

blocked the legislation for years now, has to recognize that the American people are rightly demanding that their elected leaders give them a fair chance at getting decent health care.

There are 47-some million Americans without health care. That is a tragedy and an embarrassment for this great Nation, but the fact the people who pay their premiums and expect to get care when they are ill, or their loved ones are in danger, end up fighting the bureaucracy of these large corporations with their hands tied behind them and virtually no rights, which is an outrage.

This House and the Senate need to come together and pass a real bill that gives citizens the right to protect themselves in these medical emergencies.

□

PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

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

Mr. ROMERO-BARCELO. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning with a hopeful heart. We return to Congress at the dawn of the millennium, and we face many challenges and opportunities. I wish to remind our colleagues that during the last session, the House approved legislation that greatly impacts Americans and assures their access to health care, but today, 4 months after the Patients' Bill of Rights was approved, we are still waiting for action.

We cannot allow any more delays that place the health of Americans at risk. Millions of American families suffer from managed care decisions made by HMO bureaucrats that are based on profits and not medical need. We must return medical decisions back to where they belong, to doctors and patients.

I urge conferees to produce a strong bill that will help families and give patients the right to make health and life decisions together with their doctors and not subject to the decisions of insurance bureaucrats.

□

WELCOME BACK TO OUR GREAT CITY

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

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor to welcome back Members. Welcome back to the city that is still on the rise, about to report another surplus. Welcome back to the city that has been substantially helped by this Congress. Welcome back to a city whose improvements could be seen as one comes to the House this morning because the streets were, of course, cleared. The city now has the funds and the wherewithal to act like a city and do what cities do well.

I am very pleased that the Congress passed my \$5,000 home-buyer credit because that has helped us to get more

people in this city. We still need a couple hundred thousand more. And I am going to be coming to talk about that with bills this term, but I want to say for the people who live in this city that we are very pleased that Congress is back.

I want Members to know that if they have a problem, and inevitably even with a government in good working order there will be problems, I hope they will come to their Congresswoman while they are away from their districts, because that turns out to be me. I will be sending a letter to Members about how to do that and how they can maneuver their way through problems with the District government. Again, welcome home.

□

COMMUNICATION FROM RICHARD A. GEPHARDT, DEMOCRATIC LEADER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD) laid before the House the following communication from RICHARD A. GEPHARDT, Democratic Leader:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
OFFICE OF THE DEMOCRATIC LEADER,
Washington, DC, February 1, 2000.

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to Section 602(b) of the Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000 (Public Law 106-120), I hereby appoint the following member to the National Commission for the Review of the National Reconnaissance Office:

Mr. Dicks, WA.

Yours very truly,

RICHARD A. GEPHARDT.

□

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair announces that he will postpone further proceedings today on each motion to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Any recorded votes on postponed questions will be taken up later.

□

HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 409) honoring the contributions of Catholic schools.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 409

Whereas America's Catholic schools are internationally acclaimed for their academic excellence, but provide students more than a superior scholastic education;

Whereas Catholic schools ensure a broad, values-added education emphasizing the life-long development of moral, intellectual, physical, and social values in America's young people;

Whereas the total Catholic school student enrollment for the 1998-1999 academic year was 2,646,844, the total number of Catholic schools is 8,217, and the student-teacher ratio is less than 17 to 1;

Whereas Catholic schools provide more than \$17,200,000,000 a year in savings to the Nation based on the average public school per pupil cost;

Whereas Catholic schools teach a diverse group of students and over 25 percent of school children enrolled in Catholic schools are minorities;

Whereas the graduation rate of Catholic school students is 95 percent, only 3 percent of Catholic high school students drop out of school, and 83 percent of Catholic high school graduates go on to college;

Whereas Catholic schools produce students strongly dedicated to their faith, values, families, and communities by providing an intellectually stimulating environment rich in spiritual, character, and moral development; and

Whereas in the 1972 pastoral message concerning Catholic education, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops stated, "Education is one of the most important ways by which the Church fulfills its commitment to the dignity of the person and building of community. Community is central to education ministry, both as a necessary condition and an ardently desired goal. The educational efforts of the Church, therefore, must be directed to forming persons-in-community; for the education of the individual Christian is important not only to his solitary destiny, but also the destinies of the many communities in which he lives": Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) supports the goals of Catholic Schools Week, an event sponsored by the National Catholic Educational Association and the United States Catholic Conference and established to recognize the vital contributions of America's thousands of Catholic elementary and secondary schools; and

(2) congratulates Catholic schools, students, parents, and teachers across the Nation for their ongoing contributions to education, and for the key role they play in promoting and ensuring a brighter, stronger future for this Nation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER).

