

THE FOLLY OF COMMITTING GROUND TROOPS TO KOSOVO

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GILLMOR). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDI) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TANCREDI. Mr. Speaker, as we approach the decision to send ground troops into the war in Kosovo, it is important for us to look at the historical events surrounding that particular area and to then look at the request that is being made, that will probably be made for this Congress to approve in some fashion or other, a request from the administration to commit American troops to this folly.

During the break, I was given an article that I found quite sobering, from an individual in my district. The title of the article is "Serbia: The lesson of Army Group E." It came off of the net, World Net Daily, Friday, March 26. The author, a gentleman by the name of Joel A. Ruth. And I quote from this article because I think it needs to be widely read and widely heard, again, as we approach this potential decision to send American troops in. It says:

Before we engage the Serbs in a limited war over Kosovo, it would be wise to review the experiences of the 22 German divisions that were committed to stamping out Serb resistance between 1941 and 1945. While the Germans also had the help of 200,000 Croatian, Slovenian and Bosnian Moslem volunteer auxiliaries, they still could not do the job, and with a combined army of over 700,000 men willing to commit atrocities that the United States and her allies would never contemplate in this, quote, civilized day and age.

In the end, and without direct Allied help, the Serbs succeeded, through extreme human sacrifice and one of the bloodiest partisan wars ever fought in history, in recapturing over half their country by the time the war had ended on all the other fronts.

Army Group E surrendered to the Serbs and was subsequently force-marched the length and width of Serbia without food until every German soldier had dropped dead by the wayside.

The fate of the Croatian Slovenians and Moslems who had helped the Germans was mass murder; all prisoners were taken, shot and clubbed or tortured to death and dumped in mass graves. Over one half million soldiers and their families were thus exterminated by the Serbs, over 1 million murdered if one counts the victims of the German Army Group E.

After the war the Serbs under Marshal Tito were determined that no outside aggressor would ever enjoy an advantage in occupying any part of Serbia ever again. Therefore, for the next 40 years, a massive system of underground defenses were constructed deep under the mountains, atomic bomb-proof and capable of maintaining a million-man army underground for several years while guerilla warfare would rage against any future aggressors. These underground facilities contain massive quantities of munitions, field hospitals, food stocks, fuel and consist of thousands of miles of tunnels which can enable a guerilla force to strike and vanish to safety during bombing and artillery strikes.

Believe me, if the Germans who utilized the most brutal tactics could not subdue the Serbs in 5 years when they did not possess

such a defensive infrastructure, how much harder is it going to be now that they have spent 50 years in preparing for the next invaders?

The article goes on to claim that any attempt on the part of NATO and this administration to participate in any such venture would be just as full of folly and certainly would be just as bloody. And the idea that we can bomb Milosevic into submission is, of course, if you are taking this at face value, if the information supplied in this particular article is correct, then that theory, that strategy, is idiotic.

For if there is such a system of caverns and caves within Serbia where a million men could be housed and probably are being housed even at the present time, then how can we possibly expect to really cripple him through any amount of bombing that we can possibly do? It will, of course, take armed forces on the ground, and it will, of course, turn into the same sort of bloody situation that preceded us there some 50 years ago.

So I ask my colleagues once again to reconsider, when we are asked to commit American forces to this area, that we consider the lessons of history as it is so often difficult for us to understand. But it is important for us to realize that history does repeat itself, that this is a bad place for us to be with no particular reason for us to be there.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. METCALF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. METCALF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

SCHOOL MODERNIZATION INITIATIVE—KEY COMPONENT OF 1999 DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION AGENDA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Speaker, one of the priorities of the Clinton administration and congressional Democrats is improving education. Democrats recognize that the future of this country depends upon ensuring that all American children receive a high quality education that prepares them for the jobs of the 21st century. Democrats believe that every public school must be a place where facilities are up to date and in good repair, where classrooms are not overcrowded, where the environment is safe and drug-free, where students have adequate textbooks and computers, and where teachers are well-qualified. This is why Democrats are once again promoting an aggressive, comprehensive agenda to strengthen and improve our Nation's public schools.

This evening, I would like to highlight a key component of the 1999 Democratic education agenda, the school modernization initiative. This initiative will help address the tragic conditions of overcrowded and crumbling American schools. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, thousands of our public school children are trying to learn in schools that are overcrowded and in desperate need of repair. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that our country has the highest number of students in our history and enrollment will continue to grow at a considerable rate for at least the next decade. In order to keep pace with this growth, the Department of Education has estimated that we need to build 6,000 new schools over the next 10 years just to maintain current class size. This crisis is compounded by the fact that in addition to our overcrowded schools, many of our existing schools are in desperate need of repair. According to a 1998 report by the American Society of Civil Engineers, American schools are in worse shape than any other part of our Nation's infrastructure, including our roads, our bridges and our mass transit. Moreover, in 1995, the nonpartisan General Accounting Office, in an in-depth study on the condition of the Nation's public elementary and secondary schools, found that 60 percent of our schools in all regions of the countries are in desperate need of repair. Thirty-eight percent of our urban schools, 30 percent of our rural schools and 29 percent of suburban schools have at least one building in need of a new roof, a new plumbing system, a new floor or a new electrical system. In addition, 58 percent of our Nation's schools face serious environmental problems, such as ventilation, heating, air conditioning and lighting problems, along with environmental hazards such as asbestos, lead in the water and lead-based paint and Radon.

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These conditions are dangerous and unacceptable. Leaky roofs, buildings in despair and overcrowded classrooms are not merely annoyances or inconveniences. They are barriers to learning.

This is substantiated by study after study that has produced strong evidence of the link between academic achievement and the condition of our schools. Students who attend class in clean, safe buildings not only do better academically, they also receive a far more positive message about their self worth than students who must attend run-down and overcrowded schools.

