

TEACHER EMPOWERMENT ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN B. LARSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 20, 1999

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1995) to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to empower teachers, improve student achievement through high-quality professional development for teachers, reauthorize the Reading Excellence Act, and for other purposes:

Mr. LARSON. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of the Castle-Fletcher amendment to the Teacher Empowerment Act to increase teachers knowledge of classroom technology. It is vitally important, as we approach the 21st century, that in order to remain competitive in the global economy, we adapt and, indeed, stay ahead of the revolutionary technological advances that are changing our lives on a daily basis.

Once a mere concept, the knowledge based economy is now a reality. I have often heard mentioned that the leap technology has taken is analogous to going from the dark ages to the renaissance, from cloistered monks scrolling information for the scholarly few to Gutenberg inventing movable type, and exposing the masses to the knowledge contained in books. It is indeed a momentous change. But to maintain our position in the global stage, we must make sure that we integrate technology into our society at the most important stage of our children's development. We must integrate technology into our children's classrooms.

To help our children maintain their competitive advantage in the Information Age, we must give our teachers the tools they need to integrate technology in the classroom. With this amendment we take a positive step in this direction. This amendment would allow professional development programs funded under the Act to provide training for teachers in the uses of technology and its uses in the classroom to improve teaching and learning. It would also provide state funds to Local Education Agencies and Higher Education Partnerships for development of programs that train teachers how to use technology in the classroom.

The amendment is important because integrating technology into the classrooms is not just about wiring schools to the Internet. It is also about making sure that we integrate all aspects of technology, including voice, video, data and distance learning, into the curriculum and that we do so effectively. Our teachers should be trained to develop innovative ways to include technology in teaching our children. Not just to teach our children to surf the Web—although I suspect that is not the children who need help in this area—but also to develop ways to use technology in actual subject matter.

As a former teacher and father of three children, it is quite evident to me that a comprehensive approach should be developed to place our children in a position to excel in this new economy. To that effect, I recently introduced a bill that will develop a strategic plan to create a national technological infrastructure to connect public schools to the information

superhighway. It is only the first step in a three-pronged strategy that will include infrastructure support, teacher enhancement, and child development. In the meantime, I will continue to be a strong supporter of efforts that move our classrooms into the 21st century.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the gentlemen from Delaware, Mr. CASTLE and the gentleman from Kentucky, Mr. FLETCHER for their vision in offering this amendment to improve the efficiency of our teachers and to prepare our children for the challenges they will face in the coming century. I urge all my colleagues to support this amendment.

INTERNET CENSORSHIP; JUVENILE VIOLENCE; LOWERING THE DRINKING AGE TO 18

HON. BERNARD SANDERS

OF VERMONT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 21, 1999

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, I insert for printing in the RECORD statements by high school students from my home State of Vermont, who were speaking at my recent town meeting on issues facing young people today. I am asking that you please insert these statements in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD as I believe that the views of these young persons will benefit my colleagues.

INTERNET CENSORSHIP

(On behalf of Amanda Cawthra, Angela Bellizzi, Renay Thompson, and Nick Stahle)

Amanda Cawthra: The First Amendment clearly states that people have the freedom of speech. However, we have to speak to you about government infringement on this basic right, guaranteed in the Constitution. The issue we are talking about is Internet censorship, and whether the government has the right to mandate what can be accessed through the Net.

Nick Stahle: Censorship on the Internet has become a major issue, especially now in the late 1990s. Several bills have been proposed to protect children from explicit material, such as the Communications Decency Act and the Child Online Protection Act. However, we feel it is not the government's place to mandate what can and cannot be posted on the Internet. If parents do not want their children to be exposed to this material, there are several software programs available to block out these sites.

Renay Thompson: Also, once the government steps in, who decides what is objectionable and what is not? If we are going to take the step of censoring sexually explicit material, then why not censor other potentially offensive material, such as those sites by racist groups, or even antiabortionists. Obviously, this would be a violation of these groups' First Amendment rights. Therefore the government should not censor what appears on the Internet, any more than it should censor the private, yet still potentially offensive publications of these groups, or pornographic magazines.

Angela Bellizzi: Parents, librarians, teachers and others that provide Internet access to children need to take the responsibility of monitoring their access. Legitimate web sites should not be deprived of their First Amendment right. That is why, Congressman Sanders, that we conclude in asking you to vote against future legislation that restricts online freedom of speech.

