

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I want to comment on Social Security and two misconceptions that minimize the seriousness of keeping Social Security solvent coming from the White House and from some of the status quo'ers.

One is the suggestion that if we have a strong growing economy that somehow that economic expansion will save Social Security. Let me just point out that because Social Security benefits are indexed to wage inflation, benefits go up faster than inflation. Under the current law a growing expanding economy, regardless of how dramatic, does not solve Social Security. Benefits will continue to be about 36% of income.

The other claim is that if we invest some of the surplus in the capital markets, such as 62 percent, suggested by the President, somehow that investment will save Social Security. Just a quick statistic. If we were to invest the whole trillion dollars that we expect in surplus over the next 5 years into an account drawing 10.5 percent interest, it would only keep Social Security solvent for another 11 years.

Saving Social Security is a serious challenge. Let us face up to it.

□ 1015

SUPPORT MILLER-KILDEE AMENDMENT TO ED FLEX BILL

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

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, later today Members will have an opportunity to vote on the Miller-Kildee amendment to the ed flex bill which will provide for stronger accountability on behalf of the States. We will be voting later this year to send the States \$50 billion additional in title I moneys. We have sent them \$120 billion over the last decade, and the results at best are mixed. In some cases they are shameful. We need to have accountability. The Miller-Kildee amendment simply does what George W. Bush did in Texas. He told the Federal Government in exchange for flexibility, I am willing to set the following standards, all children in Texas or 90 percent of the children in Texas will pass the State exam in 5 years, 90 percent of the African Americans, 90 percent of the Hispanics and 90 percent of the poor children. I do not know what the governor of my State could say and I do not know what the governor of Louisiana or New York could say, but they ought to be able to tell us what their goals for achievement are, how they will measure them. No longer should the Federal Government continue to enable lax accountability for our children's education.

SUPPORT THE ED FLEX BILL

(Ms. PRYCE of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House

for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to say that the White House talks a great game when it comes to education reform, but it turns out there is more going on behind the scenes that you will never see on the network news. The White House has been working with Democrats in the Congress to take the "flex" out of ed flex. The whole purpose of this program is to give the States their own authority to assess their programs instead of Washington telling them what they need. Now, 100,000 new teachers is a great slogan but trying to handcuff our governors like this is not exactly the kind of flexibility that reformers have in mind when they advocate ed flex. This program is supposed to allow local schools to spend Federal dollars as they see fit. The special interests will have none of that. But the special interests are not putting the education needs of our children first. Ed flex does. It is a commonsense reform overwhelmingly supported by all 50 governors across this country. Today we will have the opportunity to support it as well.

ON EDUCATION PRIORITIES

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

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the greatest gift a parent or elected official even can provide our children is a quality education. Education is one thing that nobody can ever take away from someone. For years we have debated on this floor the most effective way to provide our children with this gift. Later today we will likely pass the ed flex bill that allows States the opportunity and the flexibility in spending their Federal education dollars. Since my home State of Texas already participates in this program and has a great deal of success with it, I support the bill.

However, the benefits of all of the flexibility in the world will be limited if we do not modernize our schools so our children can have a safe learning and clean environment, reduce the class size for each child so they can get the attention and the guidance they need, provide state of the art technology so that all students can benefit from today's best tools in education, and finally we have a responsibility to know that each State is meeting the needs of their students. This can be done by supporting the Miller-Kildee amendment later today and not forgetting that the original reason for Federal assistance for education was to help those children most in need.

REVERSE THE CLINTON CUTS TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

(Mr. SCHAFFER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the Clinton administration has backed away from the Federal commitment to fund special education adequately. For the second consecutive year the administration has chosen to cut special education funding. For those who have any doubts, I urge them to look up the figures for themselves. By the time you factor in inflation and new children coming into the system special education students will receive less. Despite Clinton cuts to special education, congressional Republicans have worked hard to see that we make progress toward filling the IDEA program or the Individuals with Disabilities Act mandate. Over the last 3 years, Republicans have fought for and achieved dramatic funding increases for this important program. We will fight for another increase this year. Children with special needs should not be shortchanged by the Federal Government and the political priorities of the White House should not prevail at the expense of America's children. I urge my colleagues to reverse the Clinton cuts to special education.

PASS THE PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

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

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to challenge all of my colleagues, Democrats, Republicans and independents, to pass legislation that would provide all Americans with the health care protections that they need and deserve. I am very concerned that patients from my district are being denied the health care coverage they need to lead productive lives. It seems that I cannot pick up my local newspapers, the Beaumont Enterprise or the Texas City Sun, without reading about someone who was denied care because some insurance company bureaucrat decided that a procedure was not necessary. It is one thing to keep down costs, but it cannot be done at the patient's expense. That is why I support yesterday's reintroduction of the patient's Bill of Rights. I am confident that the Bill of Rights will give residents of Hotel Beaumont, a senior citizens community in the heart of my hometown, the right to choose a specialist and to see the same doctor throughout treatment.

It is time for us to put our money where our mouth is. Let us prove to the American people that this Congress can work together to address issues they really care about. Let us pass the Patients' Bill of Rights.