That is why President Clinton and the Democrats in Congress have a responsible and realistic blueprint for improving our schools. In order to help States and localities address this critical issue, the President has again included his school modernization initiative in his budget proposal for this year. Democrats in the House and Senate support this much needed proposal

and have included it in their family first agenda.

Mr. Speaker, this proposal creates a Federal tax credit to finance the interest on bonds which States and local school districts can issue for school construction and repair. These bonds would generate \$22 billion in funding to build and modernize our public schools while costing the Federal Government only 2 to \$3 billion over the next five years.

Mr. Speaker, this is not another program leading to federal control over local public schools. Instead under this legislation the Federal Government will be a partner with State and local governments. It will be States and localities that will determine their needs and decide when, where and even if they want to spend Federal funds to modernize their schools, and State and local participation in this program will be totally voluntary.

Most importantly, local school districts around the country are in favor of this proposal.

While it is true that historically States and local districts have shouldered the majority of the responsibility for our schools, this crisis is of such a magnitude, an estimated \$12 billion nationally, that States simply cannot solve this problem alone.

Mr. Speaker, this is a national crisis. The education of our children is not only critical to their personal growth, but to our country's ability to compete in the highly technical and global economy of the 21st century. Federal support is essential and in the best interests of our Nation.

In closing I would like to give my colleagues an illustration of the severity of the problem.

This is a picture of Balmont High School in Los Angeles, although it could be anywhere in this Nation. As my colleagues can see, the roof of this gymnasium has multiple leaks, and when it rains, they need to put garbage cans in order to collect the water so that the gym is not completely flooded.

These are pictures of two other schools in Los Angeles, both with extensive water damage which has caused the ceiling tiles to fall off, leaving wiring and piping exposed. It is clearly not a safe environment in which our children can learn.

Mr. Speaker, what message are we sending to our nation's children and their parents if Congress sits idle while our schools continue to fall apart? I urge my colleagues to support the democratic school modernization initiative.

Mr. Speaker, I now yield the remainder of my time to my colleague from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA), a man who is a champion of education and the chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Task Force on Education and Training.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GILLMOR). Without objection, the gentlewoman's request to give the balance of her time to the gentleman from Texas is agreed to, and the gentleman

from Texas is recognized for the balance of the 60 minutes.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate having this opportunity to help carry the ball on these issues of such importance to our children's education. The work the gentlewoman from California (Ms. Roybal-ALLARD) is doing on behalf of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus is outstanding, and I congratulate her.

Mr. Speaker, as a Member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce and chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus' Education Task Force, it is my privilege to discuss the caucus' legislative priorities in the area of education for the 106th Congress. Let us start with the unacceptably high hispanic dropout rate.

Simply put, this is an urgent problem that is not getting any better. Over the last 25 years the dropout for both white and African American young adults has declined by almost 40 percent. Hispanic youth, however, have only shared in part of this improvement. Far too many of our students fail to reach their academic potential. Nationwide the percentage of hispanic students dropping out of school is twice the rate of other ethnic groups. Over all, about 38 percent of hispanic young adults have dropped out of high school compared to only 17 percent of African American and only 8½ percent of our white young adults. These figures are simply unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

As we all know, our current economy, unlike 40 years ago, generates few meaningful jobs for people without a high school education. Because of the restructuring of our Nation's economy, not having a high school diploma or its equivalent poses a much stronger burden than it did decades ago when jobs with social and economic mobility were within reach of these with limited educational background and skills. In our present economy even high school graduation is not enough to pave the way to a middle class life. The good jobs are knowledge intensive.

Throughout the past 2 years the Congressional Hispanic Caucus has focused particular attention on the hispanic dropout crisis, but there remains much work to be done. As a Member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, I look forward to working with my colleagues in my Committee on Education and the Workforce and on both sides of the aisle of Congress to eradicate this educational crisis.

On the subject of bilingual education I want to give credit where credit is due. I applaud the congressional leaders who are working to improve educational opportunities for hispanic students such as my good friend, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. REYES) who recently, only 2 weeks ago, presented his ideas regarding excellence in education for limited English proficient students. Congressman REYES has made some excellent points which I agree with and

endorse on the complex issue of bilingual education.

The Ysleta Independent School District in El Paso, Texas, is proof that bilingual education works. It is a place where two languages are used without apology and where becoming proficient in both is considered a significant intellectual accomplishment. We need to prepare our limited English proficient students to function, to excel, in a world economy where being bilingual is an asset and a resource. School districts such as Ysleta recognize and understand that bilingualism is an asset, an intellectual accomplishment, and I applaud Congressman REYES and El Paso for their progressive thinking.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the largest elementary and secondary federal aid package targeted at low income and low achieving students. Funding for ESEA currently represents an annual \$12 billion investment in our Nation's future. ESEA is a vital program to all of the Nation's children. It includes critical funding for many programs aimed at serving the hispanic student population.

As President Clinton has stated, the 30 percent dropout rate of hispanic high school students is a national economic crisis of great urgency. Expansion of exemplary education programs is needed to increase the education attainment level in the hispanic community as well as school modernization, as well as after school programs, class size reduction in Grades K through 3, teacher training and expansion of gear-up programs at the middle schools. These significant issues must be considered in the reauthorization of the ESEA, and I certainly hope we are going to reauthorize ESEA in this Congress as an entire package, not piecemeal.

Mr. Speaker, I now yield to my esteemed colleague from the great State of New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY).

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, education is my number one priority since I came to Congress. Providing our children with a good education and a bright future is one of our most effective tools for ending gun violence, drug abuse and poverty in our country. I spend so much time in my schools back on Long Island talking with students, teachers, our principals, superintendents and our parents about how we can make the education system work better. In visiting these schools I see students and teachers who are committed to education, and these are visits that have shown me what there is in grade schools in my district. But these visits have also shown me what our schools and where they need help. Many of the buildings in which our students learn are inadequate, overcrowded and certainly in poor condition.

