

were trying to get a buyer. And the buyer, before they could consummate the sale, had to go through an environmental analysis. Well, they discovered in one of the buildings there was an air conditioner hanging out in the back, as there often is in our State of South Dakota, because the summers get to be a little hot, but that air conditioner, as air conditioners are prone to do, was dripping a little bit of water. And the EPA said, well, I am sorry, we cannot have that. That is disrupting the vegetation. Ironically, their solution to that was to come up with a one foot by one foot square slab of concrete to place down there. Not that that would disrupt the vegetation.

There are ludicrous, frivolous examples of these regulations all the time. And I will not say for a minute that there are not needs in terms of safety and health reasons why we have regulations, but there are certainly a lot of frivolous ones. And as they apply to agriculture, we should look at what we can do to make it less costly.

Mr. SCHAFFER. The American public is looking to Congress for somebody here to listen and to resolve many of these issues, and I am proud to be part of the Republican conference that will continue to push forward for a strong economy, for maintaining and protecting Social Security, providing a strong national defense, providing for a world-class education system and, ultimately, trying to provide for some tax relief for the American people.

THE STATE OF THE MILITARY

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

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, I just left a meeting with Secretary Cohen, Chief of Naval Operations, and General Shelton. I know people are talking about Social Security, they are talking about education, they are talking about Medicare, but I want to read something to my colleagues, and I want to quote.

Quite often our military leaders have been remiss in stating what the actual needs are so that they do not get in trouble, and I would like to read this to my colleagues. This was taken from a hearing in Las Vegas, Nevada. It said, "Displaying unusual candor, the commanders of combat training centers for the Army, the Air Force, the Marines, the Navy and Coast Guard described poor training conditions, outdated equipment held together 'by junkyard parts', and an underpaid, overworked cadre of service workers who cannot wait to get out and find a better job."

What is happening is our overseas deployments are 300 percent above what they were at the height of Vietnam. We are driving our military into the ground but not using the reinvestment into the parts, the manpower, or even the creature comforts for our military folks.

This goes on to say, "We have a great military filled with terrific soldiers who are suffering from an inability to train at every level with battle focus and frequency necessary to develop and sustain its full combat potential."

Mr. Speaker, we are maintaining only 23 percent of our enlisted. If my colleagues go out in any military division today and ask our sailors or our troops of any branch how many of them have been there within the last 8 years, every hand will go up; about 90 percent of them. They have not seen anything else but a de-escalation of military spending and/or support, which is denied.

We only have, today, 14 of 23 up jets at Navy Fighter Weapons School, known as Top Gun. They do not have engines. There are 137 parts missing. The 414th for the Air Force, the same problem. They do not have engines or parts to fly their aircraft back here in CONUS. We had 4 of 45 up jets at Oceania. What does that all equate to?

Why they are down is because we are taking the parts to support Bosnia, to support our off-loads and our carriers and our air force out of Italy, to put those parts in those parts of the world. We are killing our training back home. When we only have 23 percent of our enlisted and 30 percent of our pilots in all services, that means our experience is gone. Captain O'Grady, who was shot down, was not trained in air combat maneuvering.

□ 1430

That lack of training. When you only have four up jets in a training squadron back here in the United States, that means all your new pilots are getting limited training so when they go over, whether it is just handling an emergency or handling a combat situation, they are not trained for it. We lost about 50 airplanes this year, Mr. Speaker. We are going to lose a great number of aircraft and pilots over the next 5 years, even if we invest in those spare parts and so on today.

Now, the service chief will tell you, we have just put money into the spare parts and it takes delay. But that money they took and put into spare parts came out of other military programs. The chiefs have told us we need \$150 billion. That is \$22 billion a year. The President's new money is \$4 billion. Last year when they say they needed 150, the President said, "Well, I'll give you a \$1 billion offset," which means it has to come out of other military programs, which is a zero gain, zero net for the military.

We are in bad shape, we are losing our troops, the economy is high, but the number-one reason why our troops are getting out, yes, pay raise is important. But the number-one reason is because they are away from their families. They are going overseas, they are deploying, they are coming back, then they have to deploy here and they do not have the equipment, the spare parts that they use or take a part off of

your Chevy and put it on another Chevy. That part is not going to last you very long and we are going to lose those numbers of pilots.

It is said that we have more tasks for armed services than we do people. Now, we are asking our people in all services to do this 300 percent increase of deployments. But we have one-half the force to do it with. That means that the ones that are left have to go and do twice the work than we had to do it before. We cannot sustain that kind of downsizing and leave our troops unprepared.

If we look at Haiti, at Somalia and Aideed, Aristide is still there, it is still a disaster and we have spent billions of dollars. The already low budget that we have, all of those excursions come out of that low budget which even drives us further.

EDUCATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GUTKNECHT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank my Democratic colleagues for joining me here today to talk about one of the most vital issues that faces this Congress, I think, and certainly this country over the next several years, and that is education.

So that you and others will not think that I am just standing talking about education, because I have found in this great deliberative body called the People's House, we talk about a lot of issues, and we can talk endlessly on issues if someone will provide us data. But prior to my being elected to the People's House in 1996, I served 8 years, or two terms, as the elected State Superintendent of Schools in my home State. I have made education a top priority, public education for our children, not only at the State level but I have done that also since I have been here in Congress.

Throughout my service as Superintendent and to this day as a Member of Congress, I have spent a great deal of time in the classrooms of the schools of my State to observe firsthand the exciting educational innovations that are taking place in my home State. I would say that is true all across America. As my colleagues join me this afternoon, I trust they will talk about some of the exciting things that are happening in their State, also. Too many times, all we do is we talk about the problems, and it is important to acknowledge we have shortcomings and that we work on those shortcomings to make them better, because young people only have one chance to get a good education in their first 12 years and so it is throughout the rest of their lives. But sometimes it is important to acknowledge our successes as well as our shortcomings.