JUVENILE VIOLENCE

(On behalf of David Gilbert, Melissa Jarvis, Amber Atherton, Corey Lasell and Douglas Kunkle)

Douglas Kunkle: We originally planned to discuss our feelings on NATO's action in Kosovo, but with the tragedy in Littleton, we had to choose between two violent and incomprehensible acts. We, with the rest of the country, have been shocked and dismayed with the most recent shooting and bombing incident at Columbine High School, and with the rest of the country, we have discussed and debated the economic, cultural, and technical factors which may have contributed to the escalating trend of violent crimes committed by juveniles in this country.

We understand that there is no quick solution to this problem. We only know that action must be taken.

Corey Lasell: Murder rates are down; but not among adolescents. According to Attorney General Janet Reno, the problem with children killing is likely to worsen. On a typical day in this country, nine teenagers are murdered, and since 1965 there has been a 464 percent increase in the murder arrest rate for 18-year-olds.

Here in Vermont, we feel protected from those kinds of statistics. We are lulled into thinking: "That couldn't happen in Vermont." But according to the study conducted by the Vermont Center for Justice Research, there has been a dramatic increase in crimes committed by Vermont's youth, and increasingly more violent ones.

Bill Clints, Director for the Center for Justice Research, said that the result of this study "indicates the need for further examination of the state's troubled youth in the confidential system that protects and prosecutes them."

Amber Atherton: We suggest that juveniles who commit violent crimes should be tried as an adult. Juveniles must be taught to accept responsibility for their actions. Right now, every juvenile knows the law protects them, and just about anything they do will be handled with kid gloves and a slap on the wrist. Punishment is usually in the form of probation and/or community service. Most juvenile delinquents do not get punished at all for the misdemeanor crimes, so some start committing felonies. We think, because they were not punished for the misdemeanor crimes, they feel they will not be punished for the felonies.

Melissa Jarvis: People are afraid to punish juveniles because they want to give them a second chance. Increasingly, this second chance is used to commit another crime. We think it is about time that the adults in charge look at the juvenile crime situation without colored glasses. This isn't the '50s. Children are killing and getting killed. Those killed do not get a second chance.

We think the fear of harsher punishments would serve as a deterrent for those juveniles who would be successful in programs such as diversion, and curtail the activities of habitual criminals. This will at least protect the general population from them.

David Gilbert: We are afraid lawmakers are scrambling around to pass new laws. The killers in Littleton broke 18 gun laws and more. There are plenty of laws. What we need to do is enforce, prosecute, and punish those who break them.

LOWERING THE DRINKING AGE TO 18

(On behalf of Nicholas Dandrow, Eric Williams, Beth Nadeau, Becca Bergeron and Michael French)

Becca Bergeron: I will be speaking on behalf of the group.

We feel that the drinking age should be lowered from 21 years of age to 18. The reasons for our proposal are:

1. If you are 18, you are considered an adult, just the same as if you were 21.
2. If, at the age of 18, you are allowed to join or be drafted into the army to fight for your country, why can't you buy a six-pack of beer?
3. Most European countries have either no drinking age or it is 18 years old.
4. Giving 18-year-olds this privilege will help them feel like an adult, rather than just an 18-year-old.

5. The drinking age was 18 at one point in this country. It was during the '70s. We know the outcome was not the greatest, but you have to understand that that was the '70s, there was Vietnam, lots of drug use, many rebellious people and organizations.

6. Once a rule is made, the number one response is to test it. That is why many people under the age of 21 consume alcohol, just because they aren't supposed to.

7. Most of this group here is 18, and once we are 18, are seniors in high school. That means next year some of us will be attending college. The college scene is very much more older and diverse. The ages range from 18 and up. So, if you are all in the same boat, what makes the 18-, 19- and 20-year-olds different? They can vote, drive automobiles, serve the country, get into clubs, buy tobacco products, lottery tickets, give blood, purchase a firearm. The one thing they cannot do is purchase or consume alcohol products. What difference does three years make?

If the age were lowered, it is understood that some problems may occur, such as more high school students would start drinking, causing more drinking and driving. But we believe awareness to be very effective. Also, stricter laws to minors under the age of 18, and stricter penalties to the persons supplying minors.

As our representative, Congressman Bernie Sanders, we urge you to voice our opinion to lower the drinking age to 18.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. HOWARD COBLE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 21, 1999

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, on July 15 there were several rollcall votes on amendments to the FY2000 Treasury-Postal Appropriations bill, H.R. 2490. Had I been there I would have voted "no" on rollcall No. 301; "aye" on rollcall No. 302; "no" on rollcall No. 303; "aye" on rollcall No. 304. On final passage of H.R. 2490, I would have voted "no" on rollcall No. 305.