As my colleagues have pointed out, building new improved schools must be a top priority. That is why I am delighted the administration has made

school construction a top priority. But hand in hand with building more schools is reducing class size.

I was delighted with the administration's initiative to hire a hundred thousand new teachers over the next 7 years to reduce class size in Grades 1 through 3 to a national level of 18 students. I actually would take this down one step further. I happen to believe that we should only have 15 students in every classroom through 1 through 3. We have seen the research that shows 15 in a classroom is where our young students make the most progress. This is simply common sense.

It states that what most parents and teachers already know from experience—smaller class size promotes effective teaching and learning. Smaller class size allows for a smaller manageable work load for the teachers and enable children to receive individual attention. This type of one-on-one attention can solve a lot of the problems before they start.

I am on the the Committee on Education and the Workforce and will be spending most of this year addressing problems like these: teacher training, school construction, reducing class sizes. We reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. With all of this, it is so important to make sure our teachers that are in the classroom now also have continuing education so they can come up to the time that we are talking about as far as being able to use computers so they can teach on the Internet. So, I strongly support continuing education for our teachers.

The act which I refer to is ERISA. It deals with all aspects of K through 12 education.

We all know what it will take to improve our educational system: well-prepared teachers, new buildings, less crowded classrooms. It is time that we show our young people that we are committed to their education and to their future.

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I am one of those believers that believes education can help our whole country as a whole. The more we educate our young people, certainly the better job opportunities they will have in the future. The better job opportunities they have in the future will help our businesses across this country, and that certainly will keep our economy strong.

We have to look at this as a whole picture. All we have to do is ask anyone, whether it is from Long Island or New York, whether it is California, whether it is New Mexico, what is the number one issue as far as you are concerned? It is education. It is the key to the future of this country.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I yield time to my friend, the gentleman from the great territory of Puerto Rico (Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ).

Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ. Mr. Speaker, it never ceases to amaze me how much passion, or more precisely how

much hysteria, the issue of language can generate. I use the word "hysteria" because concern and fear about the supposed decline of English language usage in the United States bears no relation to reality.

We are 2 months into the 106th Congress and already three bills and one resolution have been introduced in the House of Representatives to make English the official language of the U.S.

The underlying premise of English-only legislation is expressed in H.R. 123, which says, "Throughout the history of the United States, the common thread binding individuals of different backgrounds has been a common language."

The problem here is that the premise of English as a national glue is faulty. It ignores and, by default, it trivializes the very thing that has made the United States a beacon to the politically and economically oppressed people of the world. Wave upon wave of immigrants have come to the United States not to speak English, for heaven's sake. They have come because they are desperate for freedom. They are desperate to participate in this great democracy. They are eager to participate in the American dream.

The enduring bond between our culturally diverse population is and always has been a shared commitment to the democratic principles of freedom, justice, liberty and equal opportunity for all.

Most immigrants come to the United States to build a better life, and every immigrant knows that in order to make the American dream a personal reality, English fluency is a must. There are immigrants who literally lose sleep to master English.

The issue is not whether immigrants want to learn English. They have more than demonstrated their determination to speak the language. The question is how best to promote fluency and general learning among young immigrant students, and this brings us to the heated controversy over bilingual education.

I endorse bilingual education and I am anxious to see the development of programs and funding to increase the number of bilingual teachers. Last year as a member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce of the House of Representatives, I submitted a proposal to create a scholarship program for students who are proficient in English and Spanish and want to be teachers in the Nation's public school system.

The scholarship would be named after Frank Tejeda, the former Representative from the 28th District of Texas, who died in 1997 while serving his third term in Congress. This proposal was passed by the House, but was not included in the higher reauthorization education bill that came out of conference.

Bilingual education programs need to be applied with flexibility and with an

eye to their effectiveness. Students learn in a variety of different ways, and it is the difficult job of educators to balance program structure with the flexibility necessary to address individual needs.

Educators must constantly evaluate the effectiveness of existing and proposed bilingual programs because there is something seriously wrong where minority parents have to sue school districts in order to opt out of bilingual programs which in theory have been established to meet their children's English language needs.

Unfortunately, English-only proposals are simplistic and a reactionary response to the challenges of a multicultural society. Worse, they threaten to deprive minorities of their heritage, their culture and the protections guaranteed to them by the Constitution.

If the free speech provision of the First Amendment does not protect language, what does it safeguard? How does one separate speech from the language that frames it? English-only proponents seem to forget that the very purpose of a democracy is to give people a voice. Congress should have no part in silencing those who cannot articulate their needs, their problems or their issues in English. To do so is definitely un-American.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend, the gentleman from the great State of Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ).

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, this year we have an opportunity to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. I, like many of our Members, we are all concerned in terms of the changes that we foresee and some of the things that might happen. One of the things that I would like to do this afternoon is talk about the importance of bilingual education.

One of the main programs the schools rely on is bilingual education. For many of these youngsters and the students in my district, this is not an option but a necessity. This program allows these individuals an opportunity to be able to learn the core items of the curriculum in their native language so that they will be able to function as quickly as possible in the English language.

This program allows our children to feel included in the learning process. From firsthand experience, I can say that I started in the first grade not knowing English, and it took me 5 to 6 years to comprehend what was occurring in the classroom. Now I have learned that language acquisition requires from 5 to 7 years to be able to learn a second language, and so it is important for us to have a good understanding of what it takes to learn a second language.

Programs like bilingual education will allow our students the opportunity to learn not only English but learn basic subjects in the native tongue that are essential for continued growth and development.

