

Finally, the bill provides mechanisms for giving IRS employees the educational and technical training they so desperately seek. The IRS work force is a dedicated and talented group of Federal employees, and they too want to see the IRS improved. They are willing to do their part, but they need the tools—the tools of modern technology, education, and training—which the bill provides.

There is much about which everyone can agree, in our mutual efforts to improve the IRS. We all recognize that the current IRS needs to be improved. Our challenge must be to fix the IRS—and this must be done in a truly bipartisan manner. It is important that no one play politics and this effort by bashing the IRS. We have given the IRS one of the most difficult and important—and thankless—jobs in Government. The IRS deserves our support, constructive criticism, and attention to reform—not our wrath, since we too are to blame.

I look forward to working with all the Members of Congress in enactment of the IRS Improvement Act. I ask for your support.

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 addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Missouri [Ms. MCCARTHY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Ms. MCCARTHY of Missouri addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

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

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

DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION AGENDA: SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

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 continue discussing the Democrats' education agenda. Last week, I was joined by a few of my Democratic colleagues on the floor to discuss the success the Democrats had in getting education tax breaks for middle and lower income families in the budget deal. We also discussed goals we were likely to pursue in the coming weeks as the budget deal has been signed into law.

This evening, Mr. Speaker, I want to address specifically the issue of school construction. There clearly is a dire need to invest in the physical structure

of our schools. That is a matter that every Member of this body has become very familiar with in the last several days.

At this point I would like to yield such time as she might consume to the gentlewoman from New York [Mrs. LOWEY], who has been a leader on this issue and has introduced legislation that I believe would go very far toward solving this very pressing need.

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey, and I appreciate the gentleman's help as a cosponsor of this bill. I do hope that working together, and I would hope that more of my Republican colleagues can join us, we can truly get this bill passed.

Mr. Speaker, when we introduced this bill, frankly to provide for a partnership between the Federal, State, and local governments on school construction, I really thought it would be a win-win for everybody. I was so pleased when the President and the Vice President of the United States began talking about the importance of rehabilitating our schools, and I was delighted to know that it had a good chance of being a part of the budget agreement.

Frankly, I could not believe what I heard. I could not believe that TRENT LOTT and NEWT GINGRICH made a point of saying school construction support cannot be in this budget. In fact, in the letter that the leader of the Senate and the leader of the House sent to the President, they were absolutely explicit in saying school construction could not be part of the budget agreement.

Well, frankly, it did not make any sense to me at all. I have visited many schools in my district in New York. We have worked with Senator CAROL MOSELEY-BRAUN in the Senate, and all throughout this country. Whether it is the city or whether it is rural districts, there is a tremendous need for partnerships between the Federal and local governments in helping to rebuild our schools. We are talking about computers. We are talking about repairing infrastructure in our schools. How can we install computers in schools that are really 19th century schools?

Mr. Speaker, I have seen youngsters in classrooms that were originally meant for cafeterias, for restrooms. They are so overcrowded that the youngsters who are supposed to be studying computers are going to schools that go back to the 19th century.

So, on the one hand we are talking about the 21st century, moving us forward, understanding the value of computers, making sure every schoolroom has computers. And, yet, there are some schools that are still being heated by coal, where there is plastic on the walls. I have visited schools where there are tremendous leaks and the walls are crumbling and there are big sheets of plastic holding the walls up and our kids are supposed to learn in those kinds of schools.

Now, we understand that this is primarily State and local responsibility. We understand that. But there are many things that the Federal Government gets involved in to help be a partner. And in our billions of dollars that we spend for a wide range of programs, what can be more important than making sure that every youngster has a classroom in which they can learn, a classroom in which they are safe?

Our parents are worried, whether it is in New York or Connecticut, which is represented by the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAUNO], and New Jersey, parents are worried when they send the youngsters to school because they are not safe. They should feel good about it. They should feel the children are going there to get the best education they can.

What our bill provides for is \$5 billion for 5 years to encourage local school districts to encourage States to invest in rebuilding our schools.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank the gentleman from New Jersey very much. I really appreciate the gentleman's work and I appreciate this special order tonight. And I know that my colleague from New Jersey, and my colleague from Connecticut, will continue to explain to the American people how important it is for the Federal Government to be a partner so we can work together to make sure that every youngster has the best education they can, every youngster can leave in the morning, go to a school that is in good shape, have the best computers, the best books so we can continue to be competitive and that the United States of America can be proud that our youngsters are getting the very best education they can.