Recently, I had the opportunity to visit a school in Wake County, which happens to be the largest county in my district and that also is the capital city county. The school I went in was Conn Elementary and it is really now called Conn Global Communications Magnet Elementary School. That is a mouthful. But what it really means is that these young people are wired through the Internet and through a special innovative program that the leadership in that county has put together in a partnership with the Federal Government to do some creative and exciting things for these young people. They really are on the cutting edge of education reform in America. The buzzword in Washington these days is accountability. I would say to you, as strongly as I possibly can, that an effective accountability or assessment mechanism is absolutely essential to sustain educational achievement, and I will talk about that later on today as I talk because we have done that in North Carolina on a statewide basis.

But now let me continue to talk about Conn Elementary, because they can teach us here in Washington a great deal about this whole issue of accountability and what you do to excite and energize young people and make them really love school all over again and love this thing we call learning.

Let me share with my colleagues and read, if I may, Mr. Speaker, the mission statement of Conn Elementary School. Let me say that Conn is not an exception in my State of a school having a mission statement. Every school has one.

"Conn Global Communications Magnet Elementary School will prepare students for successful citizenship in a global society. The learning environment created at Conn will provide an educational experience that will emphasize heightened communications skills via reading, writing, mathematics, science technology, and the arts as a means of connecting and interfacing with the world."

I would read that again, but let me just paraphrase it very quickly to say they understand that education is broader than what some have said, reading, writing and arithmetic. It has gone long past the three Rs. There are a lot of other things that need to be interfaced and integrated in a good, sound public education these days.

"Conn will ensure success for all students." Underlined "all students." Not just the bright students, not just the students that come from parents who have money, not just from parents who have the time to interface and work with the schools, but all students.

Now, let me share with you why they say that and how they get to that point, because I think it is important to as we emphasize that this innovative public school focuses on achieving for all their students and how they do it.

To achieve these goals, Conn has set out the following expectations for their

students and, yes, for their staff and for the parents:

"Motivational global studies will accomplish a narrowing of the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students." This is true not only in my State, it is not just true in Conn, it is true in every school in this country. How do we narrow that gap between those students who are achieving at a high level and those who are not and how do we make sure they all achieve at a much higher level because we need all of them participating in this new economy of the 21st century.

"Cultural diversity will provide opportunities for children to recognize and appreciate the value of cultural differences in their own communities and beyond." Let me tell you why that statement is so important. We have the most diverse population in our public schools today we have had in the history of this republic. Yet there are those who want us to believe that we can educate the same way we have educated historically. That is absolutely not true. We have to recognize the cultural diversities and backgrounds from which our children come, accept those, and then help them achieve at a high level. That may mean that they need more time on task in some areas than others and it may mean that they need smaller class sizes. This Congress is going to be about that, and I will talk about that more in just a moment.

"Technological resources will enable students to communicate with the world around them." Many times when we talk about technology, some of us talk about technology as if it were just a computer. That is not the whole view of the issue. Computers are just one piece of a total mass communication world that we live in that children must have access to in our public schools. If they do not have access to that total view of technology, how in the world can we expect them to walk out of school one day and engage and interface in a world that is changing so rapidly? We talk on this floor of the House about the changing world and talk is awful cheap. It is easy to talk about changing education and making it better. I have often said, money is not the only issue but the last time I checked, without a certain amount of money very little happens. Even though here at the Federal level we only put in about 7 percent of the resources that our public schools use, we can have a tremendous impact if we will encourage, provide leadership, help and be a partner. Because we are a partner. We are not the senior partner but we are a major partner and we ought to be a partner that is about helping rather than throwing impediments anywhere along the way.

"Communication skills will be the key to meaningful connections between students' education and their understanding of individuals, groups and countries." Now, understand when I use this, this is a special school that has access to the Internet and other

things that a lot of schools do not have. Every school should have this. But it gives them a chance to understand what they are about.

"Integrated, project-based learning will ensure active participation and in-depth understanding of global concepts." When we talk about education sometimes, many of us talk about education in the framework of our own background, of how schools were when we were in school. If we have not been in the classroom in the last 10 years and we go in and visit, we would recognize the school, we would recognize the hallways, we might even recognize the classroom, but I will guarantee you if you look at the curriculum and the things that a lot of teachers are doing in these creative classrooms, it would sure be different.

"Integrated project-based learning will ensure active participation and in-depth understanding of global concepts." I want to repeat that, because I think that is important as we move in this world economy. We stand on this floor and we talk about the issues of trade. We talk about the issues of money moving, et cetera. All this is in the perspective of the world that has changed in the last 10 years with global communication.

"Lower student-teacher ratios will encourage more active involvement in the learning process, more developmentally appropriate teaching, differentiation of instruction, and focused applications to improve student performance." The last bullet I read is so important to this whole concept of what we talk about when we talk about total education for every child, so that it is geared to that student, that that student understands what is expected, that teachers have class sizes small enough that they can deal with. In a diverse population that we have when a teacher has to go in the classroom and have 30 students, it is a very, very difficult task when the range is so great with those students.

I have said many times, my wife and I have three lovely children of whom we care very deeply, and I love them dearly. But I would be less than honest if I did not say today, it would be very difficult if we had 30 of them and we were trying to instruct them around the house and to direct traffic. I think that is true in most households. Too many times we ask our teachers to do the impossible task of doing what we could not do, what we would not do, and yet we talk a lot, and I have often said when it comes to education, we all have lots of answers and very few solutions. In the political arena, we need to become better partners. As those partners, we need to be sort of like the managing partner. We are willing to help where we can and push where we need to and be less critical of the children and teachers who I think are working awful hard.

