

Why do I say that? First off, I agree that we should not have a penalty on the marriage. Any two men and women married should not be penalized for being married. But it does not take \$292 billion to repeal the marriage tax penalty. Most economists and accountants will say, no matter how hard we try, we cannot eliminate the penalty, but we can do the best job we possibly can with \$82 billion. That is in the Blue Dog budget. That is what we will support, but not \$292 billion.

I am saying this to alert, to just say to the leadership, if they insist, and I think they will, on continuing to have as the real centerpiece of their economic platform for November of a \$1.3 trillion dollar tax cut, but they also believe that we have to increase defense spending and they also believe we have got to fix health care and they also believe we have got to take care of agriculture's problems and they also believe that we have got to fix Social Security. They cannot do all of those things unless they take a more fiscally responsible position. Mr. Speaker, that is why we take this hour today.

I will say again so that there shall be no misunderstanding by anyone observing or interpreting the vote today. The alternative that the President would have signed and will still sign, as he has stated, would have exempted all small businesses, all small businesses, farmers and ranchers included, up to \$4 million from even having to consider paying the death tax. What is wrong with that? Effective January 1, 2001, not 2010.

If we really and truly want to deal with it in a fiscally responsible way, let us know that the partisan politics is over on this vote, let us roll up our sleeves, then let us see if we cannot put together some, as I said earlier, if the Democratic version is not perfect, let us roll up our sleeves and, for a change on the Committee on Ways and Means, work, Democrat and Republican, to make a better one. But let us make sure it fits within the budget restraints.

To get my vote on any compromise, it cannot be a backend loaded tax cut for death taxes, for marriage tax penalty, for any other tax. It is fiscally irresponsible, in my humble opinion, for this Congress to pass tax cuts that explode in 2010 and afterwards. If we want to do it, do it now. Have that open debate. But do not, do not backend load without first coming to this floor with the Social Security reform bill.

My colleagues will find that there will be bipartisan support, bipartisan support for a lot of the ideas kicking around as long as we are willing to openly and honestly pay for them. The bill that was vetoed today was not openly and honestly paid for. The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

I thank my colleagues for joining with me today, and we look forward to the continuing of this discussion next week and hopefully getting an agree-

ment that will get 218 votes, 51 votes and a Presidential signature, ideally 435 and 100, but that will never happen, Mr. Speaker. But I suspect that we might find one that you and I will agree on.

ISSUES REGARDING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, I welcome the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER) who is going to be joining me tonight as we talk about some of the issues that we have dealt with on my subcommittee.

I chair a subcommittee dealing with the oversight issues dealing with the Education and Labor Departments. We are going to kind of take our colleagues through what we have found in our investigations, and some of the things are quite disappointing. On the other hand, there are some things that have been very, very exciting.

Let us start where we should, since we have responsibility for this agency, taking a look at the Department of Education here in Washington. This is a Department that spends approximately \$40 billion per year. It also manages a loan portfolio in the neighborhood of \$80 billion to \$100 billion. So this is an agency that, under its control, has about \$120 billion to \$140 billion. It is a pretty large corporation if it were in the private sector.

Let us reflect back as to what we envisioned for an organization like this. In some ways, it matches what our Vice President AL GORE indicated early in the Clinton administration when he was talking about reinventing government, and that we saw these Federal agencies as representing the best in management practices, mirroring the best in management practices that one finds in the private sector.

If these management practices are in the private sector, it would make a lot of sense for the Federal Government and the agencies within the Federal Government to learn from what is the best practices and incorporate those best practices. I think in many ways that was what the Vice President, Vice President GORE, intended with his assignment to reinvent government.

In 3 weeks we will close another fiscal year. The disappointing thing is that, yes, the Education Department has been reinvented, but under this administration, it has been reinvented into something that none of us can feel very good about. Remember this is an agency that spends \$40 billion on discretionary funds, manages the loan portfolio in the neighborhood of \$80 billion to \$100 billion.

What do we know? We know that, for the year 2000, the Department of Education will again fail its audit. It has

failed its audit in 1998. It failed its audit in 1999. With testimony that we have received in our oversight subcommittee, it is clear that, once again, in 2000, the Department of Education will not have the internal controls, the internal systems in place that will enable it to receive a clean audit.

If that is what the Vice President means by reinventing government, then it is time that we take another look at exactly what this should mean.