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, America's Catholic schools are internationally acclaimed for their academic excellence. They also provide students more than a superior scholastic education. Catholic schools ensure a broad values-added education, emphasizing the life-long development of moral, intellectual, fiscal, and social values in America's young people. The total Catholic school student enrollment for 1998 and 1999 was 2,646,844. The total number of Catholic schools is 8,217, and the student/teacher ratio in those institutions is less than 17-to-1.

Catholic schools provide more than \$17 billion a year in savings to the Nation based on the average school per pupil cost.

Catholic schools teach a diverse group of students and over 25 percent of school children enrolled in Catholic schools are minority students. The graduation rate of Catholic schools is

95 percent. Only 3 percent of Catholic high school students drop out of school and 83 percent of Catholic high school graduates go on to college.

Catholic schools produce students strongly dedicated to their faith, their values, their families and communities by providing an intellectually stimulating environment rich in spiritual character and moral development.

In 1972, a pastoral message was adopted by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and it stated the following and I quote for the Chamber, education is one of the most important ways by which the church fulfills its commitment to the dignity of the person and building of community. Community is central to education ministry, both as a necessary condition and an ardently desired goal. The educational efforts of the church, therefore, must be directed to forming persons and community, for the education of the individual Christian is important not only for his solitary destiny but also for the destinies of the many communities in which he lives.

It is on that basis, Mr. Speaker, that this resolution recognizes Catholic schools and Catholic Schools Week. This is an event sponsored by the National Catholic Education Association, which is, by the way, the largest private organization of professional teachers in the world. It is also sponsored by the United States Catholic Conference and established to recognize the vital contributions of America's thousands of Catholic elementary and secondary schools.

So we here congratulate today Catholic schools, their students, their parents, teachers across the country, for their ongoing contributions to education and for the key role that they play in promoting and ensuring a brighter and stronger future for this Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution. Mr. Speaker, today's resolution recognizes the significant and important contributions of Catholic schools. Mr. Speaker, I myself attended Catholic schools. I received a high quality education from these schools and have benefited greatly. Also, children all across America have benefited from a Catholic education. Catholic education's place in America and our educational commitment is strong and dynamic.

Fortunately, the truly great aspect of the American educational opportunity is its diversity. We have educational systems that can provide anyone in any city, in any State, with the opportunity to succeed. This recipe for success certainly includes our Catholic schools, schools with other religious focuses, nonreligious private schools, along with our great public schools. It is this variety, Mr. Speaker, this diversity, that truly makes American edu-

cation powerful and makes American education successful in its mission.

Mr. Speaker, today we are recognizing the educational and societal contributions that Catholic schools make to our Nation. We must recognize the importance and value that all parts of our educational structure have in our lives and the lives of our children.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Mrs. WILSON).

Mrs. WILSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support this resolution with respect to Catholic education, but to also share with my colleagues some of the history of Catholic schools in America, and particularly Catholic schools in the southwest.

In 1598, Juan de Onate came up the Rio Grande, and he included eight Franciscan friars in his expedition. They reached the east bank of the Rio Grande River near its confluence with the Chama River, close to the present site of Espanola and established a permanent settlement. That is over 400 years ago, before Jamestown became Jamestown and the Catholic church was in the southwest.

The friars began teaching to the pueblos and mostly other children were taught at home for the first 100 years or so but in the 1800s, the Spanish government, cooperating with the Catholic church, began to establish schools in the territory of New Mexico. In 1850, the Bishop of Santa Fe, Juan Baptiste Lame, began to expand Catholic schools in New Mexico and brought the Sisters of Loretto to Santa Fe and the Christian Brothers came shortly thereafter to establish a school which still exists, Saint Mike's. The importance of these institutions and the history of New Mexico cannot be underestimated. Twenty percent of the people who participate in the constitutional convention in 1910 that established the Constitution for the State of New Mexico were graduates of Saint Mike's High School.