Let me close on Conn Elementary with one other point, and then I am going to yield to one of my colleagues.

This vision is a prescription for excellence for Conn Elementary and really for education in Wake County. I think that would be somewhat true of all the schools in my State of North Carolina. Conn is a richly diverse, inner city magnet school, and they really are laying a foundation for lifelong learning and citizenship for these students. In a situation where in many cases we would say those students could not do it, they are measuring up and they are achieving at very high levels and they are closing the gap between minority and nonminority students. They are doing it because teachers care, students are focused, parents are engaged, and they are also disaggregating data for both minority and nonminority students.

Let me tell you what I mean when I say disaggregating, because so many times we talk about averages, average students. Very few of us are average. We are special in our own way. If you take that data and break it down in individuals and individual groups, pretty soon you will find out which student really needs the help, where you need to give more time for math, where you need to give more time for reading.

□ 1445

All of us learn differently and at different levels, and Conn Elementary is doing that to make sure that every child reaches their full potential. Mr. Speaker, to meet the needs they are making sure that some of these students have smaller class sizes, and they can only do it, my colleagues, because they have some additional money in a partnership with the Federal Government, and the State is putting some extra in it. That is why I say when you say it does not take extra money we are deceiving ourselves and misleading the public. It takes additional dollars.

Mr. Speaker, with that I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN) who really does understand how important it is, how important education is to the future of this country. He is close to it. Not only has he been a fighter here in Congress, but every weekend when he goes home, his wife reminds him.

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from North Carolina for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to share in the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE's) special order because not only am I privileged to have a wife who teaches high school algebra, without her I could not have made it through college algebra, Mr. Speaker. So she tutored me to make sure I can have my gentleman's C, but every weekend when I go home, I try to spend time in our public schools.

Just recently, I was at Stevens Elementary in the Aldine School District. Last Monday, I was actually at Aldine 9th Grade Center, Aldine High School 9th Grade Center, because this week is Texas Public School Week in Texas, and so to recognize the value of public education.

Last Saturday, I was at Burnet Elementary in Houston Independent School District, not necessarily for an education program, although there was students there and their parents, but it was for a Fannie Mae home buyer seminar. So, using the public school facilities also for home buying in an inner-city school in Houston.

Recently, I was at R.P. Harris Elementary and H.I.C. to read to the students and talk about what I do. But this Friday that school will be having their Career Day that I will be there, and also we are hosting a job fair for people in the community.

Public education is working, and all we need to do is go to our districts, to go to those schools and see it happening. You see the success. I like to spend time in my schools because it recharges my batteries for the debates we are having like today on Federal funding for education and things like that, but it also provides a great role model for Members to go in and sit down and read to their students and also to talk about the job we do.

Mr. Speaker, we have quality education in every one of my public schools in my district. And, again, I have lots of different school districts in Houston Harris County, a very urban district, predominantly minority children, both African American and Hispanic, but there is quality education going on, and that is why I want to talk about the Democratic Families First agenda that was just announced today by the President and the Democratic Leader, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT), and Senator DASCHLE where we talk about school modernization and providing Federal tax credit to States and school districts to modernize and renovate 6,000 local public schools. The Houston Independent School District, who recently passed a bond election, a scaled-back bond election, by the way, is providing the local funds.

Now, on the Federal level, we need to try and help because of the deteriorating situation of not just urban schools like I represent, but rural schools, smaller class sizes. Texas now has a law since 1984 that is 20-to-1 for elementary schoolchildren from kindergarten through 4th grade, and that is great. The President announced we would like to see 18-to-1. Of course, that will not help my wife who teaches 30 and 32 children in high school algebra class, but we know that we need to put our resources into elementary schools.

So the Families First agenda, the Democratic agenda, also builds on additional teacher training and recruitment.

My wife told me a story a few weeks ago, and I know the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) can relate to this. She said:

You know how long it took us to get overhead projectors out of the bowling alleys and into the public schools? It took us years. The technology was in

the bowling alleys before we could use them in our public schools. I hope we are not waiting for that long before the computers are really utilized in our public schools.

Teacher training and educational technology, there is so many things that is part of this agenda, and I know we share the same goals. The Federal Government cannot dictate what goes on in our local schools, but we can help. We can provide a little extra help for our school board members, our administrators, our teachers, our parents and the State legislators who provide most of the funding, and we can help to make sure that we pave the way for the 20th century, 21st century, so our children will be prepared to stand here on the floor of the House and want to get their children and their grandchildren prepared for the next century.

I thank the gentleman for asking for this special order and allowing me to participate today.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. I thank the gentleman from Texas, because he is absolutely correct, and the Families First agenda at this time with the educational package in it is just a tremendous piece with the President's initiative for more teachers, for modernizing our school facilities.

Every State has needs, and every State is doing some things to make a difference, and yet at the end of World War II, when our men and women came home from fighting the war that many in history said would end all wars, which it did not, they put their shoulder to the wheel, and they said: We are going to build schools, and we will make sure that children have an opportunity.

We now have an obligation, and I want to yield to my friend, the gentleman from Mississippi's 4th district (Mr. SHOWS), for some comments on what is happening in his area as it relates to this whole education agenda that we are working on.

Mr. SHOWS. Mr. Speaker, what I would like to say, too, as an educator myself that has spent a long time ago, we appreciate the opportunity to speak on behalf of the gentleman from North Carolina's bill. As an educator back in Mississippi back in the 1970s when we had a tremendous problem of overcrowding in schools then and some of the facilities were not what they needed to be, and still today, as I went through the district during the campaign and visited some schools that I thought have been outdated years ago, they are in terrible need.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that a lot of times we look at what we do to create a good environment around a business place where we do build new buildings to increase business, and it increases learning, and the same thing could be said for education.

But, Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for giving me the opportunity to express my support for the efforts to improve the education of America's children. In the past few months in

Mississippi, and especially in my district, we have had several plants that employed thousands of hard-working people in my district shut down, and in rural areas like mine in southern Mississippi a plant closure can devastate an entire community and county.

The international marketplace is here today. A new technology continues to change the face of business and employment opportunities. American jobs continue to migrate across our borders. We cannot stand idly by and let honest, hard-working Americans suffer because we are not preparing them for this reality. We must work together to do whatever it takes to make sure that our young people have the education and training to perform good jobs at competitive wages.

One obvious way to accomplish this is to build new schools that make the most of modern technology available to our students. The Etheridge School Construction Act provides tax credits to help finance school construction bonds. This legislation would provide almost \$30 million in school construction bonds from Mississippi alone, and we can use every bit of it, and we need that help. For children in Mississippi's 4th District this would mean the opportunity to move out of old and over-crowded schools that are in need of repair and to new schools with new technologies in their classrooms. It would mean having classes in actual classrooms and not in temporary trailers.

I feel like this is a bipartisan bill and a cost-effective way to help our States meet their educational needs, and we need to pass this bill quickly. It is for the future of not only Mississippi, but for this great country.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, now to my friend from the 19th District of Illinois (Mr. PHELPS). He understands how important quality education is, how important it is, how the assessment, what growth means and the need for new school buildings. He has been a hard worker since he has been in here in Congress. I had the occasion when our Chief State School Officer worked with his Chief, so I yield to the gentleman from Illinois.

Mr. PHELPS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for the opportunity to participate in this discussion on a very valued issue to all of us, education; and, Mr. Speaker, today I rise to support the Democratic initiatives to improve education for our children through better schools and smaller classrooms.

As a former teacher and a husband of a teacher, I have always believed that the single most important challenge we face as parents and as the citizens of this Nation is the education of our children. I have seen as a teacher and later as a State legislator the problems our schools face and the limitations as States and local school districts struggle to overcome them on a daily basis.

As a teacher, my first year I taught school in Harrisburg, Illinois, Unit 3 District. I walked into a classroom of

42 children. What a challenge. We had them lined up in what we used to call the old cloakroom, as my colleagues know, where you would have students even out of my sight. It was then that I learned to realize that the quality of education is so much compromised when you cannot look that child one on one in the eye and get their undue attention and the respect first because everything after that, not very much can be accomplished without that.

Mr. Speaker, I valued those first years in knowing that, however we invest in education, we can help parents and communities work together to provide better learning environments for our children through school modernization and construction. That is really the key and, of course, more specifically, smaller classrooms, as I alluded to from the problems of a large classroom.

Our commitment today to funding for more teachers will help the local school districts provide a smaller, more enriching learning experience for our kids. It was almost impossible, as many kids that I had that first year and my wife has in high school English class in Eldorado, our hometown now, to really relate to the kids in an individualized way. I believe that it is impossible to have a mentorship, if my colleagues will, for kids. This is how they relate. They get involved with a teacher. If the teacher is allowed to get to know them personally, and I believe that that is a value beyond description, it is hard to put a value on, because I personally feel that some of our problems that we are experiencing throughout the Nation with our kids rebelling in one way or another in the most vicious way is violence, that we see the school shootings, the dropout situation, the lack of attendance. The whole attitude is because many teachers do not get a chance to know those children, know those kids and the problems that they are having in their home life.

In the small rural areas, such as Eldorado, Illinois, a town of 4,000 people, my wife has made it a point to find out what is troubling the child when they seemingly are not caring what is going on, or missing school, or have a different attitude from one day to the next. She has found, to get to the heart of the matter, what is troubling that child. Smaller classrooms will afford us to do this, possibly even avoiding the most extreme expression of violence.

I really believe that. So it goes to the heart of discipline.

I know we talk about quality of instruction in the classroom, but smaller classrooms can be one of the major tools of discipline because most kids are really saying: Give me your attention. And many times their misbehavior is out of getting attention.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. If the gentleman will yield for a moment, because I think he is on to something. Let me raise a question with him because he talks of the 42 students he had when he

started, and I think every teacher in America can identify with the statement he just made. Without dating him, and I will not do that, but he was talking about when he started teaching.

The diversity of the student population in our schools have changed dramatically in recent years, and the home life of so many of our students have changed because we have two-parent households, both are working, or even if it is a single-parent household, and I thought his point as it relates to the children having someone to really identify with, to let that teacher or in that classroom be their friend today as it was years ago when they had some time.

Let me ask this question because I think it is important. As we reduce the class sizes, as we have started to do and we need to continue, and provide for the good learning environment where when one goes to school, if it is the nicest place one goes to that day, that is what it ought to be.

□ 1500

Then certainly that is not only going to help the discipline problems we see that we are spending money on, but more importantly, as the gentleman just alluded to, discipline and achievement go hand-in-hand. We will see achievement go up dramatically.

Mr. PHELPS. The gentleman's expertise is much beyond mine in education, and I value the gentleman's opinion, so he can relate to what I am saying.

But just as one who has had formal experience in a classroom, and coming from a family of educators, I have two brothers that are public school administrators, similar to the gentleman's capacity in his home State before he came here. So I learned from not only them but my own experience.

I can only tell the Members, the way I relate to what we were talking about, mentorship, is in fact a coach's success. Let us take coaches, for example. It is not so much from one coach to the other, that they do not have the key plays, because they are pretty much passed from one school or university to another, but it is the way the coach motivates his team or his or her team to accomplish the end result to win.

That motivation only occurs when the coach takes that student aside and says, hey, how are things going? Do you want to meet me out for a round of golf? Let's go fishing Saturday. Because they can identify where some child may have a lack of attention, and just take that buddy under their wing.