When we have got an agency that does not get a clean audit, what does that mean in the private sector? I worked in the private sector, and I worked for a publicly held company. If one is in the private sector and one's independent auditors come in and take a look at one's books, and they indicate to one's shareholders, one's customers and to Wall Street that one's books are not an accurate reflection of what is actually going on in one's business, typically what will happen is the value of the stock will plummet, perhaps even the trading of one's shares will be suspended on the market. One will begin looking for a new chief financial officer. One may also begin looking for a new chief executive officer. Of course one would begin looking for a new person who said we are going to reinvent this company and make it the way that we would like it to perform. That is the private sector.

Why would that happen? This is why companies go through and get an audit. This is why we push to have Federal agencies become auditable. We know that when the books are not clean, and when the systems are not in place, what one is doing is one is putting in place a system of behavior that is ripe for waste, fraud and abuse.

That is why it is so critical in the private sector. That is also why it is so critical in the government sector. Because now approaching its third year of failed audits, what else do we know? Do we see a Department of Education that has the negative with the failed audits but everything else is fine? No. What we find within the Department of Education is a system that is full of waste, fraud and abuse.

Let us also define exactly what the Department of Education is. The Department of Education does not educate any of our kids. Basically what it does is it manages this \$40 billion in discretionary spending. This is money that it sent around the country. It manages this loan portfolio. So basically what it is, it is a bank that distributes taxpayers' money. What we now know under the Vice President's definition of reinventing government it does not do it very well, because the auditors say there is no clear indication that the way that the Department of Education reports its spending actually reflects what happens.

□ 1845

So it is a bank. It distributes funds; it manages loans. What it does not do is it does not educate our kids.

What do we know about the failed audits? What do we see? What do we know is that it has a fairly elaborate process; that it has this \$40 billion, and if a local school district would like to get some of that to reduce class size by hiring teachers, to maybe purchase technology, to get integrated into the Internet, it is about a 192-step discretionary grant process. The application and approval process is a very long and expensive process.

Now, with that kind of process, one would think it is foolproof. We would think out of those 192 steps, and by the way, this process used to be a whole lot longer but it was reinvented by the Vice President to only 192 steps, yet it still takes 20 weeks to get it done; but one would think, well, it is a good thing it has gone through that process because at least we will get it right. What are some of the examples and the reason we now know that that is not what is happening? "Congratulations, you are not a winner."

That is our Department of Education. The Jacob Javits scholarship. This is an opportunity where young people who are graduating from college have the opportunity to compete for and receive up to 4 years of graduate education from the Department, paid for by the American taxpayers. Linh Hua, a graduate student at the University of California, received a letter in February informing her that she had been selected to receive a Jacob Javits graduate fellowship. She was excited. If I were her parents or friend, I would be excited, because it means she is going to get \$100,000 of education graduate school paid for.

She immediately informed the director of graduate studies at her institution. He in turn trumpeted the good news to the entire English department in a news announcement. It is exactly what anyone else would do if someone in their own class, in their own department were being recognized by the Department of Education for their academic achievement and they are being rewarded.

A few days later Linh received a message on her answering machine that she had received the letter in error. A mistake. The contractor working for the Department had erroneously sent award notification letters to 39 students informing them that they had won the awards. Thirty-nine students. Ms. Hua was crushed by the news. She describes her feelings in a letter to the chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce: "I think my heart snapped in half. News of the possible withdrawal was devastating to me, and I have not found words to break the news to my family and friends. How does one share such news and still hold her head up high? I continue to be visibly distracted from my work, family and friends, and will be in great emotional turmoil until I can trust that my fellowship will not be withdrawn. Surely you will agree that it is wrong for the United States Gov-

ernment to condone such treatment of its citizens."

Members of the committee agreed. At their urging, and due to a provision lawmakers had the foresight to include, I guess we knew when the Vice President reinvented the Department of Education that these types of mistakes might happen, that due to a provision lawmakers had inserted into the Higher Education Act anticipating such a mistake, the education department eventually agreed to award fellowships to these 39 students. The cost for this mistake was \$4 million.

Reading, writing and robbery; a theft ring involving collaboration between outside contractors and education department employees operated for at least 3 years, stealing more than \$300,000 worth of electronic equipment, including computers, cell phones, VCRs, and a 61-inch television set. It also netted from the agency, from the Department of Education, more than \$600,000 in false overtime pay.