As we move to a global economy, more and more languages will be considered a necessary resource. The highly competitive nature of today's global economy underscores the importance of knowing more than one language. America needs bilingual education to produce educated, well-informed citizens.

The Texas Educational Agency commissioner supports this idea by stating, "In the future all children should be trilingual: proficient in their native language, proficient in a second language and proficient in computer literacy. The business community understands the value of trained multilingual employees. We must offer a work force that can meet such demands. This is the commissioner from Texas.

By supporting bilingual education, we are supporting our country and also the importance of learning English, at the same time retaining as much of the native language as possible.

It also is important that through bilingual education and various types of options, the two-way developmental bilingual education programs, for example, English speakers and language minority students are in the same classrooms learning all grade level skills at the same time.

Studies show that the most successful programs, models for language for minority students, as well as for native English speaking, bilingual education is a tool that fosters a successful future for these Americans. Bilingual education is an investment that pays off.

If we are to make changes in bilingual education, I hope that it is to improve in terms of assessing the importance of teacher training. We do need teachers to be well trained, to be able to provide that instruction. We also need the ability of the staff to be evaluated and for those programs to be assessed to see how well they are doing. Also important are the initiatives that include parents in the teaching of their children.

These are drastically needed and we hope that as we look forward that these are some of the things that we will be looking at.

Again, I would also just stress that in the bilingual education we will also see dual language instruction that allows both monolingual English-speaking youngsters as well as monolingual Spanish-speaking and other language youngsters be able to work together and learn both languages at the same time.

As we move forward in the global economy, we all recognize the importance of knowing more than one language, and I hope that as we look forward, we move in this direction. I hope that there is no talk of eliminating bilingual education or thinking that Washington, D.C., is a platform for implementing a national 227 initiative. This is not the place. There will never be a time for it to be addressed.

If we do not continue to support bilingual education, we will do a disservice to our children and our Nation. I encourage everyone to support the program. It is a beautiful program.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend, the gentleman from the great and progressive State of North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE).

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend and colleague from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA) for putting together this special order this afternoon because it is on a topic that is important not just to our Hispanic students and their families; it is important to every American.

Let me take just a moment to speak as a former State superintendent of the State of North Carolina, a State that is seeing tremendous growth in our enrollment of students of Hispanic background.

Let me also thank the gentleman for his leadership on educational issues as a leader in the Hispanic Caucus, and also as a cochair of the House Education Caucus, the Democratic side, and his work there. He understands the needs not only of Hispanic students and Latinos, but of all children in our public schools; and I thank him for that.

Mr. Speaker, North Carolina has a rapidly growing Latino population, as do many of the other States in this country. They come, as my colleagues who have preceded me to this rostrum today have said, for economic opportunity. They come for a variety of reasons; and, yes, they bring their children and want them to have the same educational opportunity as other children.

As a superintendent, I worked hard to serve the educational needs of our Latino community, because they are an important component of the future of this country. If anyone who is watching today does not understand that, all they need do is read our papers and look at the demographics and how our country is changing and the contributions they are making to our society in so many ways today and will continue to in the future.

The biggest barrier to children, the biggest barrier to their learning, is language. We have just heard that. If a child cannot understand the language, then they have a difficult time understanding math or science or history or whatever they are being taught.

In North Carolina, and in most of the school systems in this country, but I will speak specifically about North Carolina and our needs at the national level to do some of these things, implementing English as a second language has served the Latino community better than anything else.

The reason for that is that young children need to understand the language. As I have said, the number of non-English speaking students, not just Latinos but of all languages coming to our shores, have skyrocketed in North Carolina in recent years. It has

increased almost 29 percent; 32 percent last year was the increase in just the Latino numbers in our State.

English as a second language works better for youngsters who are in kindergarten to second grade. Let me say why. It takes only 6 to 18 months for those students at a very early age to be proficient and be able to handle it in the classroom, but for high school students it takes 5 to 7 years to bring them up to speed.

Why? Because we do not have the teachers, we do not have the resources and we are not focusing, in my opinion, as we should.

Let me say of an elementary school in my State, happens to be in my district, in Lee County, in Sanford, where they have an outstanding teacher. She taught Spanish for a number of years. She lived in Spain for about 5. She teaches prekindergarten youngsters.

In just 1 year, in just 1 school year, she can bring those students to proficiency. They can acclimate to the classroom and compete with other students and do an outstanding job. That is an indication of immersing students in English, giving them an opportunity in the second language. They spend a number of hours each day in this class, but they also get to go to their regular classes. That is why English as a second language is so important.

There is not enough funding at the Federal level and not enough at the State level to meet the needs of our students. The Hispanic Caucus is providing tremendous leadership on education, as well as this issue of language barriers. It is not isolated to this caucus because they reach across the lines and work with all the other caucuses, because we have a lot of children in our schools who need this help. I think we have an obligation to put our message and our vote where our mouth is.

□ 1545

It is easy for Members to come to this floor and talk about how important education is, and then they fail to realize if a child cannot understand the language, they cannot learn. Today we have a number of students and others in the gallery. I will guarantee the Members, they would tell us the very same thing.

I want to thank the Caucus for their help, not just on the language issues, but the understanding of the needs of children in classrooms that are overcrowded; in putting more teachers in the classroom, and in helping by voting in support of the 100,000 teachers, as the President proposed.

They have also been helpful in supporting H.R. 996, a bill that I introduced, the Etheridge School Construction Act, to fit the needs of these communities that are growing so rapidly. The classrooms are overcrowded. Teachers do not have decent places to teach. That is just not acceptable in a day and time when we have the resources to make it happen.

This bill would provide tax credits to finance local construction bonds across

the country in those areas that have great needs. Texas is one of those States. That is one of the second fastest-growing States in America. It will make a difference. I thank them for their help on that. We now have over 100 cosponsors on this bill. I urge the Members of the other body to join us.

