northeast. That is because it is a national problem. It is not just a localized problem. I thank the gentleman again for allowing me to participate.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's comments, and believe me, my purpose tonight was to get everyone to participate, and use as much time as they like.

I guess there is not a lot of time left, but I just wanted to say, the gentleman mentioned particularly at the end about the use of resources. We all know we have scarce resources around here. We just passed the Balanced Budget Act. I think our whole purpose is to use those scarce resources on the Federal level as wisely as possible. This idea of having or raising education standards around the country really is a way of using very little resources to achieve a great effect.

I know that in New Jersey, I was given today a document from the New Jersey Department of Education, very recent, that is the annual report of Goals 2000, Educate America. It shows basically how New Jersey, I think New Jersey in the last fiscal year, received about \$8 billion for Goals 2000. What they essentially used it for, or a lot of it, was to put together this strategic plan on a State level to achieve higher standards.

It was very interesting to see, this is a long document, but to see how they put together curriculum content standards, they developed a partnership with private organizations, in other words, some of the universities, some of the corporations, to do joint programs within the schools. The list goes on and on. I was just amazed to see, \$8 million sounds like a lot, but on the State level it really is not very much, how they were able to use that \$8 million and basically leverage it to really do a lot toward achieving higher standards within the New Jersey schools.

Of course, we have, as the gentleman mentioned in Texas, we have these standardized tests we give in New Jersey, and they have shown that the proficiency has actually improved in the last few years, so it is very possible, really, to leverage some of these Federal dollars in a way that really makes a difference.

I think the same thing is true with the infrastructure of schools, as well, because oftentimes, as the gentleman knows, the local school districts, if they can get some money to, say, underwrite the bonds, oftentimes they will use bonding to build a new school or replace a school. If they can get funding to underwrite the bonds, they are able to do things.

So even though \$5 billion does not sound like a lot nationwide over a period of years for crumbling schools, it can be used to leverage, and it can be leveraged also to make a big difference. So those Federal dollars can mean something, even though they may not seem like a lot. I know the gentleman mentioned about the wise use of funds, and that is what we have to look at here over the next few months.

Mr. GREEN. If the gentleman will continue to yield, Mr. Speaker, we have an interstate highway system that we build with predominantly Federal dollars, with some State dollars, and of course, we have different levels, depending on what the level of the highway system is. We could not build those highways if it was just Texas and New Jersey.

We could not build as many, but we have to leverage it between the two, and I wish I could tell the gentleman I was talking about a program like the Federal highway system for education, but under our budget constraints we cannot do that. But we can provide some funding to help those districts, just to help provide those.

Maybe that will be the extra help to convince the local taxpayers to provide a bond election to build those schools, because very few districts can build schools out of current revenue. They just do not have that ability. You cannot do capital improvements without leveraging over a number of years, and even a small amount of money from the Federal Government would help to—and again, we are not going to tell them how to build those schools, we are going to just let them be a partner with them for a little bit, to make sure—maybe they can afford 95 percent and we can do 5 percent or something like that, or even less, but it will make a difference.

That will show that we are all in this together as Americans, again, across our country, worrying about and addressing the issue of educational opportunity for our children and quality. Again, like our colleague, the gentleman from North Carolina, said, the education is in the classroom with those teachers and those parents who participate. All we need to do is make sure we are partnering with them to help them.

□ 2300

Mr. PALLONE. Our main purpose, of course, is to continue to point out that as Democrats we want to make education a top priority and we think we have done a lot as you mentioned with the Balanced Budget Act, but a lot more needs to be done.

NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE ISSUES

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

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to discuss several defense issues, but before discussing those issues, I would like to follow up on the previous special order that we just heard, since many of our colleagues perhaps in their offices, and citizens around the country, have been listening to three of our colleagues discuss education.

Mr. Speaker, I want to, first of all, applaud the gentleman from Texas [Mr. GREEN] because I heard him use the word "bipartisanship" a number of times in reference to education success. I want to applaud him, because I want to distinguish my colleague from Texas as opposed to the other two Members from whom we heard nothing except the phrases "Democrats, Democrats, Democrats."

Now, I do not know what amount of classroom teaching experience my colleagues that spoke have. I spent 7 years in the public schools of Pennsylvania, was active in my education association as a vice president, was a negotiator for a while, was involved in running a chapter 1 program in an impoverished area in my county. So my experience is based on real life. I am not one of the attorneys in this institution.

Mr. Speaker, Republicans have in the past, continue today, and will be in the future, in the forefront of working to improve our educational system in this country, and for some Member to stand up here for 50 minutes and talk about only one party has a market on what we need to do to improve our schools is an absolute outrage. It is really a shame, because I think it is a slap in the face to people like the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. GOODLING] who chairs our Committee on Education and the Workplace, who himself was a classroom teacher, a superintendent, and someone who was involved in education. Or the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. PORTER], who spent a significant amount of time working on education priorities.

The successes that we have had in this Congress have been bipartisan, and they have not been because of any one party. In fact, I would remind some of my colleagues who just spoke, and I again say with the exception of the gentleman from Texas [Mr. GREEN], that it was the Democrat Party who for 50 years controlled this institution. In fact, the first 2 years of the Clinton administration the Democrats controlled the White House and both Houses of Congress.

Is not it amazing that those who would seek to be most partisan in this debate on education would now begin to take credit as a political aspect of the Democrats' agenda for what a Republican Congress has enacted in the last 3 years? It has, in fact, not been a Democrat win and it has not been a Republican win. It has been a bipartisan effort, as the gentleman from Texas alluded to, to bring Members of Congress together for the good of our children and the schools of this country.