Very simple scheme. The Department of Education employee in charge of purchasing filed all these purchasing agreements or purchasing contracts. There were no controls monitoring what this person did. This is why auditing companies say we are not sure that what they were actually doing, or reflecting on the books, actually reflected what they were doing.

This individual ordered the materials and, rather than having it delivered to the Department of Education, they were delivered to these people's homes. What was in it for the phone guy? The phone guy was the one that was able to bill the Department for over \$600,000 of false overtime pay. Who paid? The American taxpayer. Who lost? American students who were the ones intended to receive these benefits.

The education department improperly discharged almost \$77 million in student loans for borrowers who falsely claimed to be either permanently disabled or deceased. This did not come from our committee; this came from the inspector general's report. From July 1, 1994 through December 31, 1996, fully 23 percent of all individuals whose loans were discharged due to disability claims were actually holding jobs, some earning more than \$50,000 a year. A total of \$73 million in loans was improperly forgiven.

During the same period, the good news is that 708 borrowers receiving death discharges actually were earning wages. They were still alive. But their loans had been written off for a total of \$3.8 million, a total of \$77 million.

September: failing Proofreading 101. In September 1999 the education department printed 3.5 million financial aid forms containing incorrect line references to the IRS tax form. The forms were incorrect, had to be destroyed, and 100,000 of them that had been distributed to schools had to be recalled. The cost of the error was \$720,000.

The list goes on and on about this mismanagement within the Depart-

ment of Education. The disappointing thing is the Department of Education still has not been, as the Vice President would have described it, reinvented to a standard that hundreds of thousands of companies around America have to meet each and every day. They have clean books, a clean set of standards. Imagine the IRS going into a company and contesting their tax bill and saying, wow, we think you owe us some money, and the owner of the company coming out and saying, well, we reinvented our company last year so our books are not quite clean; but we think that our books roughly approximate what actually happened within our company. So based on those rough estimates and our books, we think that the tax that we paid you roughly reflects what we actually think we owe you.

I do not think the IRS would show the same kind of sympathy that we have shown to the Department of Education.

It is time for this Department to clean up its act and become reinvented. Actually, it does not even need to be reinvented. What we would like it to do is just to actually meet the standards that are out there in the private sector each and every day.

I see my colleague from Colorado has joined me. I do not know if he wants to add on to some of these examples or talk about others. My colleague from Colorado and I have taken a look at the Department of Education and found the bad news, the bad news on the education front in Washington, that we have a Department that has responsibility for \$100 to \$120 billion and cannot get a clean set of books and is ripe with waste, fraud, and abuse; but the good news is what my colleague and I have seen as we have gone to 21 States and seen the great things that are happening in education in America today when we empower parents, teachers, and administrators at the local level to focus on educating their kids.

We have seen tremendous things in the Bronx, in Cleveland, Milwaukee, Little Rock, Arkansas, L.A., Muskegon, Michigan. We have seen some great things in education as we have gone around the country. That is the exciting thing. And it is a sharp contrast to what we see here in Washington.

Mr. Speaker, I yield now to my colleague, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER).

Mr. SCHAFFER. I thank my colleague for yielding, and I also appreciate the examples that he laid out. They are very sad and they are very unfortunate that the Department of Education wastes and squanders and abuses the taxpayers' money to the extent that it does. But that is really no surprise though, Mr. Speaker. This is Washington, D.C., after all; and the Federal Government wastes, squanders, and loses money in virtually every department that the Federal Government

operates. It is just regrettable that the Department of Education is one of the worst.

In the audits that the Congress requires various agencies to carry out, the Department of Education in 1998 could not even audit its own books. The books were so bad, so poorly kept, that they were just unauditible. And I remember the hearings that we held together, that the gentleman chaired, where we brought the Department of Education in and wanted to know where did the money go. We noted that they get billions of dollars, and we share the dream and the goal that these dollars should be spent on children in classrooms. We care about education and we want to see our children have the best resources, and really unlimited, if possible. And to a great extent that is possible, even with the money we are spending now. But the reality is not only do we know for certain that a tremendous proportion of the dollars that the American taxpayer spends never make it to the classroom, it is so bad that the Department could not even quantify that amount because it could not even balance its own books.