I have seen myself, in my short tenure, in talking to coaches and teachers that have had that individualized partnership, friendship, that has made the difference to kids excelling who may not have had the support at home to begin with, to try to overcome that, or reinforce what is there.

Another matter that really, as a State legislator, I bring here, and I

want to talk more on this later about school infrastructure and our needs there, but it has always astounded me and I am still bewildered why we as a society are so willing to fund the building of prisons, and yet not only hesitant but stubborn to fund building schools.

I guess we react to it; we all want to reduce crime, and get to the heart and the source of crime. We do not want to have fear in our neighborhoods. I think that is why in my area we have risen to the occasion to fund prisons, but at the expense of schools, in many regards, in Illinois, I can attest to that.

To me, if we invest in education, or usually an investment of any nature in the private sector or in our own lives or homes, we expect to benefit, to reap benefits. When we invest in education, I think the benefits from the governmental standpoint of expenses to taxpayers will be less for crime, for prisons, less for welfare, and unemployment will be reduced, to benefit productive society members.

That is what the value of education is. I hope to be part of this 106th Congress, and in solving these problems.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Illinois. He has well stated the foundation that I think that we all can agree with as it relates to improving the educational opportunities for all of our children in this country, to make sure that the 21st century will be bright for all students, and ultimately, as he has indicated, make sure that our social security system is sound, that everyone is productive and working and paying into it, and will make a difference.

Let me touch on a couple of points, and then I want to turn to my good friend, the gentlewoman from Connecticut, for a couple of comments on this educational piece.

I talked earlier about the Conn experience. There are a couple of other points that I would like to make, especially on a school that is in the inner city, they are working hard, they have formed what they call CONNections, advisory committees, where each group has to work together to bring the parents in; or if they happen to be in a foster care home, whomever is responsible for the child, they have a responsibility to come and work with the individual assessment of those teachers, so that every child can get extra care and extra time on those core subjects.

They are working to reduce class sizes, where they are getting more individualized attention and a feeling of belonging on the part of each student. My friend, the gentleman from Illinois, just talked about those advisory groups that are showing up as hard evidence and data on results for children.

I think sometimes we tend to forget that. It is not in isolation. We have to do it altogether. Their assessment measures are working. They are on track on a year to year assessment that has been going on long enough now that this absolutely is working.

They have documented their performance in a systematic way. That has enabled them to show what they are doing.

Let me say that it is happening in a school and in a county that is seeing some of the most rapid growth in student enrollment population in the Nation. As a matter of fact, North Carolina is the fifth fastest growing State in the Nation over the next 10 years, as documented by the U.S. Department of Education, for student enrollment in high school. Wake County alone has added over 30,000 students in the past 14 years, and gained anywhere from 3,500 to 4,500 students every year, this is the size, and larger than some school systems.

When we start talking about building buildings, they have an ongoing project that they have not gotten out of. They are bursting at the seams. They cannot get enough space. We can imagine what that does to each individual school.

Since 1990 alone, Wake County has seen 29.9 percent growth in student population, but every county that touches Wake County in my district has grown over 20 percent in the last 8 years. That is why Congress I think needs to step up this year and follow through on the proposal the President has talked about for providing school construction for our students.

I have a bill that I will be introducing later this week called the Etheridge School Construction Act. We now have 55 sponsors, and I hope to have more before it goes in tomorrow. It will provide for \$7.2 billion in school construction bonds for growing States and localities that are hurting.

Now, some of my colleagues will say, that is not the Federal government's responsibility. I would ask them, what did we decide when we did not have electricity and we did not have telephones? There was a time we did not have canals in this country, and we put in a system in the Federal Government to make sure we had water transportation. Finally we got to the interstate system, thank goodness for Eisenhower, who pushed us into it. There are a lot of things we have gotten into in recent years that we were not in.

I will say to the Members, our soldiers who came home from World War II decided we needed to build some schools. They put their shoulders to the wheel. It is now our responsibility as we move towards the 21st century to make sure that the baby boom echo does not have to be taught in lean-tos and in shacks and in rundown buildings.

We need to build some school buildings to make sure these children have a good place to go to school. They need to have as good an environment to be taught in as my colleague, the gentleman from Illinois, talked about that we are sending our prisoners to. When we talk about sending children to school, and they ride by a \$30 million prison to go to a \$4 million school, they are not very dumb. They can figure

that one out. Our priorities are misdirected.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my colleague, the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO), who is a champion if ever there was one, for education, to share with us some thoughts she has on this subject.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman, and I want to commend my colleague for the leadership role he has taken on the issue of education. It is not just this evening, but it has been since he arrived in the Congress, he has made this a principal part of what his efforts are here. I congratulate him for that.

I am delighted to join with the gentleman. Just on the point he was mentioning, I think it is interesting to note that the gentleman is so right, this is not about the Federal Government getting into the school construction businesses, nor about just bricks and mortar and bells and whistles and newfangled buildings and all of this.

I will just tell Members about my part of the country. I am from the Northeast, from Connecticut. We did a school survey. We found that in my community the age of the school buildings is rather staggering. The average age of the elementary school buildings is 50 years old. More than half of the elementary schools regularly hold classes in areas not designed to be classrooms, including cafeterias, hallways, mobile or temporary rooms, and storage areas. The average class size is 23 students. So that I happen to live in the part of this country where the infrastructure, and whether that is the roads, the bridges, whatever it is, including our schools, are old.

What does that mean in terms of the future? If we just take one small aspect of that, that is technology, we have some buildings where the thickness of the walls is so big and so dense that to wire these schools up so that we can really be connected with the Internet, and put in the kind of computer and advanced technology that our young people need today, is either prohibitive, or there are some places where the computers are stored in boxes in rooms because they do not have the ability to get them wired up.