What is more important? Education is the future. Education is the key to the future. Our school buildings have to be safe and secure so our teachers and our youngsters can work together to make sure that education is the priority that it should be.

So, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to gathering more support in this Congress and this country for school construction.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, really, again, I do not think anything is more important right now in terms of our education agenda than the need to address the state of our schools, the infrastructure, the overcrowding, the issues that this bill would address.

What we have stated before, and we will state again tonight, is that in this case a relatively small amount of money in terms of the overall Federal budget can really go a long way toward helping the States and the municipalities in dealing with this issue of overcrowding and crumbling schools effectively.

I also think it is particularly important that the gentlewoman talked about the need to upgrade the infrastructure in terms of the electrical wiring. A lot of people do not realize that many of these schools are not equipped

to deal with computers and the other high-technology needs. So even if we had the money to do that, how do we put it in if we do not have the money for basic infrastructure? That is why I think this is such an important part of the Democrats' education agenda.

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would continue to yield, I am sure that the gentleman from New Jersey and the gentlewoman from Connecticut agree with me that the Speaker, Mr. GINGRICH and the leader TRENT LOTT must have made an error. I do not understand how anybody could be against school construction. And when we are talking about a budget, it is just impossible for me to believe that anyone could be so forceful in saying the school construction money could not and should not and we will not agree to a budget in which there is school construction money.

So I would really call on the Speaker and the leader in the Senate and all my Republican colleagues and Senate colleagues, we now have about 110 cosponsors, to join us in this bill. Let us do it in a bipartisan way and work together to improve our schools.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I yield now to the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO] who, again, has been stressing and formulating a lot of the Democratic policy agenda on education.

□ 2200

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey. I am pleased to join with him tonight and my colleague, the gentlewoman from New York [Mrs. LOWEY] for her leadership on this school construction issue. It is remarkable. It is a small amount of money that can help to leverage a lot of money in terms of the ability to use this so that municipalities can pay interest on their loans in order to get those bonds and to get those loans in order to rebuild crumbling schools in struggling urban areas.

I am so pleased, I understand our colleague from North Carolina is going to join with us as well this evening, to rise, to stand up for America's middle-class families. These are families who work hard. They play by the rules. They want what every other family wants in this country, a shot at the American dream, the chance to make their kids' lives a little bit better than their own.

We all know that in America it is education that can make the dream a reality. Education has truly been the key opportunity in our society. It is now more true than I think in any other time in terms of a new global economy, which we are faced with, and this kind of an economy requires up-to-date skills and lifelong learning.

Our public school system desperately needs our help. Young people need to be able to attend a school in safety, without fear of violence and drugs in the hallways, or whether it is on the playgrounds and, as we have been

starting to talk about tonight, America's children need to attend schools that are structurally sound and that are not crumbling around them.

There was a recent report, I know my colleagues know this, a recent report by the U.S. General Accounting Office. And it found that one-third, one-third of America's schools need extensive repair.

In May, just a few months ago, I visited the Fair Haven Middle School in my home town of New Haven, CT. Like so many schools around the Nation, Fair Haven was built over a half century ago. Consequently, like anything that would be a half century old, it needs repairs, and it needs an overhaul of its electrical, of its plumbing system.

I walked down the corridors and the pipes are exposed. Now, I know my colleague from North Carolina was a school principal, has been engaged in the school system and knows and has watched kids on a day-to-day basis. I do not know any group of kids that walks down the center of a corridor and never hits up against the side of the walls. That is not my experience with kids. But when it is wintertime in a place like Connecticut and the heat is on, those pipes are hot. What happens? A kid comes along, his friend, kidding around, or her friend, kidding around, you give them an elbow, you nudge them, boom, into the hot pipe. You have got some kid with a burned arm.

We are looking at the health and safety of our youngsters in schools.

I went into the auditorium of this school. It was like a bat cave. The lighting was so poor that, in fact, they could not hold the kinds of events you hold in an auditorium because you cannot see. You just cannot see. It is not a question of turning the lights down for the performance. The lights are down. They do not go on.

The heating system, the air-conditioning system, just decrepit and need to have repair.

Nobody is asking for bells and whistles. We are just asking for an environmentally sound area, an environment, if you will, in which our kids can go to school.