These two institutions, the Sisters of Loretto and the Christian Brothers began a long tradition of Catholic schools in New Mexico as they expanded many more schools throughout the territory.

It was only 1891 when New Mexico started establishing a system of public schools, and even then Catholic schools retained their importance. Four of the first teaching certificates issued in Albuquerque, my home, under this new public school law, were to Sisters of Charity. That was 300 years after the Catholic church began educating new Mexicans. Today there are five Catholic high schools in New Mexico, 29 elementary schools. To put that in context, there are a little less than 800 public schools in the entire State of New Mexico.

□ 1130

The great thing is how many kids go on. They graduate from Catholic high

schools. In my hometown, Albuquerque, St. Pious High School has a graduation rate of 100 percent, and between 95 and 100 percent of those kids go on to college. They do a great job. They have impacted our history and our culture and our life, and we thank them very much for it.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KLECZKA).

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, let me thank my colleague, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE), for yielding time to me.

Like the gentleman from Michigan, I also am a product of the Catholic schools, having attended St. Helen's Grade School, taught by the good Felician Sisters, and then on to high school, attending Don Bosco High School, which was taught by the Brothers of Mary.

So, I rise to support this resolution, but I would like to further the congratulatory portion of the resolution by including all the Catholic clergy in the country and all the good sisters who devoted their lives to teaching young students in the Catholic schools.

I extend this honor to the Catholic clergy, and wish that the Republican leadership would have done the same, when they had their chance to honor a Catholic clergyman by selecting the first choice of the bipartisan Chaplain Selection Committee, a Catholic priest, Father Tim O'Brien, who was passed over.

In checking back with the Committee on Education and the Workforce and with the Catholic Conference, I am told that this is the first time the House of Representatives has ever brought to the floor a resolution specifically congratulating Catholic schools.

I guess one could be suspicious of the timing. Here we are in the second session of the Congress, and one of the first items brought forward is a resolution congratulating Catholic schools. This naturally will make Catholics around the country very happy.

However, one could ask, why is this being done? We have had Catholic School Week celebrated in this country for years and years. One could ask, is this a way that some can clear their conscience? Is this resolution before us because maybe it is an attempt to repair some of the damage done to the Catholic vote in this country?

Mr. Speaker, I make a prediction. I would say after the debate on this resolution, a roll call vote will be requested. And later this afternoon when the vote is called, my Republican colleagues will stream to the floor and cast an aye vote for the resolution to show the entire world how pro-Catholic they are.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that same level of pro-Catholicism exists when the House later this month has before it the appointment of a chaplain for the House of Representatives, and when we will have the opportunity at that time

to vote on naming the first Catholic priest in the history of this country to be chaplain of the United States House of Representatives.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. Mr. Speaker, I would respond to some of the comments that were made by the previous speaker.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the timing of this resolution, it is unfair, wholly unfair, to suggest that the Council of Catholic Bishops and the Catholic Educators Association somehow planned Catholic Education Week, this week, to correspond with the second issue that the gentleman spoke of.

It is certainly not the case. Catholic Schools Week is an annual event, and one this Congress has recognized in the past and participated in events. I have been part of those myself in years past.

Secondly, the gentleman asked, why is this resolution being introduced? This resolution was introduced because I wanted to introduce it. As a sponsor, I thought it was important. I am one who represents a district where a great many of my constituents educate their children in Catholic schools. They are thriving institutions. They provide a wonderful service, not only to the children who learn in those schools, but to the community at large.

I would submit that, from a cultural perspective, our Catholic schools have contributed greatly to our Nation, and it is right and it is fitting for this Congress and for this body to recognize their contributions to the country.

Fortunately, most children who are in Catholic schools today are learning and they are hopefully not observing today's proceedings, because how confusing it must be for them to observe Members of their Congress confusing an issue that is about those children and ought to be focused exclusively on those children and the great contributions of their teachers and administrators and those who have provided professional support for those kids. That is what this resolution is about. That is where our focus ought to remain.

I find it once again troubling and unfortunate that others would try to drag in secondary issues, other issues that are important to the Congress that will in due time be resolved by this Congress in an appropriate setting.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. ROEMER).

