

most outstanding young men in America.

George is also here with his beautiful wife, Renee, who is with us in the gallery today. Renee is a schoolteacher at Cannongate Elementary School, and their mascot, Nellie, is with them in Washington today, so Nellie says hello to you from all the fourth graders back home. We will be going back to report on how well we are doing, so watch us today.

Their children, Tiffany, age 6, and Alexis, age 3, are not with them, but they do travel with them frequently.

They are good folks, and George has proudly been proclaiming the gospel wherever he goes. As we heard today, he is a man of God. Please welcome my friend, Rev. George Dillard.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would like to remind Members not to refer to guests who are in the gallery.

A LOT OF SOUFFLES

(Mr. DELAY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, what has been going on at the White House? First, we had "Travelgate." That is the scandal where the First Lady wrongly fired hard-working civil servants because she wanted to hire cronies from Arkansas.

Next we had "Goregate." That is the scandal involving the Vice President and his questionable fundraising activities in the White House.

Now we have "Chefgate." Apparently the First Lady did not like the French chef who cooked at the White House, so they not only fired him, but also gave him \$37,000 in hush money. This chef can barely speak English, and they paid him hush money. So even if he would talk, most Americans would not know what he was saying.

Mr. Speaker, \$37,000 is a lot of souffles. I urge the White House to go on a fiscal diet. In this era of balanced budget, we simply cannot afford to pay hush money to chefs that can hardly speak English.

WE MUST CARE FOR THE COMMANDOS

(Ms. SANCHEZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, in June of this year, Congress approved legislation to finally pay a 30-year debt. The South Vietnamese Lost Army Commandos will finally have their United States Government contracts honored by the Pentagon for their years of service to the United States Army.

But accepting their long overdue pay would mean the loss of something even more important for many of the commandos, their health care benefits. The medical problems resulting from years in torture require long-term health care, care they will not be able to receive if they accept their compensation.

After years of torture by the North Vietnamese, the callousness of being declared dead by the United States Government, and years of anguish over not receiving their rightful compensation, these brave men are faced with another obstacle in their 30-year struggle. I urge my colleagues to support these men who fought and bled in Vietnam for the United States cause.

As the House goes to conference on the Labor-HHS bill, I urge my colleagues to accept the Senate position exempting the commandos' compensation from Medicaid eligibility.

KANSAS PROUD OF 1997 MISS AMERICA

(Mr. TIAHRT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Speaker, today I want to recognize another in a long line of outstanding Kansans, Miss America, 1997, Tara Dawn Holland. Tara's 1-year reign as Miss America officially ends this Saturday. Tara has worked extensively in the past year as an advocate of the importance of literacy, and she has directed a considerable spotlight on this issue.

Tara has been a literacy advocate for over 7 years, and she is currently the national spokesperson for the Library of Congress' Building of a Nation of Readers campaign. During the past year, she has visited dozens of schools and communities, stressing the importance of literacy.

The number of Americans who live in a world without literacy skills many of us take for granted is alarmingly high. This presents an ever-increasing dilemma in our advancing society. Tara's efforts to emphasize these literacy skills is important, not only to those who lack these skills, but to our entire society. Those who cannot read start each day at a disadvantage, and Tara has dedicated herself to reaching out to those most at risk, including children and the incarcerated.

Tara Holland has fulfilled the Miss America motto of style, scholarship, service, and success on wonderful levels. We are very proud of her in Kansas.

REPEAL BAD LEGISLATION LIMITING FLUSH WATER IN TOILETS

(Mr. TRAFICANT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, a flush is not a flush. The old standard toilet flushed away 3.5 gallons of water,

so Congress in its inimitable wisdom passed a new law that said all toilets in America must use only 1.6 gallons of water. Since then, Americans are flushing, flushing, flushing like mad, wasting more water than ever, recklessly trying to remove all of that void.

Mr. Speaker, it has gotten so bad there is literally a black market for the old toilet. The American people, Mr. Speaker, are a flush away from a major movement. Beam me up. I say, if Congress can repeal prohibition, Congress can repeal this toilet. That is right, think about it. From the conservative movement to the progressive movement, Congress can reach out and touch the American people where they need it the most, in the bathroom. After all, one good flush deserves another.

I yield back whatever in Members' minds they believe needs to be yielded back.

OUTSTANDING SCHOOL BAND LEADER RETIRES

(Mr. SHIMKUS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend a true gentleman and educator from the 20th District in my hometown of Collinsville, IL. This man is Neal Strebel, who, after 37 years of teaching music and directing school bands, has retired from his profession.

Mr. Strebel dedicated nearly 40 years of his life to directing the "Marching Kahoks" band, leading the Illinois High School Association concert bands, and instructing some of the best student musicians in the State of Illinois.

He has instructed over 100 all-State band members, and his students are consistently rated among the best in the State. During his 37 years, Mr. Strebel directed 500 pep band and more than 200 concert band performances, splitting time between the elementary, junior high, and high school bands for many years.

As band director, he also raised nearly \$500,000 for band trips and music equipment. In his first 25 years, Mr. Strebel devoted himself and his time without winning a single trophy or award. As he said in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, "That wasn't the motivation. I think you can learn more about music with the emphasis on fundamentals and concert band."

Mr. Speaker, every one of us can learn a few lessons from Mr. Strebel's attitudes and ideas about music, and I commend him for his service.