It is spending money, Mr. Speaker, without the ability to track these dollars and let the American taxpayers know what it has done with those funds, those important revenues. So that I think the real message is that waste, fraud, and abuse exists in the Department of Education. It is graphic, it is ugly, it is miserable, it is unfortunate, and we want to fix that. And first of all, the way we fix these kinds of problems is by admitting them, openly and publicly, by talking about them and trying to find out how we fix these problems.

The goal is not really to have more and better government. Our goal is to get resources to the children that matter most. I have five kids, three of them are in public schools right now. I know the gentleman has children as well that are in public schools, and we take this matter very personally, Mr. Speaker. Our goal and our mission is to fix government in a way that allows the money that the American taxpayers spend really get to the children we care about, the children that deserve a chance in America.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. If the gentleman will yield for a moment, I will just correct one thing. My children are in a parochial school. So that is a little bit different.

But if we are talking about reinventing, I go back to this other account that the gentleman and I have had some real frustration with, which is the grant back account. The gentleman and I have on occasion, may have called it, or I think others have referred to it, as a slush account. This is a \$700 million account. The General Accounting Office went in and took a look at it, and out of this \$700 million, which is supposed to be designated only for money that comes back from

schools that have misused grants and it goes into this account and then those schools can reapply once they get things straightened out, out of the \$700 million that is in this account, only \$12 million of it was there under legitimate circumstances. The rest of it just kind of happened to find its way there. And when GAO said, how did it get here, they could not say how it got there. And when they spent it, they could not say where they had the authorization or where they had actually spent the money.

Then, when we compare that definition of reinventing government, I mean where the real reinvention and the real excitement and energy in education is happening today, it is at the State level and it is our local schools who are integrating technology, who are focusing on the needs of their kids. I do not think my colleague was in the Bronx with me in New York when we went to Cardinal Hayes High School, but this is one of the toughest areas; and here is a school that has reinvented itself and is doing some great things. They are turning out some great students in one of the toughest areas of New York City. And there are local schools all over the country each and every day that are reinventing themselves.

A lot of times, when we have talked to some of these schools, they tell us that the only thing that is standing between them reinventing themselves to the extent that they would like to, to meet the needs of their kids, a lot of time it is Federal rules and regulations that say they cannot go where they want to go.

□ 1900

So we have got a department in Washington that has reinvented an agency that cannot deliver. If the Vice President is really interested in reinventing education and reinventing government, what the Vice President needs to do is the Vice President needs to take a look at the reinvention and education that is going on at the local level.

We have been to 21 different States. That is where the excitement is. That is what the focus is on, kids and learning, rather than bureaucracy and paperwork.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, and that is the real message that I hope our colleagues will ponder, that we frankly do not look to the U.S. Department of Education, the Federal Government, to define the terms of quality in education across the country.

We do have 50 individual States, each a laboratory in and of themselves; and each that we see is free to be innovative, to weigh the risks of new programs and new ideas against the successful models and the record of their 49 counterparts and colleagues throughout the rest of the country. And States are in a better position to act more swiftly than the Federal Government is. States are closer to the people.

The elected officials are much more accountable than the bureaucrats down the street here from where we are here at the U.S. Department of Education. That is the front line. The States are the front lines of education reform.

And States differ. Some States have a more decentralized approach where local school districts are able to innovate each further at a more local level. Some States are a little more centrally controlled at their State capitals. But in no case should we ever not be willing to trust the future of our children and their ability to grow intellectually to a small group of folks here in Washington, D.C., over at the Department of Education whose goal today, facilitated by this centralized governing types down at today's White House, to collect this authority and power in Washington, D.C., to define the terms of quality, to define how a dollar will be spent in a classroom.

And of course, with the track record of the U.S. Department of Education, it is the last organization we should trust to get the Nation's precious resources and tax dollars to the children that we ultimately care about most.

This is an important topic for the whole country. The USA Today newspaper, I do not have the date on here, it was just a few days ago and I ripped this out of the bottom of the newspaper, this is a survey among Web users, and the top five problems in our society according to a survey of Internet users and of the people that they surveyed on the Internet, 37.7 percent identified education as the number one priority.

I contrast that with, again five priorities total, the next one was Government intrusion into people's lives. That was down at 10.2 percent. Then you have crime, political corruption, and rising health care costs, which trail just a few percents behind that. But given the huge number of individuals that responded, an overwhelming majority identified education as their top priority.