Last year in the school lunch debate, the American people acknowledged that children whose empty stomachs are growling cannot focus in school and they cannot learn. Why do we think that our kids can be in schools that are falling down around them and believe that they can succeed?

As my colleague from New York, Mrs. LOWEY, pointed out, there are some Republicans, some on the other side of the aisle, who have repeatedly blocked Democratic efforts to help schools find the resources that they need to repair and to rebuild. I find it almost as outrageous and unconscionable as she did. And I know my colleagues here tonight find it unconscionable that the Speaker of the House of Representatives, that the

leader of the other body would specifically single out school construction as the area to apply the axe and to cut out that \$5 billion, a small amount of money, which does not in fact pay for these repairs. Essentially, what should be understood, it allows for school districts, for municipalities, for States to alleviate the interest on the bonds that they have to float in order to do these kinds of repairs. It just makes good sense.

I would just like to say that I have been concerned about this issue of crumbling infrastructure and I have introduced something called the National Infrastructure Development Act, introduced it in the 103d Congress. It is an innovative, creative financing mechanism that brings private dollars and public dollars together to raise capital to invest in our schools. It also is for roads and bridges and deep water ports, but one of the cornerstones is to be able to invest in our schools. It just makes good sense. That is what we ought to be about in terms of trying to meet the needs of our kids, of our schools, and particularly to alleviate the concerns and fears of the mothers and fathers who send their kids to school every day and know that they are in a safe and a healthy environment.

I am really delighted to participate in this effort tonight.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman.

I had some interesting statistics about school conditions by State, which maybe I could just use our four States as an example just to give you an idea, because we come from different States and different environs.

But, for example, in my home State of New Jersey, the share of schools with at least one building in need, this would be an individual school district or municipality, the share of schools with at least one building in need of extensive repair is 19.1 percent. In Connecticut, it is 30 percent. In New York, it is 32.8 percent. In North Carolina, it is 36.1 percent. So regardless, just in our own States, those figures.

Then it is even higher, if you look at the number of schools with one unsatisfactory environmental condition. This goes back to whether it is air quality, whatever it happens to be. For New Jersey, it is 46 percent. For North Carolina, it is 58 percent; Connecticut, 60 percent. The list goes on.

Probably the worst example right now is the District of Columbia, where we are tonight, because a lot of us are aware of the fact that the schools are actually not open in the District of Columbia because of the fact that, I guess it was a judge that ruled, as a result of a case, that the schools were in such bad condition physically that it was unsafe to open them until they did the repairs.

My understanding is that it may be at least 3 weeks before they open the District of Columbia schools, which means they may not be going to school

until almost the end of September or early October.

I just wanted to mention that one of our colleagues, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia [Ms. NORTON], actually started a program where she is encouraging high school students in the District to come and work as interns in our office while the schools are closed so that they are not sitting around idly.

I happen to have this one guy, Andre, who is in my office now, at the Duke Ellington School in Georgetown. I guess that is the school for the arts. And he has been doing a very good job and helping around the office. But it just reminds me every day, when I see him when I come in in the morning, this guy should be in school. He should not be here interning in my office. I am glad he is here, but it is not just the District of Columbia, it is throughout the country. This is just getting worse and worse all the time.

I want to thank the gentlewoman.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, just to point this out, this \$5 billion that the gentlewoman from New York [Mrs. LOWEY] has been talking about, just for the schools in the New Haven area, they would receive \$17 million, again, to help cover the interest on the loans. We are not talking about creating a wild-eyed bureaucracy. It is to meet the kinds of needs that the gentleman has identified.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I want to yield now to the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. ETHERIDGE], who is, I think it is fair to say, our education specialist within the Democratic caucus.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey for organizing this special order. I think it is important, what we are about, and the gentlewoman from Connecticut touched on something I want to expand on, if I may.

As you are talking about school quality and quality of the air in the buildings, I think a lot of our people who are looking in tonight around this country many times do not think about the energy crisis we went through over the last 15, 20 years. In many of the buildings we now occupy, the quality of the air is not what it should be because buildings were not built to be as secure as we have those buildings in a lot of places across this country today.