(Mr. ROEMER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROEMER. Mr. Speaker, first of all, as a Catholic, as a product of Catholic schools, including the University of Notre Dame in my district, someone educated by some of the Diocesan, some of the Holy Cross and Jesuits orders, I am very proud as an original cosponsor to rise in support of this resolution.

The success of the Catholic schools across the country and particularly in

my home district makes me very proud. That is why I am a proud original cosponsor of this legislation.

The Catholic schools, Mr. Speaker, are traditionally very strong academically, with very good curricula. They have a very good parental involvement and they have few disciplinary problems. Catholic schools, Mr. Speaker, can often teach students not only the importance of academic achievements, but also provide them with the important perspective of life that promotes social justice and responsibility and social service and love and respect of one's neighbor. Catholic schools also have considerable ethnic and racial diversity.

We have also seen, Mr. Speaker, and I think it is very important to point this out, that there is about a 95 percent graduation rate from our Catholic schools, and about 83 percent of those students go on to college. I think it is important for us to look at why this is so. We have very many great public schools, but we have a real pattern here in our Catholic schools. We need to understand why this is.

Dr. Maureen Hallanan, with the Institute of Educational Initiatives at the University of Notre Dame, is working to do precisely this. She is conducting a comparative analysis of public and nonpublic schools and their effects on student achievement. This research will help identify the characteristics of those schools that successfully promote student achievement, especially, especially targeted for at-risk students. These would be important considerations for us to better understand.

So I hope that all my colleagues will join me in supporting this valuable research and supporting this resolution.

With respect to the comments that my good friend, the gentleman from Wisconsin, made, I think it is fair to bring up the situation of the Catholic chaplain as we consider and debate and talk about Catholic education and the importance of that Catholic education in America today.

Mr. Speaker, I think, sadly, it was a missed opportunity. I think Reverend Wright surely could and would make a very good chaplain here, and I have the highest respect for him. I certainly think the process probably could have been much fairer. I think basically it is a missed opportunity to be more inclusive. Mr. Speaker, I think it is generally a missed opportunity to be more inclusive.

Secondly, I think we could have reached out and shown the Catholic community throughout the country we embrace their diversity, and for the first time in the history of this Congress have a Catholic chaplain.

Thirdly, we have seen, through the centuries in this country in politics with Al Smith and John Kennedy, through the Ku Klux Klan, that we have had prejudice against the Catholics. This was an opportunity in this new century to show that we have

overcome much of that prejudice. It is a missed opportunity, and I hope that it will not happen in the future.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WELDON).

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me, and I rise in strong support of this resolution.

I can speak on this issue from personal experience. I have several people on my staff who are graduates of Catholic schools, including several who went through Catholic elementary school, high school, and college.

As well, I can also speak that my father was a graduate of Catholic schools, and my sister went to Catholic school as well. My parents actually wanted to send myself and my two sisters, younger sisters, to Catholic school, but like so many working class families, they could not afford it.

That is why I feel so strongly that we in this Congress should be doing everything we can to enable parents, working class parents, to have the ability to choose the educational environment for their kids that they would like, a choice that unfortunately today is primarily reserved for wealthy people and people who end up having to sacrifice a great deal. I know my parents sacrificed to send my sisters, and I have met many people who sacrificed a great deal to send their children to Catholic schools.

Why do they do that? Children who go to Catholic schools, they are much more likely, 95 percent of them graduate. There is a higher percentage of them who get into college. As well, there is a lower incidence of drug abuse. There are just so many amazing things that the Catholic schools have been able to do.

What is most amazing is that they actually do it with less money. They have demonstrated very clearly that they can do a better job with less, and that is why we in the Congress should be doing everything we can to encourage Catholic education in America for those who would choose to send their children there.

Most importantly, we should be encouraging school choice so that not just wealthy people can choose where they send their kids to go to school, and people are not forced to make incredible sacrifices, but that every American, working class, poor, would have the ability to send their child to the school of their choice.

Yes, if we had an educational system in America that was like that, I believe millions more would choose Catholic education, because Catholic education has demonstrated clearly in that marketplace that they can do more with less. They can produce kids that are better equipped to go out in the world and be productive citizens.

Therefore, I am extremely pleased to be able to rise and speak in support of this resolution. I encourage all my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Ms. ESHOO).