We are hearing this around the country that parents care about how much money they are spending on taxes, they care about the corruption and the lack of integrity we have seen in the White House over the last 8 years. They care about a strong national defense, they care about foreign policy, they care about the environment and health care and all the rest. But education repeatedly as a topic comes up as the number one concern among the people we speak with and have heard from as we travel around the country.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, if we build off of how education is being reinvented around the country, recently my colleague and I were in Minnesota where they are talking about a plan that really reinvents some of their spending and focuses it around parents by giving them tax credits and tax deductions. So Minnesota is working on a reform plan.

Then we have been to Arizona, Michigan, California, at least three States

and two of them leading the way on charter schools, Arizona and the State of Michigan. And that is helping to improve all of education within those States. But they are experimenting with charter schools.

Then my colleague and I were in Florida together for a hearing. We were in Tampa. The State of Florida has taken it one step further where they are now actually creating charter school districts so that a whole school district can apply for a charter which says, our relationship now with the State is very, very different. We are not going to focus on bureaucracy and paperwork and process for a greater degree of freedom. What we are only going to focus on is learning.

And then Illinois has reached a unique arrangement with the Chicago public school system, which is one of the largest school systems in the country; and for all intents and purposes, they have created a large charter school relationship with the City of Chicago for their public schools. And again, what they said is, let us forget about all these categorical programs, because the only thing that we really want to focus on, so the State of Illinois rather than now funneling a whole bunch of separate checks to the City of Chicago, now really sends them two, sends them one for general operating and one for special education. And then what they say, on a yearly basis, we are going to come back and we want to review with you the actual results of kids' learning.

So those are the kind of reforms and the reinvention that is taking place at the State level. We have tried to do the same thing here in Washington by creating charter States where States can have a different relationship with the Federal Government that says we are going to do this as a pilot program, hopefully with 10 States, by giving them freedom to move dollars around from program to program; and Washington is no longer going to be going through these 219 steps for grants and audits and those types of things. What they are going to do is they are going to say, as a Federal Government, we are going to reinforce what you are trying to do at the State level, which is to focus on learning with children. That is where we need to go.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, it is an interesting thing. What we are really talking about is treating States like States rather than subjects of a centralized Federal Government.

Power was always meant, even by our Founders, to flow from the bottom up, not from the top down, in America. But with respect to the Department of Education, it was about the 1970s when President Carter occupied the White House that we saw the Department of Education begin to take that authority from States.

So here we are today on the House floor talking about the liberty and freedom that States deserve and rightfully possess to build schools that

reach out to children and talking about that almost in revolutionary terms. We have to wage a small war here in Washington simply to allow States to be treated like States.

And my colleague is right, we have seen all across the country great approaches. Governor Jeb Bush in Florida and Lieutenant Governor Frank Brogan in Florida have really led the way at providing real liberty and real freedom to local communities. And they do that based on results.

Those States that hold children in the greatest peril, school districts that are failing in Florida, are the first places they have started in Florida to begin to provide educational opportunity to parents. So you have parental choice in those districts.

I remember the woman we heard from, the mother from the inner city, I cannot remember what city she was from, but we heard her testimony in Tampa, and she came and said, you know, my school was failing. It was rated poorly by the State and failed a couple tests in a row. And the response from our State was to let me, the parent, decide where to send my child to school.

Now, she could have chosen to send her child to the same failing school, but she, like most parents, wanted something better. And so, she drove her child to a different neighborhood not too far from where she lived and found a school where her child was thriving. And she was almost to tears I remember in front of the committee with joy thanking the State of Florida, Governor Bush, Lieutenant Governor Brogan for passing this program in Florida that allowed this parent to be treated like a real customer for the first time and a program that allowed her child to be the center of attention, the center of emphasis in education, not the government school building, not the government employees who are part of a failed system, but to put children first.

That is a model that I think we are pushing for throughout the country and would like to encourage, but it needs to be driven by States.