So we closed the buildings. We have done a lot of things to save energy. But in the process of doing that, we have cut out a lot of cross ventilation where we do not have air-conditioning, where we do not have air moving in those buildings. If you are in after lunch and the child has had lunch, and that is true of us as adults, if you have lunch and you go to a place where the air is not moving, guess what is going to happen? You become sedentary, you nod off, you get sleepy. You do not pay attention.

We wonder why children are not as alert as they should be. That is why in

most of schools now, your toughest courses, they organize them so you can have those early in the morning.

And the point you talked about, it is so true, we have a lot of inadequate facilities all across this country, depending on where you are, rural areas or in urban centers, for that matter, where the tax bases have been stretched. We have not had the resources in recent years.

And I mentioned this last week, and I believe it very strongly, I have been in probably more schools than anyone who is currently serving in Congress, but certainly over the last 8 years, on a regular basis, I was in the public schools in North Carolina. And I have yet to have a child come to me and ask me who paid for their school building, who pays their teacher or buys their books or anything else. They only know what they get.

I think we have to get beyond that. We have a responsibility for all the children. And the responsibility is great, I think.

But when we look at the facilities, we need to look also at the growth areas of this country, because I went into a building today in my State. I looked at the list. California is projected in high schools to grow 36 percent in the next 10 years. North Carolina, a 27-percent growth in high schools. That is not speaking to the problem in kindergarten through the eighth grade.

What is really happening is this is the echo of the baby boom. In other words, the baby boomers are now having babies. And when they have them, they tend to show up in school eventually. When they show up in school, they are allowed to have good facilities.

What is happening, we have not been able to build those infrastructures because of a number of issues over the last several years. But as you look, I went into a school this morning, a new elementary school that is in its third year. Nice school, the kind of building with all the modern conveniences, computers, et cetera, that you would want. Did not have enough. The school was built for less than 600 elementary children, a community that is booming. And that is true of a lot of places in North Carolina because of the economic growth in the research triangle.

This school has 1,200 children, 1,200, an outstanding principal, a great staff, but they have 18 portable classrooms on that school ground. They have expanded the physical properties twice in terms of permanent buildings. And one of the teachers showed me one of the classes where they were teaching art and English, and it was in the hall of a new building.

Some of this money could have made a big difference in buying them bonds so they could expand. This county just passed the largest bond issue in their history. Our State, last November, on the general election ballot passed a \$1.9 billion bond issue, largest bond issue in

our State's history and, I might say, by the largest majority. And that would not come close to meeting our needs.

I think that could be repeated 50 other times across this country, whether it be urban or rural. The point is that, as the gentlewoman from Connecticut has pointed out and our colleague from New York, not only do we have inadequate facilities that need upgrading, refitting, prepared for computers that are not there, and have air quality that is substandard in a lot of cases, but we need buildings for children who are showing up at schools that do not have buildings, do not have desks, and a lot of other things.

I would acknowledge that, by and large, historically that has been a local or State issue, but I come back to the point at one time that was also true of water and sewer in this country. And then we realized that there was a national responsibility to leverage and we leveraged.

□ 2215

And there are a lot of other things we leverage to make a difference when it becomes a national priority.

As the gentlewoman from Connecticut has so adequately pointed out, I do not know of anything that is a greater national priority today than to have a well-educated citizenry to occupy the jobs of the 21st century, when roughly two out of three will require education beyond high school.

And if it is going to require education beyond high school, it seems to me commonsense dictates we should get them through high school first. And to get them through high school we have to start them right, encourage them, get them reading and doing math and a lot of those things that have been talked about. It will not be easy, but it is a tremendous investment in the infrastructure of this country that will make a significant difference for children.

We have talked about the numbers, and it is repeated. I was looking at some statistics today in terms of different States, of how the growth is growing. It is not even, but the States that tend to be growing faster were States that have had some economic opportunity. But the problem we have is it is growing so rapidly in many of those States they have a difficult time keeping up with the infrastructure, too. So I think if we could help, we could leverage that.

We had an opportunity with the budget deal that did not happen, but we have not adjourned yet. Last time I checked, we have not adjourned. We still have an opportunity to correct some of those problems, and I trust that we will. Because there are going to be a lot of young people, and I think a lot of voters will ask us when we go home, what did we do on this issue that we left hanging. And I trust we can say to them before we adjourn, in October or November or whatever it is, that, yes, we were good stewards; yes, we did

leverage; yes, we did realize there was a tremendous need. We did not stick our heads in the sand and say it was someone else's responsibility, it was someone else's duty. We did do our part on it. And I trust we will.