Mr. Speaker, again I thank my colleagues from Texas and all those in the Caucus who are working so hard to make education for all children a top priority, but specifically making sure that languages are available for those children who do not understand the English language, to help them to get up to speed so they can become a full player in this economic system of the 21st century, because the future will belong to the educated.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GILLMOR). Members are reminded not to refer to occupants of the gallery.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from the great State of California (Ms. SANCHEZ), the most populous State in the Nation.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak today a little bit about school construction, and in particular because my colleague who just spoke, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) spoke a little bit about the school construction bill, and I would like to tell America and my colleagues, so they will sponsor this bill, a little bit about it.

The Expand and Rebuild America's Schools Act is H.R. 415. I know quite a bit about it because I am the author of that bill. We put it in last year and we did not get it passed. This year we hope that we will be able to do it. What does the bill do? The bill addresses one of the most crucial crises facing this Nation; that is, where do we educate our children?

Now, some people would say that at the Federal level we should not be dealing with school construction. I would say that we deal at the Federal level with those issues that do not get answered at the State or local level. One of the major problems that we have with our schools is where do we educate our children, the room in which we educate our children.

I happen to represent a great area, Anaheim, California, Santa Ana, Garden Grove, Irvine, the central portion of Orange County. In the next 5 years, our school population will grow by over 25 percent. That is almost twice as fast the rate of growth as the five fastest growing States with respect to school population across the Nation.

That means not only is California growing faster in the amount of children who are entering public schools, or Texas, for example, or Florida, or New York, or Illinois, but in central Orange County we are growing at twice that rate.

That means that if we take a look at a school district, for example, Anaheim City School District, an elementary school district, kindergarten through

6th graders go there, there are 17,000 children attending that school district. Every year we grow by more than a thousand children.

I know about this school district because I attended it as a child, and the very same school that I attended with about 500 or 600 children today houses almost 1,000 children. Those other schools that are patterned exactly like the elementary school that I attended in the rest of the district have 1,000, 1,100, 1,200 children attending in the space that was made for 600 children.

How do these kids get there? How is it that we are able to put them in the classrooms? We have portable classrooms. We now have double sessions. That means that some children go early in the morning and others come later in the day, so we have a double session going. We now have year-around school. We do not have the traditional 9 months on and 3 months of the summer off. We actually have 4 different tracks of students going to school at any given time.

Now, imagine if you were a mother and you have two or three children, and let us say one of those children is in the middle school or the high school, and they have their own school program going, where they are going 9 months and then 3 months off. And let us say you have two young children also at home, both attending the elementary school. One could be going at 8 in the morning, and the next one would have to be going to school and starting at 10:15.

Now, imagine, you are a mom at home and you have these three children, and you are trying to take them around to soccer and to school and to the doctor's appointments and all, and all three schedules are not the same. So if you are a mother who wants to take three children at the same time to the same school, you cannot do that any longer in the city of Anaheim. It is very difficult to do.

Then, of course, there are the safety issues of sending our kids like that, kids who go out in the morning because they have a 7:30 or 8 a.m. schedule, and kids who come home late because they are on the late schedule and may be walking home in the dark. Think about the problems that we are creating with respect to the school schedules.

Then, of course, there are the portable classrooms that we are now putting onto that school that houses 600 children so we can house more, so we can house the 900 or the 1,000 or the 1,200 children, portables that sit on blacktop and the green grass, where I used to play: less space, double lunches, children going in at 7:30 in the morning so they can have lunch at 9:30. Think about that. We would not do that to ourselves in the business world.

Let us talk about business, because I am a businesswoman. If I were to start a small business today, let us say out of my home, like so many people are doing today, how many telephone lines

would I have coming into my office, that extra room in my house set up as my office? At least three, do we not think?

Let us say it was just you working on a consulting basis or doing things like accounting or what have you. You would have at least three lines. One, you would want to be on the Internet. You would want to have your computer set up; two, you would probably like to have a fax; three, you would probably have a line or maybe two lines where someone could be calling in and you could put them on hold while you talk to somebody else.

Well, in these elementary schools in Anaheim, the entire school has only three phone lines to it. Now imagine, you are the principal. You are calling out. There is one phone line. If your PTA was great and was able to raise funds, you would have a fax machine in your office, and you might be faxing some information out to a colleague or somebody else.

Then, of course, kids get sick, so in the morning parents are calling in to say, my kid is not coming to school. If you are a parent and calling in and there is one line dedicated to the fax and one that the principal is calling out to talk to a parent or to somebody else, that means there is one line, one line to call in and say your kid is sick. Imagine if there are 40 children sick that day out of 1,200. That could be a possibility. Imagine the busy signals that you would get or the inability to get through.

Now, imagine if there was a problem at the school and there was a safety hazard or something was going on and you only had three lines, also. You would not start a business in your own home with less than three lines. Why do we allow elementary schools to have 1,200 children, 10 or 15 staff people, 80 teachers, and only three phone lines? That is the state that our schools are in today. That is why room, the fourth R, is so necessary.

That is why at the Federal level we need to be concerned about the rooms in which we teach our children. They should be modern. They should have the technology of the future. They should have the computers and the Internet and the telephone lines, but more importantly, they should be a space that our children could learn in.

The bill that I am offering is not about taxing people more and sending it to Washington, and then deciding what schools we want to be nice to and sending it back to California or Texas. It is about letting people actually keep the money in their area by not sending it to Washington, by giving tax credits.

Schools that qualify would need to have help, they would have to be on a heavy burden list, one like the city of Anaheim, where we need more classrooms, and we can show that we need the growth. Schools would also be required to work public-private partnerships and have businesses working with them, and maybe the businesses would

buy the bonds that the local agency issues.