I will provide one more example as to why we should not look to Washington to reform.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, before my colleague goes there, yeah, the testimony that we had in Florida from that mother was awesome and a sharp contrast to the testimony that we received a couple of years earlier in New York City, where I believe a father came in and testified and said, 5 years ago I knew that the New York City schools were some of the worst schools in the country. But they had a 5-year plan to improve; and I had no choice, I had to send my child to the school that they told me she should go to. He said, it is now 5 years later and the schools are no better and, if anything, they may be worse, and they have got a new 5-year plan. I have no choice. But what if this 5-year plan does not work any

better than the last one? Then I have had my child in a failing school for 10 years, and I am going to lose my child.

And as excited and as close to tears as the woman was in Tampa because of the positive things that were happening, we saw the same thing in New York City on the other side, a father almost coming to tears saying, I have no choice. I know the schools are not any good, but have I got no choice and that is where my son or daughter is going to have to be. And what hope does my child have if they are going to be in a school that cannot teach them and that is where they spend the 10 or 11 years that are key and formulative in enabling them to get the basics?

So it is about people. It is not about bureaucracies. It is about parents. It is about kids, and it is about parents wanting to have the best opportunities for their kids, whether it is in the Bronx, whether it is in Cleveland, or whether it is in Tampa or whether it is in Colorado or Michigan.

Mr. SCHAFFER. And parents do want the basics for their children. I think most parents understand and if given a choice would choose the kind of schools that build for their children the kind of intellectual foundation that allows them to learn more and at exponential rates as they grow older and begin to grow in an academic setting.

I have got a question for my colleague, and that is the three R's. In Michigan I assume the 3 R's means about the same thing as it does in Colorado. What do the three R's mean to people in Michigan?

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Mr. SCHAFFER. My parents, oddly enough, were educated in Michigan and grew up there. My father became a school teacher and that is what took him to Cincinnati, Ohio, where I was born. He taught all of his life until he just retired a few years ago.

When I grew up and went to school in Ohio, the three R's meant reading, writing, and arithmetic. That is what my father taught in the classroom, as well. And when I moved out to Colorado, that is the kind of education I was looking for for my children were schools with reading, writing, and arithmetic, the basic, most fundamental foundational of learning.

I mention all that and I kind of refer to the three R's that way because today, September 7, the Secretary of Education made a speech, it was his annual back-to-school address entitled "Times of Transition," he made the speech today before the National Press Club. I was going through this before I came over to find out what the Secretary of Education, and this is the person, for those who are unfamiliar, is the person who is the head of the U.S. Department of Education, this is the guy who is in charge.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Who for 8 years has been in charge now. I think he is the longest serving member of the President's cabinet and has been there since

day 1 almost and in 3 weeks will deliver the third set of un-auditable books, or a failed audit, to the auditors.

Mr. SCHAFFER. That is right. And before I get to this, I will also add to that, what these failed audits represent is money failing to get to children in American schools. That is what matters the most.

Anyway, here is what he says today, the Secretary of Education, in his speech to the National Press Club: "We need to focus on what we like to call the three R's over at the Department of Education." You would think it would be reading, writing, and arithmetic like it is everywhere else in America. No, the three R's over at the Department of Education is relationships, resilience, and readiness. That is what the emphasis is over at the Department of Education.

Now, relationships, resilience and readiness are important things. I have no doubt about that. But in a Nation that squanders and wastes as much money as it does by giving it to the U.S. Department of Education and allowing that agency to get by without the ability to balance its books and the inability to get those precious dollars to children and a Nation that is lagging behind our international competitors in math and science, that is not right.

□ 1915

Mr. HOEKSTRA. For our colleagues, the information is clear on international testing. The U.S. comes out somewhere between 17th to 19th out of 21 industrialized countries. That is not good enough. That is not good enough for my kids. That is not good enough for your kids. On this, this is something that I am very selfish about. It is time to reinvent education so that our kids score the best in the world, and I hope everybody else in the world is on the same level as what we are; but it is unacceptable to have the rest of the world 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and it is kind of like, hey, where is the U.S.? we are down here 17th, 19th. It is not good enough, and it is unacceptable.