As for me, as the old saying goes, as for me and my house, I plan to vote, if I get a shot at it, as I did before, because I think our children are waiting for us to take that action.

I thank the gentleman for putting this special order together because it is important.

One final point I will make, my colleague from Connecticut touched on it, and that is this whole issue of infrastructure in the buildings, of computers, and we talked about the Internet. We have so few schools today that have the wiring, as she has pointed out, but more importantly, we do not even have the telephone lines in a lot of cases to carry that Internet access that is so important that each of us in this Congress has access to.

If it is important for those of us who are making public policy decisions, I think the Vice President was right, and the President, when they said we want to make it available to the schools, because it is available in a lot of our schools that have money. It is true in most States around this country.

If it is true for those that have the resources, then certainly it ought to be true and the opportunity ought to be there for every single child, because who knows which ones will the doctors, the lawyers, who will find the cure to the problems in the world; and we need to give them the same opportunity no matter where we live.

I yield to my colleague from Connecticut.

Ms. DELAURO. That really is, I think, a critical point. I have spent a lot of time in schools and I got very, very much involved in the connecting up of schools in my district to the Internet. I worked with the business community, and a number of them sponsored the cost of the wiring, et cetera.

And in fact in a number of these schools the fact was that the actual physical plant did not allow for the wiring up, and that is one set of the problems, some of which we are talking about here tonight.

But just as in the past, education in this country has been the great equalizer, that is, public education has been the great equalizer, so that no matter what our station in life, no matter what our social status was, or is, that we could achieve success based on our God-given talent.

Now, I think that that is what needs to be preserved in all of this. And when we talk about some places, and now that we have moved into this technological age, we have to view the opportunity for the use of the Internet and computers and the ability of the physical plants of our schools, like a Fairhaven Middle School, which is a half century old, being able to accommodate that.

Because then, in fact, what we are going to do, if we are not vigilant about this and if we do not put the resources necessary into infrastructure and into making sure that we have the phone lines and the computers, then we will create a stratified society where those places that can afford to have this kind of technology and this kind of access are going to get the benefits of it, and those that cannot are going to be held back from their ability to compete, their ability to succeed in this new global economy.

The vistas and the potential of the computer and the Internet of just exponentially expanding horizons and opportunities for knowledge, we have to be very careful that we do not set people back in this process but have to be really guardians of that concept of public education.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. If the gentleman would yield, the point she has made is so well taken. Because really what she is talking about, there was a time, and many people like to talk of it as if it were yesterday, but it has been a little more than that, but the truth is when the textbook was so important, that was the one thing we had to pass knowledge on to the next generation, if we did not have the one-to-one ratio.

As I have said, the best learning takes place when the teacher is on one end of the log and the student on the other. But we have to have more than that today. But the truth was, it was the textbook. Then we added the video to the classroom. But today the Internet provides an opportunity.

We really do not know what the dimensions of it really are because we have not had the opportunity to access that in a classroom. The schools that have it, by and large have it in a media center, or what we used to call a library. Some have it in the classroom, depending on where they are, but very few. But that, with broadband networks available to transfer a tremendous amount of information for long distances, will at least allow a classroom, a group of students to be in a classroom in the most remote part of this country, and they can access information anywhere in the world they can receive.

As a matter of fact, just this spring we had a four-school hookup, one in Massachusetts, one in Ireland, one in England, and I forget where the other one—oh, it was in Swift Creek Elementary in Wake County. Each group of students, rather than just hook up and chat, had a research project on the Internet. They had already had the access to the Internet, had done their research project, then they put the project up on the Internet and shared it with the other three schools, two in foreign countries; and then other schools did it, who took it to Australia, et cetera.

The point being these students were dealing with some very complicated things, I mean the European Common Market. I am not talking about high

school students, I am talking about elementary school students, 5th and 6th graders. Well, these were 3rd and 4th graders.

Now, they were communicating, some of them, with a group. I said in Ireland; it really was in Brussels, because I remember at the end, the students in North Carolina had done research on lighthouses along the eastern seashore, and particularly the Cape Hatteras lighthouse, about its getting pretty close to the edge and a lot of debate about how to move it.

The point being they had done it, but the youngsters in Brussels, when they finished their dialogue on their projects, they started communicating back to the students in the United States in French.