What are we talking about with school construction? It is modernization, it is providing the kinds of facilities that are going to lend themselves for that future opportunity for our young people.

I am going to use myself. I am old. My kids are computer literate. My grandkids will be computer literate. We have little tots that know more about computers than I probably will ever know. I want to talk about a classroom that I went to this past week.

But the fact of the matter is, what was a textbook to me, to my generation, and the importance of that, is what the computer is to our kids today, so looking at modernizing our schools so we can deal with this new technology is critical.

Now, that having been said, school construction. What we are offering here is not to build the schools, not to say where they are going to get built, not to preempt any local control of this effort. But what we will try to do as a proper role for the Federal Government is to say to the locality, you have to float bonds to be able to modernize or to build.

What we want to do is to provide you with a tax credit. Use the tax code to help to pay the interest on those bonds. Therefore, you can float the bonds, you can get some financial resources to pay the interest, thereby cutting down the costs to local communities and taxpayers and what they have to pay in terms of modernizing or building those classrooms.

It is good for the community, it is good for the tax relief and local property taxes, and we get to where we want to be in modernizing facilities for advancement for our young people. It makes perfect sense. It makes sense to use the tax code in a way that facilitates the direction we want to go in in trying to meet a goal and a value, because education is about values and who we are as a country. Secondly, it is to provide the kinds of tax relief to struggling local communities in this effort.

So this is one of the most logical pieces of legislation that has come along, with the perfect match between local control and Federal government partnership in an effort. No one is suggesting that the Federal Government get into the business of constructing schools.

I just want to make one more point on computers and teacher training, which we allow for in this families first agenda and our budget. I did go into a classroom, and I watched a first-rate teacher who takes every opportunity that she can to avail herself of information and learning herself to be skilled, and then transmitting these kinds of skills to young people today.

As I said, we can provide and we can get involved in getting all of the hardware into these schools, and if we do not have competent and qualified teachers who can teach our youngsters about how to use the machinery, then they are just going to stay in the boxes and it is not going to amount to a hill of beans. It really will not.

So that the training, that we have competent and qualified teachers to train in this area, is critical to where we want to go. In addition to which, it says to parents and says to local taxpayers, we want to make sure we are keeping our kids up to date, that the standards rise, that there is accountability on behalf of the schools and the children and the teachers, so that we make sure that our children are competent and qualified for those opportunities of a new century that we do not know what of, it is going to have so many promises and opportunities for young people. We would be foolish to squander these opportunities.

That is why I am excited about this families first agenda that we have embarked on, with education being at the center of it. I know the gentleman is going to continue to make this battle in the next year and a half, and I look forward to joining that battle with him. I thank the gentleman for letting me participate with him tonight.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Connecticut, because she has been on the forefront of this issue. She understands as much as anyone in this Congress that education, public education for our children, is the one thing that levels the playing field for all people. It makes no difference what their economic or ethnic background is, when they get an educational opportunity, it is very difficult to ever close that door again. I thank the gentlewoman for her time.

Now let me turn to my friend, a new Member of Congress, and yield to the gentlewoman from Nevada (Ms. BERKLEY), from the First District, who has taken on this issue of education again, because she fought for it in her home State before she came here.

Ms. BERKLEY. Yes. I thank the gentleman, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak with him about an issue that I have a great passion for.

I believe that the Democratic agenda, which puts families first, is absolutely pivotal to the success of my district. I would like to tell the Members a little bit about the district that I represent, because in order to understand how important educational issues are to the people of southern Nevada, Members need to know a little bit about the district that I represent.

I have the fastest growing district in the United States. We have the fastest growing school-age population in the United States.

□ 1515

There are 5,000 new residents that come to Las Vegas, Nevada, every single month, and there is no end in sight to the growth. We have to build a school a month in order to accommodate the growth, in order to make sure that our students have a place to go to school. So the issues that we are discussing in our education agenda are absolutely pivotal to the success of our schoolchildren in southern Nevada.

There are certain areas that are of particular importance, and I would like to highlight those. The fact that I do have the fastest growing school age district in the United States and one of the largest school districts in the United States, with 210,000 students going to school in Las Vegas, Nevada, that means that school construction is absolutely necessary in order for us to make sure that our kids have a place that they can go to school.

We need to get them out of the portables, get them out of the trailers and get them into a classroom environment where they can thrive. So the school construction component that

has been proposed by the Democrats is very, very important for our needs in southern Nevada.

Also, the fact that we want to modernize our schools. What is the use of having a belief that we need to have computers in every classroom and connect everybody in the United States to the Information Highway if we have schools that are obsolete and do not have the ability to bring in the technology that is so important? This is especially true for a community like southern Nevada where we have some schools that are a little bit older.

In order to accommodate the technology which is going to take us into the 21st century and that our children absolutely must be trained to be educated on, that is a very, very important issue for us.

Mr. Speaker, another important issue is the hiring of new teachers. Next school session, when our schools open up next September, we are going to be 700 teachers short of the amount that we will need in order to teach the number of students that we have in southern Nevada. So the President's initiative to hire an additional 100,000 teachers, that is very important for southern Nevada and I suspect for many school districts across the United States.

The two perhaps most important issues in my mind are the after-school programs and the summer school programs. For a large number of my school population, they are going home to empty houses. They are latchkey kids, because their parents are working, and we have a working class environment in southern Nevada. So these kids are coming home to empty homes with nobody to help them, nobody to take care of them.

If we can provide after-school programs for these kids, it actually satisfies two needs that we have in southern Nevada. One is that it gives them a wholesome place to come after school, but the second thing is it gives them an opportunity to get additional mentoring so that they can learn the material that they have to learn in order to pass to the next grade.