Ms. ESHOO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this resolution. I think it is a very important one. Certainly the Catholic schools of our great Nation have shaped and formed so many fine citizens.

I am a product of Catholic schools. I am proud to have paid my taxes for the public schools, and yet educated my children at Catholic schools as well. My daughter and son-in-law today are part of the faculty, high school faculty, in California at a very prestigious Catholic institution. Many of us I think have compared notes with one another talking about how the nuns shaped us, and it is them that we salute today. There are so many who have gone before us that we want to recognize when we recognize Catholic education in the United States.

It is really a real tribute to the Framers of the Constitution that we have the separation of church and State, and yet we recognize that we are one Nation under God, and that there is room in this country for private education and religious education.

It is my understanding that this is I think the very first time that the House of Representatives is entertaining a resolution honoring Catholic schools. I am grateful for that, and I salute that.

As a Member of the House Chaplain Search Committee, I would like to also say that the House and its leadership have the opportunity to recognize and to accept by the leadership for the first time in the history of our Nation a Catholic chaplain. Unfortunately, that has not happened. There are questions surrounding that, but we did miss a bipartisan opportunity and the opportunity to make history.

So while we recognize Catholic schools today, I am sorry that we have missed that opportunity. Mr. Speaker, I thank the sponsors of this important resolution.

□ 1045

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I have other speakers who are intending to be here who are not here now, so I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. REYES).

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I also rise in strong support of this resolution this morning. It is also my understanding that this is the first time that such a resolution has come before the House.

I was privileged and honored to have been at a function last Saturday night where we recognized the supporters of Catholic education for the El Paso area. It is important to note, and I agree and want to associate myself

with the comments of all of the comments this morning in extolling the virtues of Catholic education.

Mr. Speaker, I should say that, although I am a product of public schools, I deeply appreciate the value of a Catholic education, especially in a community like El Paso which services predominantly 80 percent of the Hispanics in that area.

I want to congratulate Bishop Armando Ochoa for the great job that they are doing. In El Paso there are 13 schools with 4,600 students employing about 300 educators. The oldest, which was honored on Saturday night, is Our Lady of Mount Carmel, which is celebrating its 81st year. The Father Yermo School is celebrating its 40th year in education.

I think it is important that we understand that the products of Catholic education are serving throughout the country in different capacities, both in private and public service. The superintendent of the Diocese of Catholic Schools is Sister Elizabeth Schwartz and she, with some degree of regret, did mention to me about the issue in terms of having missed an opportunity to select a Catholic for the chaplain.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this important issue.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate all the speakers today who have articulately spoken about the value and benefit of Catholic education and the contributions Catholic schools have made throughout the history of our country, right up to today and also that which we anticipate beyond.

There are a number of interesting statistics that I would like to remind the body about. First of all, just in terms of faith, I am Catholic and was educated in a Catholic high school in Cincinnati, Ohio, Moeller High School, and also Catholic University. It was my observation while I was there that clearly the majority of students who I attended school with were Catholic, but we had a great number of students from a wide variety of different Christian and non-Christian faiths who attended our school as well.

Almost 11.5 percent of Catholic elementary school students are from other faith backgrounds throughout the country. In some inner-city schools, the majority of students are non-Catholic. I think it speaks to the mission of Catholic educators to reach out to all students and provide academic and spiritual-based services to all those who wish to achieve a superior education in many settings throughout the United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, it is a remarkable accomplishment that the schools have achieved, and one worth noting today. As the gentleman from Florida mentioned a little earlier in terms of cost, the average tuition for children in a parish school setting is approximately

\$1,500 annually. Eighty-two percent of schools have some sort of tuition assistance. Over 60 percent of Catholic schools have a tuition scale for children from other parishes or other non-Catholic children. Over 80 percent of schools have some form of tuition assistance that is passed on to students that helps those students attend and achieve.

The average per pupil cost is \$2,414 and 87 percent of the schools receive other subsidies from within the Catholic church and other Catholic endowments.

