

Why should my South Georgia school districts be penalized? They have raised taxes locally. They have done the right thing. They have been responsible. They built new school systems. Why should they be penalized to subsidize Chicago and New York City school systems. It is ridiculous.

Education has always been a State and local priority. We do not need to federalize it and have Uncle Sam in the Department of Education knowing best.

#### EDUCATION

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, this education problem is not only a big city problem in spite of the comments of the previous speaker. Yesterday, the National Education Association estimated the country's construction needs at over \$300 billion. This includes basic necessities, a desk in a classroom rather than in a broom closet, plumbing that works, computers capable of reaching the Internet.

My State, the State of Ohio, rural, urban, suburban, is home to one of the greatest needs, ranked 49th in the country for infrastructure, in spite of local effort and State effort. Ohio faces a \$25 billion bill to provide children a safe and healthy learning environment.

The State recently committed to spending \$10 billion over 26 years to do just that. Unfortunately, that is just not enough. In my district, Elyria High School is over 70 years old and does not qualify for any State funds. The children of Elyria, as are other places across the country, simply cannot wait any longer. If we work together, they will not have to.

I am cosponsor of the America's Better Classroom Act by providing zero-interest bonds, it would leverage local and Federal resources to begin to take care of this national disgrace.

Only a unified front can fix this problems. I urge my colleagues to support it.

#### TAX FREEDOM DAY

(Mr. HEFLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, Americans love to celebrate landmarks and anniversaries: Christmas day, Independence Day, New Year's Day. But yesterday was one of my personal favorites, Tax Freedom Day. That is the day when hard-working Americans have finally paid their tax burdens and can begin earning for themselves and their families.

This chart illustrates when that day is over the years. I invite Members to use this opportunity to reflect on the problems with our current tax system. First, it is cumbersome. Our Tax Code exceeds 2.8 million words, more than War and Peace and the Bible combined.

It is unfair. It discriminates against married couples, the elderly, even the dead. It is discouraging. It punishes investing and saving and steals profits from healthy businesses and confuses a large majority of Americans trying to decipher its complicated forms.

Today, I encourage my colleagues to support reform and tax reduction measures that will truly provide tax freedom for hard-working Americans.

#### EDUCATION

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, education must be our Nation's number one priority. Our children are 25 percent of the population, but they are 100 percent of our future. If we act now to strengthen our education system, our children and our country will be prepared for the economic and growth challenges of the future.

The Democrats' Safe and Successful Schools Act of 2000 would give teachers, parents, and students the tools they need for success.

As Democratic legislation proposes, investing in modernizing schools; hiring new, qualified teachers; and providing safe after-school programs for children will, indeed, take us into the new millennium and truly help our children and their future.

Let us not play politics with our children's future. Let us work together to support the Safe Schools Act and show our children that they are our number one priority.

The Republicans have proposed what they would call reforms, but, Mr. Speaker, closing troubled schools, doling out vouchers is not the answer. Investing in our education system is.

#### PERMANENT NORMAL TRADE RELATIONS TO CHINA

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

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, later this month, Members of the House will be casting their votes on one of the most important trade issues that we have faced in recent years. I am referring, of course, to extend permanent normal trade relations to China.

The United States and the international community have been working together with China for decades to bring China into the WTO. For the first time in history, the doors of China's economy will be opened up to international commerce and competition.

Congress will be faced with a simple choice then. If Congress passes PNTR, we will allow U.S. companies to freely participate in the nearly \$4 billion Chinese economy. However, if we do not pass PNTR, American products and American workers will be denied this opportunity.

Faced with these options, I think the choice is clear. I urge my colleagues to avoid the temptation to give in to the protectionist forces inside our country and instead support free trade and progress in China.

#### HONORING MERITORIOUS SERVICE OF VIETNAM VETERANS

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

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, the Vietnam conflict began from 1964 and ended 25 years ago on April 30, 1975. During that time, over 3.4 million U.S. American military personnel served in southeastern Asia.

□ 1030

Our veterans served in the rice paddies of the Delta, in the jungle of the Central Highlands, on river patrols of the Mekong River, and from air bases in the Pacific. Brave Americans went halfway around the world to help an embattled country and to perform the duty that we asked of them.

Many Vietnam veterans were not sufficiently acknowledged for their service to the country in those contentious times. For some, the war is still not over; some of our veterans have not recovered from their wounds, and families will not forget their loss. The war ended 25 years ago, but the event of those days remain deep in our collective memory.

It is never too late to express our appreciation. Recently, Congress passed House Concurrent Resolution 228 honoring members of the armed forces and Federal civilian employees who served during the Vietnam era. This resolution acknowledges the significance of the fall of South Vietnam and the importance of the events of April 30, 1975, as a benchmark in American history and an indelible memory for those who so honorably served.

I am pleased that Congress has so recognized and commended the meritorious service of our Vietnam veterans. Let there be no doubt that this country does indeed respect, appreciate, and honor the personal commitment and sacrifice of our Vietnam veterans for their service to this Nation.

#### ELIAN AND RELIGIOUS VALUES

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

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, for those persons who say that Elian must be returned to his biological father at all cost, I submit these other arguments.