Mr. Speaker, we are opposed to social promotion, but if we are opposed to social promotion we are going to have to do something to help these kids so that they can, in fact, be promoted with the rest of their class. That is why summer school programs are so important as well.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentlewoman would yield at this point for a moment, let me ask a question. It sounds like Nevada is doing some creative things, and North Carolina has done some of these same things. I assume that they are doing after-school tutoring in some areas right now for those students who need extra help to stay up with the other students, and probably some early morning tutors, too.

Ms. BERKLEY. We are doing some, but not half enough. And if we could

get some help from the Federal Government in order to do that, that would be absolutely wonderful.

Another important thing is, of course, the summer school programs. Because the very students that need the summer school programs are often those who can ill afford them, and if they have to pay for the summer school program then those students who actually need it might not have the opportunity.

Those are the issues that I find very, very important and compelling; and those are the reasons that I came to Congress, in order to make sure that the people of southern Nevada are protected.

Mr. Speaker, if I may have one more minute, the education that I received in southern Nevada was wonderful. It was wonderful for the life that I am leading today. It will be obsolete for the life that my children are leading.

It is important for us as the leaders of this country to make sure that the students that are going through school now will have the tools and the opportunities that they need in order to succeed in the 21st century. We have a golden opportunity in this country to make a difference, make a difference in the lives of millions of children that are crying out for help, crying out for quality education, crying out for a good life.

I, for one, am going to join with the gentleman from North Carolina to do everything I can to make sure that these students are taken care of so that they can take our places in the 21st century and lead this country to a new horizon and new beginning and greater heights.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Nevada. She understates her hard work, because she has worked hard since she has been here. She had a record of support for education before she came, it preceded her, and she is doing an excellent job.

Mr. Speaker, I think the point that the gentlewoman made, that education is no longer a K-12 or K-16 through four years of college or master's or doctorate. It is a lifelong process. All we need to do now is talk about the new technologies and recognize those of us that are rusty with computers have to get up to speed on those computers because most of our children are ahead of us.

The gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO) just talked about it, but the truth is that is the way of life for all of us now, and we have to do a better job.

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, with the help of the gentleman from North Carolina, and hopefully with the help of those across the aisle, we can work together in a bipartisan way to make sure that all of these children in our great country have the same opportunities that the gentleman and I had when we were growing up.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. The point the gentlewoman makes is absolutely correct.

If we think about it, when most of us were growing up, our world was much smaller in the sense that we thought about the competition being maybe the community next door, the county next door, or maybe even the State next door. For our young people today, that is not so. It is the whole world.

We talk about the world having shrunk. It has only shrunk in that time has shrunk. Because if something happens today on the far side of the world, within seconds it is front page news in Washington, D.C., or hometown, U.S.A. This means that for our children and for us as adults, we have to learn to deal with issues differently. That puts an extra burden on our public schools and on our teachers.

When we were talking earlier about the teachers and having training to deal with computers, it really means that the teacher has to be able to integrate their teaching techniques on that computer. Otherwise, the computer is a tool that will not be used.

Ms. BERKLEY. Interestingly enough, I go home every weekend. Last weekend I was home, and I had an opportunity to read. It was Reading Readiness Week, and, of course, in Las Vegas we are working very hard to read to our children and give parents an opportunity to read to our children as well.

I was one of those people who went into the classroom to read to a group of kindergarten students, and I can say that not only were the kindergarten students absolutely superb to read to, but I was particularly impressed with their teachers and the amount of training necessary in order to be able to pass on the skills that these children are going to need.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am very, very excited. When I look at those kindergartners, when I look at my own children, I can only imagine what a magnificent life they have ahead of them. But before they can have any life at all, we need to make sure that they have the tools to prepare them to lead the life that they are going to be leading in the 21st century.

And as the gentleman has so correctly demonstrated in his comments, that technology component is so vital. In order to not only succeed in the 21st century, but merely to survive in the 21st century, they are going to need to have those skills. And if we do not give them to our students while they are in school now, I am afraid they are going to be terribly disadvantaged and unable to compete in the global world that we now live in.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her comments, and she is correct. Education is the key to opportunity in the future. We have worked at it in North Carolina, and she has worked in Nevada, and all of us have to work at it in this country because of the mobility of our population.

For a child in North Carolina today, they may be going to school in Nevada next week or California or New York.

We have to work our system together so we have some parity across the country.

Mr. Speaker, I yield now to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCINTYRE), my colleague from the Seventh District, to share with us some of his thoughts on education.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Mr. Speaker, we know that education is the key to the future of this country. And when I think about the words of Robert H. Jackson, the Supreme Court Associate Justice, who once said that, "Education should be a lifelong process, the formal period serving as a foundation on which life's structure may rest and rise."

We realize when we talk about this foundation and the structure of life we have to ask ourselves what kind of message are we sending to our children? What are they learning now that will make them the leaders of tomorrow?

Mr. Speaker, I think there are three important ingredients that we here in the Congress and we here in the Nation should consider, that it does take the people, the purpose, and the partnership in working together.

First of all, the people. We realize that it is not just up to the educators alone. They need our help and support. But it is also up to the people of the community and the people in government, the people in business, the people in all sectors of society who will come together and provide that positive example of commitment. People who are willing to go and help the teacher, call up a teacher and say, I want to know how I can come help.

And when we decry the lack of role models for our children today and we wonder what are they seeing? Are they just seeing the athletic heroes and the movie stars? But where are the future businesspeople and the future nurses and doctors and the future teachers, the future people that will be working in the communities?

Mr. Speaker, they are out there in the communities now, and our children are looking at us, and they are wondering, are we going to provide some kind of example for them? Are we volunteering our time to go into the schools and help?