Mr. SCHAFFER. My point being is that in a Nation where we have unacceptable national test scores in comparison to our peer nations as industrial countries, in a country where we know we have problems in education in America, Americans would expect and should expect the leader of the U.S. Department of Education to acknowledge that we have a problem, we have got to get serious about it, and we have got to get focused on fixing it. The way that we usually do that back in your State and the State I grew up in Ohio, and the State I live in now, Colorado, and in virtually all other States in the union is we start focusing on the basics, getting the money to children and start focusing on reading, writing, and arithmetic. We can add to that a little bit, science and history and so on and so forth. But over at the Department of Education, as of today, our new goal is

to redefine, to reinvent the three Rs to be relationships, resilience, and readiness. I am not making this up, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. You get what you measure. If the Department of Education is now measuring relationships, resilience, and readiness, that is probably what we will get, at least from the programs and the emphasis, the programs that the Education Department funds. If that is reinventing government, I do not want it. I mean, I want my kids to know reading, writing and arithmetic. They need the basics.

Under the Department's definition of the three Rs, if we focus on, I cannot believe these three, relationships, resilience, and readiness, when we focus on those three, we get the fourth R, which is what we have also seen as we go around the country, we get remediation. When you focus on relationships, resilience, and readiness, we are going to get remediation. What is remediation? What remediation is, and this is when we have gone to our colleges and we find that one of the fastest growing programs on college campuses today is remediation because kids entering college cannot read or write at a ninth or 10th grade level or an eighth, ninth or 10th grade level, which means when they get to college they have got to be remediated to get their learning up to that level. And if remediation is one of the fastest growing programs on campus today, then it is time for us to re-evaluate as to whether relationships, resilience, and readiness are what we need to be focusing on.

Mr. SCHAFFER. I do not want to denigrate these concepts. These are important things, obviously. But for anyone in a position such as the Secretary of Education in the Clinton administration is, for anyone to be in the position that he is, to define for the Nation these goals as a replacement for the basics in education, it is an indication of why we are in trouble in America and why the U.S. Department of Education is frankly incapable of being part of the solution. It nine times out of 10 is actually the source of the problem. We just need to let professional teachers do the job they are trained to do and let parents have the liberty and freedom to place their children in the kinds of academic settings that earn the confidence of knowledgeable, loving parents. These are the people, after all, who know the names of the children and care about them most. I guarantee you that the Secretary of Education does not know the names of my kids, and he would have a good fight on his hands if he wanted to presume he cared about them more than I did.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. But this is reinventing government from maybe the Vice President's perspective, I am assuming that this is the position of the administration, this is the longest serving Cabinet member; and this is how they have now reinvented government, moving from the Department of Education which should be saying our,

I would think close to our only, our most important goal is academic excellence for each and every one of our children and we are not going to leave one behind and we are going to allow every child to achieve their full potential.

What we are now going to have under these measurements is a bunch of children who are going to have great relationships, they are going to be able to get along well, they are going to be prepared for not being able to have the basics and they are going to be able to bounce back and be resilient. This is not brain surgery. The Department of Education should be striving for academic excellence in each and every school in this country.

Mr. SCHAFFER. These are good goals, but they really mean a lot more if you are smart on top of that. There may be some citizens, some of our constituents perhaps, who would prefer that relationships, resilience, and readiness as the Clinton administration states should be more important and the goal of education rather than reading, writing and arithmetic, science, history and all the rest. I think there ought to be a school for those parents. I think there ought to be places around the country where teachers who agree with Secretary Riley, where Secretary Riley can send his grandkids, I suppose, where people who agree that these concepts are more important than real learning can send their own kids.

The problem is you have somebody with a goofy idea here in Washington that wants to impose these values on your children, my children, everybody else's children and it is just wrong. We do not get to vote for Secretary of Education. This is an appointed person. He does not hold town meetings in my neighborhood like I do or in your district like you do. He is not accountable to anyone in my district or anyone who is a parent of these kids who he thinks should be focusing on relationships, resilience, and readiness.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Let us cut the Secretary a little bit of slack. We know exactly what he is talking about. Relationships. When you go into the workforce today, you recognize that many companies today are talking about participative management; they are talking about team concepts, being able to work in groups and those types of things and that is the relationship factor. But also coming out of a company that focused very heavily on teamwork, participative management and those types of things, you also knew that for somebody to get on the team, they had to have the basic skills to do the job and the assignment that they were given as part of that team. They did not get on the team because they could really relate well to you and because they were ready and because they were resilient. They were on the team first and foremost because they had the skills to do the job that was required, and the teamwork part came second.

But the first criteria was do they have the skills to get the job done? And I think in some cases that is maybe where the Secretary is just moving off track here, is we have got to work with our kids to make sure they know the basics before we move on to some of these other issues.