Third, the responsibility of deciding to issue bonds in order for the interest to be given as a tax credit by the Federal Government would have to be a local decision. That means that on a local level, a community needs to get together and decide that they are willing to pass a bond issue in order to build a school in their area.

Local control, not sending the money to Washington, but giving it back, in a sense, in a tax credit, that is what the Rebuild American Schools Act would do. That is why I hope that when people realize that this is really about putting responsibility on the local level to decide that they are going to do something about it, and the Federal Government stepping in and saying, we are going to help you to do that, we are not going to give it to you, but we are going to help you to solve your problem, that is why this act, this bill, makes a difference and is important.

It is a matter of national security. It is a matter of national security that our children learn in a school environment that is conducive to the 21st century, not in what people have to learn in in Anaheim.

I know because I used to go there as a child. I have seen the closet where the janitor used to push his barrel with his mops and put them away for the night. That closet has been turned into a classroom for six special ed children and their teacher. This is what we are doing to our children, we are putting them in closets so they can learn. How do we expect them to learn? How do we expect people to learn, children to learn, if they do not have the classroom space?

I was talking about portables earlier. The Santa Ana Unified School District, another area that I represent, if we took the portables that sit on its 26 permanent schools and pulled them off and made real permanent schools out of those portable classrooms, there would be 27 new schools built; 26 existing, 27 worth of portable classrooms on those areas.

There is no room to play. There is no room for recess. There is no room for lunch. If it is hot, as it gets in Southern California, there is no shade when you are eating your lunch. If it rains, what do children do? There are even some classes that are taught outside without a classroom.

This is why the Federal Government needs to get involved, and we get involved in a very specific way, with those classrooms that need to be built by the neediest schools all across the Nation, with responsibility at the local level to decide to build them, and with returning money, not sending money to Washington, D.C., but leaving it in the local level to be invested in local communities.

That is why I hope that my colleagues will join me in supporting H.R. 415. I know there are many sponsors already who have spoken today on that

bill, and I appreciate the time that they have given me, I say to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA).

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend from the great State of Texas (Mr. GENE GREEN).

(Mr. GREEN of Texas asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the gentleman from Texas, and a member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce for organizing this special order this afternoon.

It is hard to ignore the fact that our country is one of the greatest in the world, Mr. Speaker, and we have crumbling classrooms and overcrowded classrooms. Research has shown that students do not learn well in overcrowded classrooms and schools.

Some schools have problems with ventilation, heating, air conditioning, lighting, water, along with environmental hazards, such as asbestos. Worst of all, many schools do not have access to the Internet. The advantages of the Internet are unlimited. It is one of the most important educational tools, and provides instant access to a wealth of information.

□ 1600

We need to provide the necessary funding to enable local schools not only to modernize and to rebuild their classrooms, but to make sure each student has access to the Internet.

One of these schools could be preparing the first person to land on Mars, cure cancer or AIDS, or halt global warming. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity this last Friday to have an astronaut from the Johnson Space Center, Dr. Franklin Chang-Díaz, to visit a number of middle schools in my district in Houston, Texas.

He looked out over the 8th graders in each of the rooms and said, "You are the generation that will be on Mars." We need to make sure those eighth graders are prepared to make that step onto Mars.

Also last week, Mr. Speaker, during our break, I had a chance to visit the AAMA Learning Center in my district. AAMA is the Association for Advancement of Mexican Americans. They have a charter school in Houston, Texas. They received E-rate funding for their charter school in the amount of a little over \$35,000.

I was happy to see this funding was being used to provide counseling in reading and computer training to these youth in my district, but particularly Hispanic youth.

The AAMA school, the George I. Sanchez High School, was established to take dropouts from our public school system and give them that second chance or that opportunity. When charter schools became in vogue, George I. Sanchez had been around for a number of years. When charter schools became in vogue, the George I.

Sanchez School became one of those charter schools and is successful today, Mr. Speaker, because of the success. They are benefiting from the E-rate that will help that charter school help educate these students who are the leadership for tomorrow.

We need to make sure that programs like AAMA's have the necessary funding so that all children have access to quality and innovative education to be competitive in this global economy we have.

In addition, we need to finish the job of hiring the 100,000 new teachers to reduce class sizes in the early grades. My wife is a public school teacher in the Aldine district in Texas. Even in high school we have problems with overcrowding in our math classes. It is tougher to teach 35 children algebra, Mr. Speaker.

In Texas, in 1984, the gentleman from south Texas knows because his former elected position was a State Board of Education member in Texas, Texas law changed it to where we had 22-to-1 pupil/teacher ratio in grades K through 4. That is great. The problem is we could not even keep up, and there are a lot of waivers having to be granted because of the need.

We need that 22-to-1 not only on a State level, but we need it to be 20-to-1 or 18-to-1 on a national level, particularly in elementary school grades, because that is where we set the tone for children to be good students.

Of course, before they get to be high school algebra students or science students or English or math, we need to make sure those class sizes are also small. Because if we are preparing our children to take our place not only as astronauts and physicists and Members of Congress, we need to make sure they have every opportunity.

Let us focus our energy on school modernizing initiatives so our children can learn in a safe and clean environment. Let us create a learning environment in our schools that inspires education and imagination. Let us reduce those class sizes so every child gets the attention and the guidance they need.

Finally, let us provide state-of-the-art technology so that each child is prepared for the challenges and demands of the 21st century. These are measures that will make a difference in the education of our children and that will provide for the best learning environment for our children.

I know the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA) has two very attractive and cute little girls, Mr. Speaker, and I have watched them, not only the 2 years he has served and now his third year, his second term in Congress.