We are talking about something that is so vast, and the point the gentleman was just making, how important it is that no child, and this happened to be a school that had a lot of business partnerships.

What about those communities that have no business partnerships, that have no large corporate sponsors? Whose responsibility does it fall upon then to make sure that that child in that community has access to the same kind of opportunities? Because they are as much a citizen of the United States, or whatever State they may be in, as these other students are. And if we deprive them of that opportunity, I think we have cheated ourselves.

And that was the point the gentleman made so well is how we level the playing field and provide the opportunity for the child and families in the future to move into the middle class in America. And education is the only way we will do it unless they come from privilege and money to start with.

Ms. DELAURO. I just want to make the point, because all this is by way of saying no one is suggesting that we bankrupt the Federal Government to do this; that this is going to be this giant program to use Federal dollars for this. Simply spoken, it is that a small amount of money in partnership with the cities and towns and local school districts where the money is leveraged so that there is a small participation by the Federal Government that allows these projects to go forward.

That seems to me to be an appropriate function for government. It is not only appropriate, I think it is what we need to do as people in public life. It needs to be our responsibility to make sure that we are providing these kinds of tools in order for the schools that can do this and that the kids can learn, and that the parents receive the benefit of this effort, as well, in terms of seeing what happens with their youngsters.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. If the gentleman will yield, what we are really talking about is making funds available for buying down the interest, which will, in turn, encourage that local jurisdiction, State or school district to proceed with a bond issue, or

however they want to do it, then to acquire resources to do what they want to do right now, but because of the extra costs are unable to do so in many cases, for a variety of reasons.

It may be a community that has seen industry move out over the last several years. It may be a community does not have the tax base to be able to do it, but if we leveraged it and brought the interest rate down, it would be to a point they could do it.

And ultimately, the gentlewoman knows as well as I do, if we have a good strong education system in a community, economic growth will follow. As sure as the sun comes up tomorrow morning, we will see economic growth and prosperity will move very quickly.

Ms. DELAURO. And I emphasize public education because it is critical. The gentleman made the point before, my colleague from New Jersey has made the point, we need to invest in public education and that is where we need to put our resources, because that is where we maximize and level that playing field so that all youngsters can take advantage of this opportunity.

I am not denigrating or I am not putting aside private education. Believe me, they play a tremendous role. But there are, in a number of instances, resources that can be brought to bear, and what we should not do is to create a world of education and opportunity that was once before only the purview of the rich and the privileged.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. I agree.

Mr. PALLONE. I think what both my colleagues are talking about is equal opportunity. That is really what it is all about. We just want to make sure there is equal opportunity.

And I wanted to mention, if I could, the way this is financed, again I am looking at the bill that was supported by the President and that our colleague, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. Lowey) has introduced, and it says that the Partnership to Rebuild America's School Act would provide up to a 50 percent subsidy of interest or the present value equivalent of other financing costs to a school district. So basically a leveraging, as the gentleman said, to lower the interest costs.

And of course these States and the local localities have to contribute money, and it is basically a partnership with the Federal Government.

The money can be used for a number of infrastructure needs, whether it is fixing or upgrading classrooms, building new schools, addressing health and safety, problems with air quality, plumbing, heating, lighting, or electricity.

□ 2230

I just wanted to mention because the gentleman from North Carolina pointed out about the fact of why we have this overcrowding because of what is happening with the baby boomers' children basically, and also the gentlewoman from Connecticut talked about

the need with regard to the Internet and computers. The statistics we have show that 46 percent of schools lack even the electrical wiring necessary for computers in their classrooms and a mere 9 percent of classrooms are currently connected to the Internet. More than half the Nation's schools lack the needed infrastructure to access the Internet or network their computers. It is a question of the ability to buy the computers but also the infrastructure needs before you can even get them in place.

The other thing is in regard to the overcrowding and the fact that we need more schools and more classrooms. I have to be honest, until I started looking into this, I had no idea about what kind of increased school population there was, particularly on the high school level where a lot of times the costs are the greatest because of all the high tech or other needs that come into play. But just to give some statistics here, it says that the school enrollment this year broke the all-time record set by baby boomers in 1971. These are the baby boomers' children.