On July 16, the House considered the African Growth and Opportunity Act, H.R. 434. Had I been present I would have voted "no" on rollcall Nos. 306 and 307.

On July 19 and 20, the House considered several bills under suspension of the rules. Had I been there I would have voted "aye" on rollcall Nos. 308, 309, 310, and 311.

On July 20, the House considered several amendments to the American Embassy Security Act, H.R. 2415. Had I been present I would have voted "no" on rollcall No. 312; "aye" on rollcall No. 313; and "aye" on rollcall No. 314.

On July 20, the House also took up the rule on the Teacher Empowerment Act. Had I been there I would have voted "aye" on rollcall No. 315.

On these dates, I was participating in the Fourth Annual International Symposium on Reduction of Patent Costs at the Hague, Netherlands, where I was the keynote speaker. This event was sponsored by the International Federation of Industrial Property Attorneys (FICPI) and the American Intellectual Property Law Association (AIPLA). I had committed to participating in this event prior to the scheduling of votes.

AMERICA SHOULD SUPPORT KASHMIRI, SIKH, NAGA FREEDOM STRUGGLES

HON. JOHN T. DOOLITTLE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 21, 1999

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Mr. Speaker, the world watches carefully the situation in Kashmir, where the Indian military attacked the Kashmiri freedom fighters to shut down the seventeen freedom movements within its borders. The effort did not go well for India, despite its claims of victory. An Indian military spokesman admitted that Indian troops were "dying like dogs."

The Sikhs in Punjab, Khalistan have been very concerned that this war will spread to their homeland, where they are also seeking self-determination. One of India's strategies for keeping the freedom movements from succeeding is to set the minority nations against each other. In pursuit of this divide-and-rule strategy, they have sent Sikh soldiers to fight the Kashmiris, as they have done in Nagaland. The Christians in Nagaland have been fighting for their freedom for the last 52 years.

The Council of Khalistan wrote an open letter to the Sikh soldiers and officers. They called on the soldiers and officers to stop "dying like dogs" for the Indian government. The letter asked Sikh soldiers if they would rather die as Sikh martyrs or mercenaries for Indian oppression. It urged them to stop shooting at their fellow freedom fighters in Kashmir and join the movement to free Khalistan.

The reasons why Khalistan and the other nations of South Asia should enjoy their freedom have been outlined by many of us in the past, and they have not changed. Amnesty International reports that thousands of political prisoners are being held without charge or trial. Some of them have been in illegal custody for 15 years.

If India is democratic and if there is no support for the freedom movements, as India claims, then why not let the peoples of the subcontinent vote on their political status? America should support self-determination for all the nations and peoples. We should declare our support for the freedom movements and the right of self-determination and stop aid to the repressive Indian regime.

CELEBRATING THE ARTISTRY OF WILLIAM KRAWCZEWCZ

HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 21, 1999

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an outstanding artist, William Krawczewicz, whose design was recently selected to appear on the back of the Maryland quarter, to be issued in March of 2000.

The U.S. Mint will issue fifty different designs of the official quarter for the fifty different states, each quarter depicting features of its state. Mr. Krawczewicz's winning design features the state Capitol building in Annapolis, Maryland, the only statehouse that also once served as the Nation's Capitol. The design was chosen from among the approximately 280 designs depicting different aspects of Maryland.

This is not the first time Mr. Krawczewicz's artwork has been recognized. Over the years, he has won a number of awards and one of his designs was selected for a 1994 Olympic coin commemorative set. When he is not producing coin designs, Mr. Krawczewicz works as a graphic designer for the White House.

I would like to congratulate Mr. Krawczewicz for his artistry and for his contribution to the commemoration of the state of Maryland.

MARION COWELL, JR.

HON. BILL McCOLLUM

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 21, 1999

Mr. McCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to publicly congratulate Marion Cowell, Jr. on his retirement from First Union.

Mr. Cowell served as General Counsel for First Union for an impressive 27 years, during which he earned the respect and confidence of his associates at all levels of the corporation, both as a talented lawyer and as a friend. Besides working diligently for First Union, Mr. Cowell dedicated significant time providing pro bono services to individuals and community organizations that could not otherwise afford them. Such willingness to contribute to the community was recognized by his peers, and in 1998 he received the National Public Service Award from the Business Law section of the American Bar Association. His wise and judicious council will be greatly missed at First Union and I personally commend him for his outstanding achievements.

CHARACTER COUNTS

HON. MARK E. SOUDER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 21, 1999

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Speaker, yesterday Congressman ERNIE FLETCHER introduced an amendment, which allows teacher training funds to be used for character education training, to the Teacher Empowerment Act. It was adopted with my strong support.