Based on the projected per pupil costs to educate a child in government-owned institutions during the most recent year that statistics are available, 1996 through 1997, it cost approximately \$6,600 across the country to educate children. Parents of Catholic elementary school students provided a gift to local, State, and Federal governments of over \$15 billion on that basis when we take into account the cost of educating those children in government-owned institutions, had those children had government schools as their only option; the cost of those entities would have been paid, if all Catholic elementary school attendees had attended those public schools.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the teachers themselves. The teachers in Catholic schools are largely organized under the National Catholic Educational Association. That represents most of the U.S. Catholic elementary schools through the Department of Education.

The organization is a professional organization. As I mentioned earlier, it is the largest private professional educational organization in the world.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KLECZKA).

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER). When he was speaking and basically chastising me for introducing the entire chaplain issue, I asked him to yield for one question. That question was: Where was this resolution last year? Where was the resolution the year before?

Mr. Speaker, this is the first time ever that I can find where we have had a resolution praising the Catholic schools of the country. Maybe one could say, and I agree, that it is about time we did so. However, we have to know the background.

There was a bipartisan chaplain selection committee appointed, nine Democrats, nine Republicans, who went on a very exhaustive search, over 35 candidates, to choose a new chaplain of the House. After their voting was completed, and I do not really understand the point system, but the person who received the highest number of votes for chaplain was Father Tim O'Brien, a Catholic priest who received 14. The next received 10.5 the third received 9.5.

The third one, the minister who received 9.5 points, was the one selected by the Speaker of the House and Majority Leader to be the next chaplain. We have not taken that issue up yet. That is coming up, I believe, in a couple of weeks.

So some of my colleagues have indicated that we have missed an opportunity in the House. No, that opportunity has not come before the House. I think we can right the wrong of the leadership in passing over Father Tim O'Brien, a Catholic priest.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). The gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KLECZKA) will have to yield for that.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Will the gentleman yield for a parliamentary inquiry?

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, I yield.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, is it not correct that we are supposed to be debating the resolution before us today?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. That is not a parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, I have to question the timing of this first ever pro-Catholic resolution. And I think it is totally appropriate to bring it to the debate, the fact that if the people who are bringing this resolution forward are so pro-Catholic, let us see if that pro-Catholic feeling continues to exist when the House has before it the issue on electing, for the first time ever in the history of the House, the first Catholic chaplain.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would correct his previous response to remind all Members that debate should be confined to the pending question.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DIAZ-BALART).

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER) for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I did not think I was going to be speaking on this resolution. I have come to the floor because shortly we will be bringing forth a rule on the Taiwan security legislation. But I want to commend the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER) for bringing forth this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I have two sons. One of them is 16, the other has just turned 15. The 15-year-old is in ninth grade; the other one is in the eleventh grade. They both go to Catholic school.

In south Florida, we have a wonderful series of Catholic schools, both primary and secondary, as well as a wonderful Catholic university, Barry University. We are very proud of the education that those schools provide. So I think it is very appropriate that the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER) brought forth this resolution that we are debating it today.

I do not know if it is the first resolution in history, Mr. Speaker. But I am glad that it has been done, because the reality of the matter is that the men and women who work in the Catholic schools throughout the United States deserve our commendation and they deserve our praise and we should go on record as expressing our appreciation for the work they do.

Mr. Speaker, I never cease to learn in this body, because I never thought that this would be a controversial resolution. I think that praising the men and women, both the religious and the lay folks, who work in Catholic schools is something that everybody would wish to do. So this has been an educational experience today that it has become controversial, but that is democracy. Even something like this can become controversial.

The reality of the matter is that I think we should all come together and praise the men and women who form the new generations who are privileged enough. Because all schools, whether they are private or public, are praiseworthy. But, specifically, definitely so are the Catholic schools and that is why I commend the gentleman from Colorado.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I would like to thank the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Nazareth, Michigan, who taught me at Saint Mary's school in Flint, Michigan. I would like to particularly thank Sister M. Hilary who helped change my life.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I too would like to thank those who have spoken today on this important topic in reaching out to congratulate those involved in Catholic schools. The students, the administrators the teachers, all those who make Catholic education possible in the United States.

As a product of Catholic schools, I have learned myself that it is virtually impossible to disconnect the academic construction from the spiritual basis that all children in America need in order to advance and grow spiritually and personally. A great many parents throughout the country, even with the government-owned system that most children are educated in today, manage to instill in their children a strong spiritual basis as their children grow. But for many children, that is just an opportunity that is lost or missed.