VOTE YES ON ED FLEX BILL

(Mr. GIBBONS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, Republicans and my colleagues on the left know that the biggest and best investment we can make as a nation is in the proper education of our children. But one of the greatest debates that is taking place in Washington right now concerns the future of our children's education and how scarce Federal education dollars can most effectively and efficiently be spent to improve that education.

I ask, should the money of hard-working parents be left in the pockets of Washington bureaucrats, and should every important decision be left to the red tape bureaucrats in Washington to develop the plan to educate our children in our schools across America? Of course not. We all know the answer. Local control wins out over Washington bureaucracy. As a parent, I know. I want the best education possible for my children. And I envision a national goal on education, a goal that offers every child in America the best education possible. The Republican plan puts our teachers, our parents and our school boards in the education driver's seat. Mr. Speaker, the ed flex bill gets us closer, closer to letting our parents, teachers, schools and communities accomplish this goal by reaching a higher standard of learning.

ED FLEX ACT A FLIMSY PIECE OF LEGISLATION

(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, last year Democrats were successful in passing a measure to improve education by hiring 100,000 new teachers. We are a third of the way there. This year there are 30,000 new teachers, reducing class size, improving discipline and increasing the individual attention that our kids need.

Democrats want to pass the next installment toward 100,000 teachers, but the Republican leadership is fighting us tooth and nail. The Republican leadership's ed flex act is a flimsy piece of legislation, a fig leaf to cover its barren agenda. It makes no provision for new teachers, no measure to ensure that the neediest school districts receive funds, and it has no accountability. Democrats believe that local school districts should have flexibility when they administer Federal education programs, but there should be flexibility coupled with accountability to ensure that our teachers, students and parents receive the support that they deserve. What we ought to do in this Congress is authorize 30,000 more teachers on our way to 100,000 and hold schools accountable for student performance. These are the measures that are going to make a real difference for our students, ensure that our schools have the support that they need to

make the decisions that they need and to provide our youngsters with the best possible opportunity for their future.

CONGRESS RENEWS PLEDGE TO ABIDE BY SPENDING CAPS

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

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, just 4 years ago when they unveiled their budget, the administration acknowledged that we would see \$200 billion deficits well into the next century. But the new Republican Congress said that that was unacceptable. Against the shrill cries of our friends on the left, we reformed welfare, saved Medicare, eliminated over 400 Federal programs, and cut the growth in Federal spending by more than half. Today our budget is balanced and we can look forward to a decade of surpluses. We can now begin to tackle the great issue of our generation, saving Social Security, if, if only we continue to exercise the fiscal discipline begun with the balanced budget agreement.

Unfortunately the President in his budget reneges on the spending caps. I am happy to report today that the congressional leaders have said that they will renew their pledge to abide by those spending caps. This means that we can secure every penny of Social Security taxes only for Social Security. It also means that American families can expect lower interest rates and a stronger economy well into the next century.

GIVING PRIORITY TO MATH AND SCIENCE EDUCATION

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

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, today we will be talking about flexibility and accountability in our schools. My colleagues know that to compete in today's world and to give citizens personally fulfilling lives, we need to give students good education in science and math. International math and science study results show U.S. 12th graders lagging well behind the international average in math and science. Eisenhower funds are the only program available to all schools to help train public school teachers in math and science. If we are to give these students the education they need, we need these Eisenhower funds to help teachers at all levels prepare to teach in science and math. As we give school systems more accountability and flexibility, we need to give a priority to math and science education.

SUPPORT ED FLEX

(Mr. HILL of Montana asked and was given permission to address the House

for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HILL of Montana. Mr. Speaker, let us take a clue from successful governors across the country who have taken on the special interests in making education their top priority. The same scene has been played out in State after State. A governor proposes real education reforms, from charter schools, to school choice, to tough academic standards, to back-to-basics, to ed flex. Then the special interests rise up in indignation, they denounce those reforms and a battle forms, a public relations battle between the reform-minded governor and the special interests that have produced the terrible results in the first place.

One reform that the special interests particularly do not like is ed flex. They do not like it because it gives States and local schools the power to decide how to best spend the Federal education dollars. The special interests hate this idea because it means that Washington will no longer be telling local schools what they need, and they do not like it because it means parents and local authorities will have more control over education and the special interests will have less.

Let us give governors the power they need to improve our public schools. Let us support ed flex.

CALL FOR BIPARTISAN EDUCATION REFORM

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

Mr. WEINER. Mr. Speaker, some might wonder when it became a partisan issue to support our children and our schools. If you recall after World War II there was truly a bipartisan spirit in this country that we needed to invest in education at all levels. We built more schools in communities all around this country, we encouraged more people to go into teaching, and we hired tens of thousands of new teachers. We need to do the same type of bipartisan plan now that the Cold War has ended, now that we have realized that our battles that we are going to be fighting in the future will be on the economic battlefield, not the military battlefield, thank God.

Now we have to do the same: we have to invest in modernizing those schools, we have to invest in hiring more teachers. We have to take that kind of approach. I think that we can all agree that it should be a bipartisan effort.

When a youngster in PS 254 in my district, which is dramatically overcrowded, is trying to figure out why they are learning in a gymnasium and a lunchroom, they are not thinking because it is a Democrat or a Republican, they are thinking because we simply need new spaces. This is the kind of thing we must do. We need to hire teachers, modernize schools, and make college tax deductible. We should do it in a bipartisan fashion.