Let us point out that his real father, if he goes back to Cuba, will be Castro. In a Communist state, the government controls the state and controls the lives of the people. Those are the facts.

Returning Elian to Cuba after so long in America will doom him to psychological abuse by the Communist regime.

Ancient religious tradition from the Talmud, back 5,000 years, cites examples that, under Jewish law, a child must honor a person who teaches his moral and religious values above, above, a parent who does not.

Since there are no religious values in Cuba, it follows that Elian could just as well honor his relatives in the United States, here, where they will teach him moral and religious values.

#### EDUCATION

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

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, the time has come for Congress to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. With this act we have the opportunity to make significant progress towards repairing and modernizing schools, reducing class size, and ensuring that our classrooms are healthy and safe learning environments.

Too many schools are stressed by population growth and crumbling infrastructure. Our average school is 42 years old. While money cannot solve problems in all of our schools, I believe matching our talk about the importance of education with an appropriate level of funding would go a long way towards improving classroom resources, reducing class size, and giving kids the space and tools they need to learn well.

Yesterday, the House passed the IDEA Full Funding Act. This bill is an important step towards honoring the commitment that we have made at the Federal level to share an important part of the resources needed at the local level.

Mr. Speaker, time is running short for Congress to complete its work. The stage is set for Congress to make meaningful improvements in the area of class size reduction and school facilities repair and modernization. We should not let this opportunity pass us by. We need to act soon.

#### HIGH TECH'S QUIET REVOLUTION EMPOWERING CHINA'S CITIZENS

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

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, the growth of high tech and the openness of the Internet are spreading democratic ideals throughout China, enlightening their people with ideas of freedom and opportunity.

In Nanjing, young Chinese men and women are being exposed to a quiet revolution led by the growth of the Internet. A Times of London article, entitled "China Embraces Its Last Rev-

olution," underscores high tech's role in opening up Chinese society. The article says China's older generation now recognizes that the economic development on which China's future depends requires a new openness to the world, the encouragement of the Internet, entry into the World Trade Organization, and concentration on education and globalization. They know this will change the political and social balance of China.

We can encourage this change. PNTR for China will maintain America's technological leadership in the world and provide high-tech jobs for Americans. It will also provide the Chinese people with access to Western influence and ideas. The open technology of the Internet will force China to open their society to bring about positive economic and social changes.

Mr. Speaker, China PNTR is in the best interest of both the American and the Chinese people.

#### CARDINAL JOHN O'CONNOR

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

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, after 16 years as the head of the New York Archdiocese and a life of devotion, faith, and of love for the Catholic Church and all of its parishioners, Cardinal John O'Connor passed on last night. And as we say in the Catholic faith, entered eternal life. He was the voice of all of God's people. He never forgot those in need.

Soon after the Cardinal was ordained, he began an illustrious career in the Navy. Entering the Navy as a chaplain, he rose to the rank of a rear admiral after 27 years of service. He traveled the globe celebrating mass in foxholes and on aircraft carriers, spreading the word of God.

He was a passionate defender of the rights of all workers. In fact, his father was a skilled interior painter and a union man. His father passed these views on to his son. And at a Catholic charities event not too long ago, the cardinal, who was a man of great humor, said jokingly, I told the Pope that there was only two requirements for the guy who replaces me. One is that he be Catholic and the other that he be a union guy. Cardinal O'Connor's working-class roots remained with him throughout his career until the very end.

His relations with people of all faiths were strengthened. He was a champion of the Jewish faith and helped the Vatican as it began to recognize Israel. His lifelong devotion to all those less fortunate and sick will not be forgotten. We will miss him terribly.

RECOGNIZING CINCO DE MAYO AND WELCOMING THE INLAND EMPIRE MARIACHI YOUTH GROUP TO WASHINGTON

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

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, this week is Cinco de Mayo week, a time to celebrate the tremendous courage and bravery of Mexican Americans. I have introduced House Concurrent Resolution 313. This resolution calls for a presidential proclamation to recognize the struggle of Mexican American people as we celebrate this holiday.

The Mexican American people have fought against great odds for their freedom. Cinco de Mayo is indeed a great day to be filled with celebration, symbolism, and remembrance. It is about culture, tradition, heritage, and pride. It marks the victory of the Mexican Army over the French at the Battle of Puebla. Many of us come from different places, but we share a common bond: we are united and proud Mexican Americans.

I would also like to salute the students from the Inland Empire Mariachi Youth Education Foundation of Southern California, who have been performing this week in our Nation's capital. My daughter, Jennifer Baca, is one of those performing and exposing individuals to this culture, tradition and heritage as we celebrate Cinco de Mayo. It represents a dream come true for many of these students.

This Friday we will remember Cinco de Mayo. It is an important day in the history of Mexico and California.

#### PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 673, FLORIDA KEYS WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS ACT OF 2000

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 483 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 483

*Resolved*, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 673) to authorize the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency to make grants to the Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority and other appropriate agencies for the purpose of improving water quality throughout the marine ecosystem of the Florida Keys. The first reading of the bill will be dispensed with. Points of order against consideration of the bill for failure to comply with clause 4(a) of rule XIII are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. It shall be in order to consider