I remember my children went to public schools in Texas, and now a daughter who is starting medical school in Texas and a son who is going to graduate school at Texas A&M, they went to public schools. Public schools educate most of the people in our country.

We cannot say that we are going to fail the public schools simply because

they have a harder job today than they did when I was in public schools in the 1960s. We need to make sure we give them the resources, the technology, the facilities, the smaller class sizes, and also the qualified teachers to be able to do it.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for allowing me to participate with him today.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. REYES), my friend and distinguished member of the delegation from my State.

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak about a different but equally important issue affecting education in America. As we prepare to embark upon the 21st century, all of us know that the Technology Age is upon us.

We live in a time when new ideas and innovations impact the way that we live, the way that we learn, the way that we work, and even the way that we play. Today's children cannot remember a time when fax machines, calculators, computers, or the Internet were not a part of their daily lives.

Their world and the future that they will inherit will require not only an understanding of these innovations, but an ability to fully utilize them and integrate them into their work environment. No matter what occupation our children pursue, every American child must be versed in the technology that is permeating our society today.

Mr. Speaker, a program that is making a tremendous impact is the E-rate program. This program through the Schools and Libraries Corporation is providing discounted telecommunication services and Internet access to schools and libraries across the country.

As a nation, we cannot afford to have only the affluent areas access the benefits of technology. Consequently, through this program, the E-rate program, equal opportunity has been provided to minority and poor areas in urban and rural communities.

The demand for this program and the funding is tremendous, as has been indicated by over 30,000 applications requested in the very first year. Fortunately, we were able to fund the majority of these requests through the E-rate fund with a total of almost \$1.66 billion committed around the country.

Even so, however, there were many school districts and libraries that were left out. Nearly 500 million in requests went unfunded this year. This means that not all schools and libraries received the necessary resources that they needed. That, Mr. Speaker, is unacceptable.

There is good news and there is bad news. The good news is that there is a round two for the E-rate. The bad news now is that in round two there will be 2,000 more applications than last year. With over 32,000 applications pending, clearly the need for discounted services

and internal connections remains very high.

We as a nation have always prided ourselves on giving each and every child the opportunity to receive an education that will benefit them in their future employment. This year as schools and libraries around the country make applications for round two of the E-rate discount, we must make sure that not one child is left out in achieving technical literacy.

I want to encourage every Member of this Congress to stand up for our schools and libraries and encourage that they apply for year two funding. This is just as important as additional teachers, just as important as additional funding and additional pay for teachers, and certainly just as important as school construction and remodeling monies.

Our children's future depends upon the educational tools and skills that we provide them today. We, as a nation, must uphold our commitment to our children. This will determine the solvency and the prosperity of our Nation and secure the future of their children.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mrs. NAPOLITANO).

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, one of the most important keys to success to Americans is our education. That is why it is one of the top concerns in the Latino community and a high priority in the Unified Democratic Agenda.

We heard our youth requires increased literacy and more education plus enhanced technological skills. My District in southeastern Los Angeles County is absolutely no stranger to high dropout rates, and I discussed this with all of my school districts. These students leave school and are unable to be good, productive citizens in our area.

There are many types of approaches that the people in my district have come up with to fight the dropout rate and improve education. However, this does not mean that we in Congress and the Federal Government do not have a responsibility to work with them.

There are many types of approaches to fight these dropout rates that we hope to be able to, together, fight for. That is why we need to have more teachers, school modernization, funding for alternative programs that help keep our next generations of Americans in school.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most important keys to success in America is education. That is why education is one of the top concerns in the Latino community and a high priority in the Unified Democratic Agenda.

To succeed in today's economy, our youth require increased literacy, more education and enhanced technological skills. But our schools are overcrowded and need to be equipped with the latest technology; teachers need better training; and we need to address the unacceptably high Latino drop-out rate.

Thirty percent of Latinos 16 to 24 years old have dropped-out of school. The number for

African Americans is 13 percent and for non-Hispanic whites it is 7 percent. Among Latinos with limited English proficiency, about 50 percent have dropped out.

My district, in southeastern Los Angeles County, is unfortunately no stranger to high drop-out rates. Just a few weeks ago, I was discussing this very issue with an administrator at Bell Gardens High School, which serves the East Los Angeles and Montebello communities in my district.

At Bell Gardens High School, they have another problem in addition to the traditional drop-out rate as we know it. They have a very high transiency rate—about 30 percent. These are students who leave school and then come back several months or a year later. Their education is interrupted and they have difficulty readjusting to the educational program, which makes them even more likely to leave school again.

Local teachers and school officials have been tackling the drop-out and transiency problems in multiple approaches. One is to increase parent involvement in their children's education, so that the learning experience at school is reinforced at home.

Another approach is to improve libraries. There seems to be a correlation between the size and quality of libraries and the ability to capture students' interest and keep them engaged in the educational process.

A third approach is the Pathways program, which gears students toward a specific career path. This program has been successful at making high school education more relevant to the lives of students who might otherwise not see the necessity of staying in school. When they can link each of their classes to a future job, school suddenly becomes a much higher priority for them.

For those students who are living adult lives, either because they are parents themselves or they have to work full-time hours to support their parents and siblings, Bell Gardens High School has implemented "alternative programs." These are flexible educational programs designed to fit the schedules and demands of these students' lives.

These are the types of approaches that people in my district have come up with to fight the drop-out rate and improve education. Let us not mislead ourselves into thinking that all the solutions to our schools' problems can be found here in Washington. Excellent ideas are developed in the local schools in our districts.

However, this does not mean that there is no role for Congress and the federal government. It is our responsibility, as servants of the people, to ensure that local schools have the resources they need so that special programs, such as those at Bell Gardens High School, succeed. That is why we need to fight for more teachers, school modernization, and funding for alternative programs that help keep our next generation of Americans in school.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to discuss an important, brand-new education program called "Gear Up."