It says that demand for school facilities will continue to be high. School enrollment is projected to continue to climb over the next several years growing from 52.2 million in this school year to 54.6 million over the next 5 or 6 years. High school enrollment is increasing even faster than elementary and secondary. The crisis and the need for new classrooms is centered in the high school. It says some States in particular are projected to witness astronomical increases in high school enrollment. There is where the gentleman said about how it varies from State to State. Just to give a few states, California will experience an increase of 35 percent in high school enrollment over the next 10 years. North Carolina, the gentleman's state, will experience an increase of 27 percent in high school enrollment over the next 10 years. Rhode Island, one of the New England States, 21 percent in high school enrollment. Texas, 19 percent.

Although it varies from State to State, we can see that regardless of the region, we have the phenomenon. One of the places with the biggest problem of overcrowding is right nearby here, in Virginia. Many of the cases that keep coming up are in Virginia. There is a case here with Salem High School in Virginia Beach. It was built in 1989 at a cost of \$20.8 million and was designed to accommodate 2,000 students. Today only 8 years later, in 1997, the school's population stands at 2,615 students and is climbing. In just 5 years, they exceeded their enrollment projections for their new school. I am sure there are a lot of cases we could cite around the country where that is the case.

Again, when we talk about this bill, it is only \$5 billion. Of course we could obviously do even more than that. I am just amazed again at how our colleagues on the other side of the aisle excluded this from the budget. We

talked about it quite a bit during the whole course of debate on the budget. I guess to this day we do not know exactly why they insisted on it.

Ms. DELAURO. I find it interesting, again what I do not understand is why this program so specifically, it was almost singled out, as we know, "Under no circumstances are we going to allow for this school construction funding." I do not understand it. I cannot explain it. I suppose it would be an interesting conversation to have with our colleagues on the other side of the aisle. I do not think it is all of them. I think it is just some. I do not know. Maybe they think that helping to pay for the interest on this stuff is too much meddling. I truly do not understand it. Or that the schools are in good shape or that we do not need it. I do not think you can go to any district whether it is an inner city or suburban school that is not facing the same kinds of problems. It is a question of degree maybe in some areas, especially, and I go back to the Fair Haven Middle School, it is a half century old versus a school that is 20, 25, 50 years old, there is a different state of repair. But I have been to schools in inner cities and in the suburbs in my district and again I say they have all of the same kinds of problems. My hope is that we are able to come to a meeting of the minds on this in a bipartisan way where we focus in on public education and in the direction of putting more of an investment in public education today, whether it is on the issue of the infrastructure which we have been talking about, the overcrowding issue which we also have been talking about. We also want to make sure that our children can read by the third grade, that they are literate. Again in today's economy, my God, they cannot survive. They will be left in the dust. The whole issue of safety in addition to safety because of the physical plant but their safety from drugs and from violence. These are critical issues that face us in public education. I am quite proud that Democrats I think have taken the lead in these areas and want to make sure that we do have a sound and a strong and a true commitment to public education in this country. It has served us well.

Mr. PALLONE. If I could just add, because I know that we do not have a lot of time left, our whole purpose really in coming to the floor and starting this education initiative again after the budget is to try to get our colleagues on the Republican side to come together with us on some of these issues. That is how we started out with many of the tax credits and the plans that ended up in the budget that improve access and affordability of higher education and ultimately if we keep at it, we hopefully can get the Republican leadership, the majority leadership on the other side to come together on school construction and the overcrowding issue as well, as well as the need for national standards that we talked about last week.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. It actually accentuates the fact that there is considerable need. It is going to continue. We have just passed the tax credits and other things for young people to make it beyond high school. But the point is that we now have an opportunity to go back and rework that foundation. No house is ever stronger than the foundation you put under it. We have a chance to really strengthen that foundation, provide for some infrastructure needs that are badly needed, and I would agree with the gentlewoman from Connecticut. All these things are important and we must do them. But certainly children being able to read, compute, do math, safety, those are givens. We all agree that has to be done. But I hope we can now do some of the same things for the other needs that our K-12 children have that we were able to force together for those beyond high school and provide that dream of an educational opportunity. I think to do it we have to keep reminding people that the job is not finished, that we did not get done just because we went home in July and took a break. We have got a lot yet to do. It is going to be here next week, next month, next year. Until we get the job done, we are going to still be there knocking on that door, and the children are waiting for us to take that action.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleagues joining me tonight. As I said, we talked about the need for national standards last week. We talked about school construction needs tonight. There are a lot more educational priorities that we as Democrats are going to be discussing over the next few weeks.