I know the last 18 years that I have been spending as a volunteer in the school, I continue to do so even now in Congress when I am home during a recess, to spend time with kids, to volunteer personal time, to show support for our teachers and, most of all, support for our children.

With the people working together, we can share a common purpose, a purpose that instills and inspires in our children the idea that they can become what they dream they might become one day because they see in us an example of coming to them. Why would that person come and spend time in our schools? He is too busy. He is a doctor. Or why would that businessperson take time to come talk to us about marketing?

Mr. Speaker, when we take time to invest ourselves, we set an example that pays more than money could buy.

Third, we put together with that a partnership. We here in Congress are looking at issues affecting school construction. We are looking at issues affecting the reduction of class size. We are looking at issues that will affect private business being able to donate computers and being able to get tax deductions for doing that, much like they can for other charities and other organizations now.

So the question is, will we be willing to work together in that partnership? I know it is a challenge for us here in Congress, but it is a challenge that we are well up to and that we can do on both sides of the aisle.

Mr. Speaker, I know that Robin Cooke once wrote that, "Education is more than a luxury, it is a responsibility that society owes itself." Education is something we cannot just leave up to one group or one organization and expect them to handle it for us. It is an investment that has to come from the heart and from the hands and from the heads of all of us putting ourselves into the educational process to work together to strengthen the foundation of the future of this society.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from North Carolina for his comments, and certainly education is that critical lynchpin that fuels our economy, gives us opportunity, and the reason we are the kind of society we are to reach out and help the people around the world.

Any of us that travel any places know how people admire Americans, and part of it is because we have a system that says everyone who shows up will have an equal opportunity.

Today we have talked about a number of issues of the Family First agenda of education, and one of them being the lynchpin of school construction. Too many times when people want to talk about education, they fail to talk as our colleagues have today and have reminded us, that the teacher is the heart of that issue and the students are why we are there.

But the truth is, if we ask teachers what is most important to them in having the opportunity to teach children, it is not always salary first. Recognizing that certainly they pay the same for food or shelter as we do, but they need a good environment to teach, and children should have a good place to learn.

Also, they need the latest in technology, simply because the young people that leave those classrooms are going to be coming into the workforce. And if anyone wonders why business has stepped up and decided that education is the most important issue on their agenda besides making a profit, all we need to do is look at our public schools. They are going to be employing these young people; and, secondly, they are also going to be their consuming public.

Finally, as we talk about the staff shortage we are going to be facing, we are going to be facing some, we have to recognize if we are going to keep some of these people longer than the years after their retirement, we have to make sure that we change our retirement policies for them and make sure that their employment opportunities are where they ought to be, and they get the ample training to make sure that they can deal with our young people.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from North Carolina for a comment.

□ 1530

Mr. MCINTYRE. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to say two other things briefly. We in the Congress can also support our local school districts where we have military bases. As a member of the Committee on Armed Services, I hope that we will challenge ourselves to support impact aid for direct appropriations to school districts with military children.

Secondly, I hope all of my colleagues will do something that we did, and that is host an education summit in your district. I have held two over the last 2 years. We even had the U.S. Secretary of Education come down. Listen to the parents and the children themselves talk about their needs, and that way we will know that what we are doing is making a difference back home.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, let me close by saying thank you for this opportunity to share with you, with our colleagues and with the American people hopefully an issue that is so critical to the future of this country, educating our young people, providing a rich opportunity for each one of them, making sure that we have teachers in front of those classrooms who are well trained, who are well equipped, and they have an environment in which to teach effectively, and for children to have a place to learn the way they should learn in this place we call America for the 21st century.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 707, DISASTER MITIGATION AND COST REDUCTION ACT OF 1999

Mr. DREIER (during the Special Order of Mr. COBURN), from the Committee on Rules submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 106-41) on the resolution (H. Res. 91) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 707) to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to authorize a program for predisaster mitigation, to streamline the administration of disaster relief, to control the Federal costs of disaster assistance, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

SURPLUS SHOULD GO TO SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. Speaker, I found the previous hour very enlightening. Many of the things that I heard I absolutely agree with.

But the subject I came to talk about today is something that oftentimes is overlooked by the American public, and that is the fact that one hears in the press and one hears on this floor all the time that we have a surplus, that there is a surplus of money in the Federal Government today. I am here to tell my colleagues that that is not true. There is not a surplus in the Federal Government today. In fact, the monies that are shown in surplus actually belong to the Social Security system, the retirement system.

What I have before me is a graph that shows my colleagues actually what is happening right now and what is projected to happen with Social Security monies. This chart, my colleagues will see, is from the Social Security Trustee's report, and it was issued this last year.

If my colleagues will notice, what they see is somewhere around \$70 billion to \$75 billion per year actual more money coming in to the Social Security system than we are paying out. That is, everybody that is working in this country is paying a FICA tax, and everybody that they work for is paying a portion of that FICA tax that comes to the Federal Government. This last year, it was about \$480 billion that everyone who worked in this country paid in.

When you look at this graph, what actually happened is we paid out somewhat less than that to the seniors who are presently on Social Security. What we have before us in Washington today is a shell game.

How do we confuse people about what is going on with Social Security? When I talk to seniors in my district, as a matter of fact, when I talk to seniors anywhere, I have not found anybody that wants that money spent for anything except Social Security.

We continue to play a shell game by not being truthful with the American public. What one will see is, when we get to the year 2013, this surplus of money that is paid in versus the money that is paid out on Social Security starts running a deficit.

As we can see, with the baby boomers, of which I am one, by the year 2030, the Federal Government is going to have to come up with some \$750 billion a year to fund the Social Security program.

All right. So we have a problem that is coming to us. The first thing I was taught by my father as a young boy is that a half truth is a whole lie. The half truth is that there is a surplus. Yeah, there is more money in Washington than what we are spending out. But