The Catholic schools throughout the country provide a remarkable example and a remarkable model of academic institutions that result in thriving, growing, well-educated young men and women throughout the United States of America. And it is fitting for this body to recognize the contributions and accomplishments of Catholic schools today.

This is Catholic Schools Week all week long. There will be events taking

place throughout the country. Our participation here is a symbolic one, but I think an important one as well to let them know that their job is one which is well done, one that is critical and essential to the maintenance of our union and the academic excellence of our graduates and students who are in school today, and that they play a critically important role in the future growth and development of our Nation as a whole.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I ask the committee to consider favorably this resolution and that concludes the balance of my remarks.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this important resolution that honors the contributions of Catholic schools in the United States. I am a product of that school system, I have been privileged to teach in a Catholic school, and my two children currently attend Catholic schools in our hometown of Cincinnati, Ohio.

In Cincinnati, we're very proud of our Catholic school system—one of the largest in the United States with 77 elementary and 16 secondary schools. Students in the system routinely score in the top one-third on nationally standardized tests. 98% graduate from high school. And 96% go on to pursue higher education.

Representatives from Catholic schools from all across the United States are in Washington this week to celebrate National Catholic Schools Week. We welcome them. And we thank them for building an exemplary education system that is based on academic achievement, community involvement, and strong values. Our Catholic schools have set a standard we can all be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support this resolution.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor America's Catholic schools.

It is fitting and appropriate that the Congress consider this legislation today. Our nation's Catholic schools are reputed not only for their academic excellence but also for their contributions to our communities.

Catholic schools—and their faculty, staff, students and families—go above and beyond the call of duty. Children educated in our Catholic institutions benefit from moral and social development along with superior intellectual challenge.

Millions of children attend thousands of Catholic schools every year in our nation. These schools boast diverse student bodies and exceptional success rates. Their graduates are not only skilled, but also devoted to their faith and community.

Right in my own district in Central Orange County, California, Catholic schools teach our children not only the knowledge they will need to succeed in the classroom, but develop the character children will need to thrive in the world.

In its 1972 pastoral message concerning Catholic education, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops stated, "Education is one of the most important ways by which the Church fulfills its commitment to the dignity of the person and building of community."

The Catholic school system has made invaluable contributions to our nation. Today I congratulate Catholic schools for their success and their continued role in promoting and securing a bright, strong future for our nation.

Mr. SWEENEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to voice my strong support for House Resolution 409, honoring the contributions of Catholic Schools. Over two and a half million students are currently enrolled at 8,217 Catholic schools across the country.

This week, as "Catholic Schools Week", provides us an important opportunity to recognize the outstanding performance of Catholic schools in the education of America's youth. I believe their successes truly hold some of the keys to improving our education system nationwide.

Catholic elementary and secondary school students consistently display superior results on national and science academic achievement tests. Catholic schools maintain a phenomenal graduation rate of 95%, compared to 66% for public schools. More importantly, Catholic schools provide their students with a strong sense of their faith, family and community. They provide a rich, intellectually stimulating environment in which today's youth learn the skills required to be tomorrow's leaders.

These schools teach the value of self discipline, tolerance and respect for one another. Catholic schools open their classrooms to economically and culturally diverse students, giving young people of all backgrounds the opportunity to succeed.

I also salute the Catholic school teachers who dedicate themselves to the teaching profession and take great pride in the success of their students.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the sponsors of this resolution, and appreciate the opportunity to honor the Catholic schools of our nation. I believe these schools are a model for success in the education of our youth. I urge my colleagues to support this important resolution.

Mr. MCINTOSH. Mr. Speaker, today Congress passed a resolution congratulating America's Catholic schools, the students, the teachers, and especially the parents, who make many sacrifices to provide their children the education offered in Catholic schools. The outstanding contributions of Catholic schools to our Nation are worthy of celebrating, and as a co-sponsor of that resolution I offer heartfelt congratulations to all who participate in the work of Catholic education. I am especially proud of Catholic schools in Indiana which provide a great education to more than 62,000 children.

This week we celebrate the 26th annual Catholic Schools Week and commemorate the important role Catholic elementary and secondary schools across the country play in providing a values-added education for America's young people. We are proud of their educational network, emphasizing intellectual, spiritual, moral, and social values in their students.