Two weeks ago, I hosted an information workshop in my south Texas congressional district to spread the word to our local teachers, colleges, superintendents and school board members about what a difference the Gear Up program can make in the lives of our junior high school students.

This exciting new initiative is designed to prepare underprivileged students for college. Gear Up is a competitive grant program and supports early college awareness activities at both the local and the State level.

Specifically, this initiative will award multiyear grants to locally designed partnerships between colleges and high-poverty middle schools plus at least two other partners, such as community organizations, businesses, religious groups, State education agencies, parent groups or nonprofit organizations, to increase the number of students going to college among the low-income youth.

Gear Up partnerships will be based on the following proven strategies: working with a whole grade level of students in order to raise the expectations for all students; starting with sixth or seventh grade students and continuing through high school graduation with comprehensive services, including mentoring, tutoring, counseling, and other activities such as after-school programs, summer academic enrichment programs, as well as college visits; promoting rigorous academic coursework based on college entrance requirements; informing students and parents about college options and financial aid, and providing students with a 21st century scholar certificate—an early notification of their eligibility for financial aid.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge and encourage all local educational agencies to get involved in applying for this important grant. It is my firm belief that mentoring programs such as Gear Up can make all the difference in the lives of our middle school students.

A mentor may be the person who makes the difference by providing a role model for positive behaviors, like studying hard and staying away from trouble, by helping with academic work, by encouraging the student to take the right college-preparatory courses, or by providing extra moral support and encouragement.

We have a fantastic opportunity to help our local students—their future success depends on our leadership now. They fail if we fail to live up to our responsibility to ensure them the strongest chances for academic success.

Mr. Speaker, expanding after-school opportunities is a top legislative priority for the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

Our President is committed to triple funding for the 21st Century Learning Center Program, which supports the creation and expansion of after-school and summer school programs throughout the country.

Experts agree that school-age children who are unsupervised during the hours after school are far more likely to use alcohol, drugs, and tobacco, commit crimes, receive poor grades, and drop out of school than those who are involved in supervised, constructive activities.

The program increases the supply of after-school care in a cost-effective manner, primarily by funding programs that use public school facilities and existing resources.

In awarding these new funds, the education department will give priority to school districts that are ending social promotion by requiring

that students meet academic standards in order to move to the next grade.

The President's budget includes \$600 million in fiscal year 2000 to help roughly 1.1 million children each year participate in after-school and summer school programs.

I have visited many of the schools in my congressional district. I have listened to teachers, principals, supt's, and schoolboard members. I have suggested they try converting schools to "After School Community Centers." After school snacks, tutoring, mentoring, homework, organized sports, theatre, number sense.

I strongly support funding for this program and urge all my colleagues to do the same.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

WOMEN IN BUSINESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. KELLY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about an issue that is near and dear to my heart, women in business, specifically women-owned small businesses.

As the mother of four and a former small business owner myself, I know just how hard it is to balance the full-time job of being a mother and then adding to it the challenges of owning and running your own business.

From women-owned construction firms to women-owned public relation firms to Donna, Jo-Jo, and Angela who own Donna's Hair Design in my own district town of Chappaqua, New York, all of these women deserve all of the support that we here in Congress can give them.

Everyone needs to remember that small business is the most important sector of our economy. Currently, in the United States, there are approximately 8.5 million women-owned businesses. That is 8.5 million women-owned businesses, 36 percent of all businesses in the United States. These 8.5 million businesses employ 23.8 million employees. These businesses have seen their sales increase from \$2.3 trillion to \$3.1 trillion in just the last 6 months.

My congratulations to all of the hardworking women who are doing more than their share to contribute to the economy of our Nation.

The number of women-owned small businesses have increased by 89 percent in the last decade. During the same period, these businesses have increased

their revenue by 209 percent. Women are a force to be reckoned with in today's economy.

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During my life, I have had many roles: The mother of four, a public school teacher, a college professor, a rape crisis counselor, a professional patient advocate, a small business owner, and now a United States Congresswoman.

I have learned countless lessons in these roles and have brought them with me to the House of Representatives. Many of these lessons were learned as a small businesswoman. This has given me some insight as to what women need in order to fully compete with their male counterparts, and for this reason I have devoted my energy to working with the Committee on Small Business to enable small businesses to run more efficiently.

I have introduced legislation again this year that expresses the sense of Congress regarding the need to increase the number of procurement contracts that the government awards to women-owned businesses. The Federal Government is America's largest purchaser of goods and services, spending more than \$225 billion each year, and women should have more access to these projects.

In 1994 Congress set a 5 percent procurement goal for women-owned businesses. Five years later, however, the rate of procurement for women-owned businesses is 1.9 percent. This percentage is a poor reflection on the access to these jobs when considering the rate of growth of women-owned businesses.

I want to continue to do what I can to improve the procurement process for women in this Congress, and I am happy to say that a few weeks ago the House passed H.R. 774, The Women's Business Center Amendments Act of 1999. This bill authorized appropriations of \$11 million for the expansion of this program in fiscal year 2000.

I want to congratulate the chairman of the Committee on Small Business, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. JIM TALENT), for his work, as well as the ranking minority member, the gentlewoman from New York (NYDIA VELÁZQUEZ), and many other people who worked to make this accomplishment here on the floor of the House.

Currently, there are 60 centers now operating in 40 States. These centers assist women in many ways, including helping them to focus their business plans through courses and workshops, providing information on capital, as well as helping the women choose their location. The centers have the freedom to tailor their programs based on the needs of the communities in which they work.

Recently I have been able to meet with many women business owners and some of the women who run these centers and heard firsthand the challenges and the successes of these businesses. These are just a few of the issues that