

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.)

Mr. MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I am sure our colleagues will no doubt remember this very famous photograph. This is the photograph where Speaker GINGRICH and President Clinton shook hands on July 11, 1995, and pledged to this Nation that they would reform the campaign finance system under which we govern.

Mr. Speaker, since that time, President Clinton in the State of the Union asked the House of Representatives to pass campaign finance reform by July 4. The House of Representatives stonewalled.

Yesterday, President Clinton again asked the House and vowed he would fight for campaign finance reform, and yet we have heard nothing from Speaker GINGRICH. In fact, we have heard nothing from Speaker GINGRICH on this subject, except that he believes we need more money in campaigns and not less money. But he will not schedule campaign finance reform for the House. He will not lead an effort to reform this system. He has continued to stonewall this.

Mr. Speaker, we need more than this from the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The people's House and the people deserve campaign finance reform. Mr. Speaker, I say to Speaker GINGRICH, "Live up to your pledge. Live up to your handshake. Give the people the reform we need."

SCHOOL CHOICE IS THE ANSWER

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

Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, if we were a manufacturer that produced an inferior product, what would we think if we had to face real competition for the first time? My guess is that we would feel the same as those government-owned schools which are absolutely terrified by school choice.

Mr. Speaker, they are terrified by school choice because they know that kids whose parents do not have the money to move or to send their kids to a private school have no choice but to send their kids to another government school where they have to pass through metal detectors, where there is no order in the classroom, and where the idea of standards and accountability leave them lagging behind their international peers.

Government-owned schools have a complete monopoly, plain and simple, and all monopolies fear competition. I can 100 percent guarantee an inferior product of any human endeavor if producers are shielded from competition, if producers are not forced to innovate and improve.

Mr. Speaker, just look at the Communist legacy in every single case, especially education. The bureaucrats who just love their government-owned schools and want to protect their monopoly will do so at just about any

cost, regardless of whether kids have to receive an inferior education and blighted futures.

Mr. Speaker, it is wrong and I have lost patience with those who refuse to do best for the kids. School choice is the answer.

SUPPORT PUBLIC EDUCATION

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

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, what are government-owned schools? Public education. And public education in this great Nation of ours has always been the great equalizer, for it is in fact public education that affords the child of a garment worker, like myself, the same opportunities as the children of university professors, political figures, and business leaders.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle would work as hard as they can to see the destruction of public education in this country. Today on this floor they will propose to cut Goals 2000, cut Whole School Reform, cut Safe and Drug Free Schools, vital initiatives that in fact, yes, have proven to work.

That is why Democrats are fighting against these Republican efforts. These initiatives help to make our schools safer. They get parents more involved in education. They help school districts to buy new textbooks and train teachers, and they help our students to meet the high standards to ensure that they are learning the basics in reading and mathematics and writing.

Mr. Speaker, that is the direction that we should be going in. I urge my colleagues to support and strengthen fundamental school reform and support our public education system.

EDUCATION REFORM MUST BE A TOP PRIORITY

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

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, Alexis de Toqueville wrote in his famous work, "Democracy in America" that, "In America, there cannot be enough of knowledge, for all knowledge benefits those who possess it and those who do not."

Now, Alexis de Toqueville is quoted all the time, but there is a very good reason for it. He is often right on the mark, so insightful, and so remarkable in his judgment. And de Toqueville's commentary here on the value of knowledge, about how education is important to everyone, is an example of his wisdom.

Mr. Speaker, education is an issue that is important to those with children and those without. If a generation of American schoolchildren is receiving an inferior education, that is a serious problem of concern to us all.

Of course, the reality is that some of our Nation's schools are excellent, some undistinguished and some simply a disgrace. But it is the general trend toward mediocrity, the systematic dumbing down of curricula, textbooks, and standards that I find more alarming.

Mr. Speaker, I know that millions of parents agree, and that is why education reform must be a top priority.

REPUBLICANS SHOULD JOIN WITH DEMOCRATS TO ADDRESS CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

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

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning just to speak briefly about campaign finance reform and the need for this House to address that issue before we go home this fall.

Mr. Speaker, whatever business we do in this House requires that the American people have some faith and confidence in what we do and what action we take. Credibility is something that is lacking as long as the American public senses that we do not have the will to address the issue that is foremost on their minds, underlying all of the other issues which we will debate and are to debate, and that is whether or not we can do away with the perception that money, soft money or hard money, has way too much influence in the way that business is conducted in this House.

Mr. Speaker, the Republicans want to say that this is the responsibility of somebody else, but I tell my colleagues that it was Democrats in the 105th, 102d, and 103d Congresses that brought this issue to the forefront. It was President Bush that vetoed campaign finance reform when it passed, and it was the Senate, led by the Republicans, that stopped it.

Mr. Speaker, there are some Republicans in the House that now want to move forward on this issue. But if they had the majority on their side, and the Republicans are the majority, we would be moving forward on that issue.

So, Mr. Speaker, the responsibility lies with the Republican side of the House to join with the Democrats and deal with the issue of campaign finance reform.

CONGRESS SHOULD EMPOWER PARENTS, NOT BUREAUCRATS

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

Mr. ROGAN. Mr. Speaker, in today's newspaper we learned that the Journal of the American Medical Association is publishing a national study that found when teenagers feel connected to their parents and to their schools, they are less likely to suffer emotional distress, consider suicide, engage in violence, smoke, drink, use drugs, or have early sex.