Studies have shown that Catholic schools succeed because they employ a system that works: Site-based management; discipline and virtue; high academic standards, and parental involvement. These qualities contribute to a caring, well-ordered, safe and stimulating environment where children learn more than just academics. They learn individual responsibility, respect, moral conduct, and hard work.

Catholic schools work because they are entirely voluntary for both students and teachers. If students are unhappy, they may leave. Teachers are not tenured. Parents who sacrifice to send their children to school remain involved.

Cicero once said, "There are more men ennobled by study than by nature." However, if we are to ennoble the next generation, we must begin now by inducing positive changes in our education system so more children may have the opportunity to have the rich experience Catholic schools offer. We must introduce more examples of education excellence into the community, to kindle competition and bring excellence to all learning institutions public and private.

At the K-12 level, Indiana spends an average of \$5,666 per student per year. Yet performance declines as the student progresses through the public school system.

For instance, in 1996, Indiana's 4th graders took the National Assessment of Education Progress math exam. They placed 4th out of 43 states that participated in the exam. Which is very good. However, Indiana's 8th graders ranked only 17th out of 43 states. On Math Advanced Placement exams, Indiana ranked last in comparison to other states and the District of Columbia in terms of the percentage of students who scored a 3 or higher out of 5. For Indiana high school students who are college-bound, their SAT scores are about 30 points below the national average. 46th in the nation.

We need to rethink our whole approach to elementary and secondary education. We need to look to examples of education systems which achieve great results so that we can make systemic changes. We also need to provide ways to help parents take advantage of the choices that exist.

Barbara is African-American and lives in inner city Indianapolis. She struggles to raise three boys. And Barbara has decided to become a leader in her community. She is president of a new grassroots organization called FORCE—short for Families Organized for Real Choice in Education.

A few years ago her son, Alphonso, had an opportunity to escape the inner city school system that was failing him. Through a private scholarship program started by Pat Rooney at Golden Rule Insurance Company, Alphonso has been able to attend Holy Cross Catholic School.

It was opportunity that enabled Alphonso to go to a better school. But it was Alphonso's own intellectual abilities and hard work that put him on the honor roll. His own athletic abilities that make him stand out on the football team. And his own leadership abilities that led his classmates to elect Alphonso to the student council.

I could tell you about studies that show the great academic achievements made by inner-city youth in Catholic schools. But Alphonso's success story speaks for itself. His real-life experience tells us so much more than mere statistics ever could. Catholic schools shine just a little brighter when more disadvantaged young people like Alphonso make the grade. The author Victor Hugo once wrote, "There is one thing stronger than all the armies in the world, and that is an idea whose time has come." Excellence in education is the course of the future.

We will not let our children—our future—slip through the cracks. Our families will rebuild our education system so that our children grow up with the knowledge and the confidence to build a new day for our nation.

Mr. LARSON. I rise today to acknowledge the contributions made by Catholic schools,

which build strong educational and moral foundations for our students.

As a former student of St. Rose's School in East Hartford, Connecticut, I would like to praise the outstanding efforts of the Sisters of Notre Dame for providing students with strong academic and moral values. My Catholic school education has given me a valuable framework for life, and has enabled me to achieve personal and professional goals.

Our nation's Catholic schools provide excellent opportunities for learning. With over 8,000 schools and current matriculating classes of greater than 2.6 million students (of which one-in-four are minorities), Catholic schools provide educational opportunities to a broad cross-section of our society. These schools encourage greater levels of student-teacher interaction through their small class-size ratio. As a result, Catholic school students achieve a graduation rate of 95%, while 83% continue on to a college education. This education model has been internationally acclaimed for its stellar academic reputation.

As we celebrate Catholic School Week, I am proud that these schools will continue to nurture students dedicated to their faith, to their values, to their communities and to their families. These schools develop the leaders of tomorrow with effective leadership and character. I am, therefore, proud to support H. Res. 409.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 409.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

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□ 1200

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on House Resolution 409.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Colorado?

There was no objection.

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TAIWAN SECURITY ENHANCEMENT ACT

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 408 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 408

Resolved, That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order without intervention of any point of order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 1838) to assist in the enhancement of the security of Taiwan, and for other purposes. The bill shall be considered as read for amendment. The amendment