Ms. DELAURO. I think that it is not each of the individual pieces, but it is where our values and our priorities lie as a country. I think we truly are in a defining moment about who we are and what we stand for. I do not think we can do enough in terms of the kind of commitment that we can have to these standards and values. I think it will set a tone and a direction for what the 21st century is going to be about. We talk a lot about bridges and all that, we can do it in hardware, software and so forth, but that is not the point. The point is fundamentally what kind of time and effort and resources do we commit to providing the opportunity for our youngsters, our kids, to really learn, to be able to expand their minds with what we are learning about zero to 3 and when kids start to learn. These are exciting times, I think, for us, exciting times for us to serve where we can truly make a contribution to a future generation, because so many did it for us.

Mr. PALLONE. The gentlewoman is just talking about equal opportunity, and that is what it is all about. We want any kid regardless of where he or she is to be able to have the equal opportunity. They will not be able to unless we encourage some kind of stand-

ards and at the same time we improve the infrastructure.

I want to thank both my colleagues for joining me and the gentlewoman from New York [Mrs. LOWEY] before. We are going to continue pressing this education issue over the next few weeks and over this Congress.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. HOUGHTON (at the request of Mr. ARMEY) for today after 7 p.m., on account of illness.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today, on account of official business.

Mr. RANGEL (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today, on account of business in the district.

Mr. GONZALEZ (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today and the balance of the week, on account of medical reasons.

Ms. CARSON (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today, on account of illness.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. PALLONE) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. COYNE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. RANGEL, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. CLAYTON, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BLUMENAUER, for 5 minutes, today.

EXTENSION OF REMARKS

By unanimous consent, permission to revise and extend remarks was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. PALLONE) and to include extraneous matter:)

Mr. POSHARD.

Mr. LAFALCE.

Ms. DELAURO.

Mr. SHERMAN.

Mr. BLAGOJEVICH.

Mr. TORRES.

Mr. ROEMER.

Mr. ENGEL.

Ms. MCCARTHY of Missouri.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. COBURN) and to include extraneous matter:)

Mr. DUNCAN.

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM.

Mr. FORBES.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 40 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, September 9, 1997, at 9 a.m. for morning hour debates.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XXIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

4871. A letter from the Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service, transmitting the Service's final rule—Potato Research and Promotion Plan; Suspension of Portions of the Plan; Amendments of the Regulations Regarding Importers' Votes; and Clarification of Reporting Requirements [FV-96-703IFR] received September 5, 1997, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

4872. A letter from the Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service, transmitting the Service's final rule—1997 Amendment to Cotton Board Rules and Regulations Adjusting Supplemental Assessment on Imports [CN-97-003] received September 5, 1997, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

4873. A letter from the Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service, transmitting the Service's final rule—Milk in the Tennessee Valley Marketing Area; Suspension of Certain Provisions of the Order [DA-97-09] received September 5, 1997, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

4874. A letter from the Director, Office of Regulatory Management and Information, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule—Pyridate; Pesticide Tolerances for Emergency Exemptions [OPP-300527; FRL-5736-9] (RIN: 2070-AB78) received August 25, 1997, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

4875. A letter from the Director, Office of Regulatory Management and Information, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule—Sethoxydim; Pesticide Tolerances for Emergency Exemptions [OPP-300533; FRL-5738-6] (RIN: 2070-AB78) received August 25, 1997, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

4876. A letter from the Director, Office of Regulatory Management and Information, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule—Coat Proteins of Watermelon Mosaic Virus-2 and Zucchini Yellow Mosaic Virus and the Genetic Material necessary for its production; Exemption from the requirement of a tolerance [OPP-300537; FRL-5739-3] (RIN: 2070-AB78) received August 25, 1997, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

4877. A letter from the Director, Office of Regulatory Management and Information, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule—Chlorfenapyr; Pesticide Tolerances for Emergency Exemptions [OPP-300529; FRL-5737-7] (RIN: 2070-AB78) received August 25, 1997, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

4878. A letter from the Director, Office of Regulatory Management and Information, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule—Coat Protein of Papaya Ringspot Virus and the Genetic Material Necessary for its Production; Exemption from the requirement of a tolerance [OPP-300538; FRL-5739-4] (RIN: 2070-AB78) received August 25, 1997, pursuant to 5 U.S.C.