SCHOOL VOUCHERS ARE A DRAIN ON RESOURCES

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, Democrats have made education a top priority this Congress, and our emphasis has

been on improving public schools, including raising educational standards and addressing infrastructure needs. My concern is that the Republican leadership, after trying to make the deepest education cuts in history last year, are now emphasizing vouchers to pay for private schools as the way to reform our education system.

In my opinion, vouchers will not help public schools; just the opposite. They will drain away resources that can be used to improve public school standards and rebuild crumbling or overcrowded schools.

Americans overwhelmingly support the Democratic commitment to public schools. They want to make public schools safer, improve the quality of teachers, and get parents more involved in education. Let us not walk away from the public schools, but let us try to improve them. That is the Democratic Party position.

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COMPETITION WILL MAKE FOR BETTER SCHOOLS

(Mr. HEFLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, what would be the effect on the public schools if a school choice program resulted in the most motivated kids and the most involved parents leaving the public school in their neighborhood? I ask this question because the question I get most often from those who oppose school choice is: What about the kids that are left behind?

Well, Mr. Speaker, my response is increased competition among public schools will, without a shadow of a doubt, have the same effect on schools that increased competition has on the computer industry, the automobile industry, the restaurant business, the supermarket, the construction industry, the financial industry, and on and on and on.

Increased competition means that bad schools will shut down, as they should, as more students flee those schools that have failed them. Increased competition means that mediocre schools will feel pressure to improve, real pressure, for fear that their students will go elsewhere.

And let me suggest that increased competition, here is a novel idea, increased competition will result in real accountability for the first time. Competition in education will make better private schools and it will make better public schools.

SCHEDULE CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM LEGISLATION NOW

(Mr. KIND asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call upon the leadership in the ma-

jority party in this House to schedule what is the most pressing, most important issue that we should be dealing with in the 105th Congress this fall, and that is campaign finance reform. But, we are running out of time.

Mr. Speaker, I am a proud member of a bipartisan freshman task force on campaign finance reform. We are six Republicans, six Democrats, freshmen, working together to try to draft what would be a good bipartisan piece of legislation.

And we did, Mr. Speaker. It is not the comprehensive reform that I would like to see; it is incremental; it gets the biggest of the big money out of the political system, the soft money ban.

Mr. Speaker, all we are asking is just to get it scheduled for a floor debate and for an ultimate vote, but we are running out of time. Next year is another election season. Lord knows we are not going to pass campaign finance reform then. The year after that we are looking at the year 2000 and the Presidential race, and it is going to be tough to do it.

Mr. Speaker, it is now or never this fall, and "no" is not an acceptable answer. My constituents in western Wisconsin did not send me to this place to accept no as an answer. Even we freshmen realize that the system is broke and that the very survival of this democracy is at stake. Schedule campaign finance reform now.

MAYBE THEY JUST FORGOT

(Mr. CHABOT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, as America's schoolchildren head back to school, I am reminded of an old Steve Martin routine on "Saturday Night Live." I am talking about the skit in which Steve Martin tries to explain away his breaking the law by saying, "I forgot armed robbery was a crime."

Mr. Speaker, teachers are used to all the lame excuses they get from their students about why they did not do their homework, or why they did not study for a test. But, Mr. Speaker, the excuses coming out of the White House about all their fund-raising irregularities would make even Steve Martin laugh.

Maybe the White House needs to be reminded that accepting contributions from foreign nationals, directly or indirectly, for political campaigns is a crime. Maybe the White House needs to be reminded that laundering campaign contributions in order to hide the source of the funds is a crime; that selling Commerce Department trade missions in exchange for political contributions is a crime; that using government lawyers for private counsel is a crime.

But who knows, Mr. Speaker? Maybe they just forgot.

WHEN WILL THE HOUSE VOTE ON CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM?

(Mr. FARR of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to ask the Republican leadership: When are we going to legislate? If something is broke, let us fix it.

Mr. Speaker, every Congress before this one was able to vote here and act on campaign finance reform. The House Democrats passed a comprehensive campaign finance reform in the last three Congresses; in the 101st, 102d, and 103d. Even last session, when the Republicans were in control, we had a vote here on the floor.

When, Mr. Speaker, do we get to have that vote this year? Now, let us not talk about minor campaign reform. Comprehensive campaign reform, that is what every other Congress has been able to debate and vote on. When do we get to do that?

Mr. Speaker, let us not just hear; let us act. Let us not investigate; let us legislate.

THE BIPARTISAN CAMPAIGN INTEGRITY ACT

(Mr. HUTCHINSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on the issue of campaign finance reform. As we debate this issue in the House, we should remember a couple of key points. First of all, there are supporters and detractors on both sides of the aisle.

My Democrat friends have been critical. This is wrong. An old maxim in equity is, "He who seeks equity must come in to equity with clean hands." Neither side should claim clean hands on this issue. When the Democrats had both the House and the administration, they did not pass campaign finance reform law.

Second, we should enforce the law, but that should not be an excuse for a failure to legislate.

Third, a soft money ban must be the centerpiece of any reform legislation. It is the greatest abuse; we must address that.

Fourth, the solution must be bipartisan in nature, because otherwise it is doomed to failure and gridlock.

The bipartisan Campaign Integrity Act, which is a bipartisan bill which we have worked together on, accomplishes this plus much more. I urge my colleagues to support it.

AMERICAN PEOPLE DESERVE CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

(Mr. MILLER of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)