Mr. SCHAFFER. I think these nutty ideas that come out of the Clinton-Gore administration provide a more clear emphasis on the need for choice, for parental choice, for parental involvement in academic settings. That is frankly where the liberals in the Democrat Party and the more moderate and conservative Members who are on the Republican side of the aisle differ with respect to our approach on education. We on the Republican side genuinely believe that we can trust parents. We genuinely believe that when you elect a local school board member to make decisions about what the curriculum should be, about how much a teacher should be paid, about whether a scarce tax dollar should be spent buying a new bus or repairing the roof or maybe giving the teacher a pay raise, that those are the folks that can be trusted.

We do not need to be second-guessing them every day here in Washington, D.C. That is the real battle that takes place. It is unfortunate that so often it is misrepresented in the press or by our opponents or the media, in other words. Our goals are probably fundamentally the same. We want to build an education system in America that helps children. We favor a decentralized model that is decentralized right down to the last school, even beyond that, even for those who want to educate their children in their own homes, in their church school, or wherever they want to educate them. We want to allow this marketplace of competitive ideas to take place, versus our Democrat friends, the Clinton-Gore model of centralized authority here in Washington where left-wing ideas out of their bureaucratic agencies come to define the failing terms for children all across America.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. I think what we are also saying is that by empowering parents, that if in the local community you have got a school superintendent or a school that says, our model and our priorities, we are going to match what the Department of Education, what Secretary Riley is promoting, our school is going to focus on relationships, resiliency and readiness; and if you have got another school saying we are focused on the basics and when your children leave our school, they are going to be at class proficiency or grade proficiency in reading, writing and math and, as a matter of fact, our objective is to have your kids at one or two levels above grade proficiency in each of those areas, a parent at that point in time should have the option of saying, for what I really want for my kids, that is the school I want to go to. Maybe some will choose the Sec-

retary's model, and they will have the opportunity to go to that type of school. But we should not have a top-down approach from Washington saying this is what every school district is going to focus on.

Mr. SCHAFFER. You mentioned earlier, in 3 weeks the U.S. Department of Education is going to announce that they have failed another audit, that once again they have done a poor job of accounting for the billions, almost \$130 billion that they manage, that they cannot account for it very well, the kind of audit that would result in a private company's stock crashing through the floor.

Yet our Department of Education, after coming to Congress and saying we cannot audit our books, then when they did bring us an audit for the subsequent year, 1999, they got an F. Now they are going to bring us another audit that they will fail again. That is a tragic event. It is important to note, though, because what such rampant and wholesale mismanagement of funds really represents is, one, a tremendous amount of sacrifice by the American people who work hard to pay taxes and send them here to Washington, D.C. in hopes that we are going to do something responsible with them. Secondly, it suggests that people in Washington do not take those tax dollars seriously. Third, it suggests that people in Washington do not take the children seriously who are affected by this waste, fraud and abuse in the Department of Education.

Finally, what it suggests is that there are billions of dollars that American taxpayers send to Washington, D.C. that will never get near a child, who like every child in America is repeatedly exploited by the bureaucracy here in Washington to get one more dollar out of the taxpayers' pocket for the children. Yet some of those folks over there have no intention of doing anything different that will result in those dollars really helping children. That is what we are here to try to fix. That is what we want to help. As we travel around the country, that is what we hear school board members say. They do not say, spend more on education. They say, get the money to us. We know what we are doing. We are trained for this. We are elected for this. We know your children and we are professionals. Just get us the money and get out of the way and we will produce results. And when we do that, we know that they are right. Schools do perform better when they have fewer strings, fewer regulations, fewer government agents and bureaucrats snooping around in their files and in their classrooms and getting in the way.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. And they will have a clean audit.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Yes. And with fewer responsibilities and more dollars passing through to the States and the school districts, it will be easier for the, I do not know how many accountants, hundreds of accountants over

there in the Department of Education to be able to come back to this Congress and say, the money got to children, we can show you, we can prove it, congratulations, job well done. We are a long way from that goal, but that is our dream.

□ 1730

I am about ready to yield back the balance of my time, and I did not know if my colleague from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER) wanted to talk about any other issues tonight.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, there is one topic I would like to bring up only because we have adjourned and there is no business left for the rest of the week, and we will be back next week; but I wanted to point out a piece of legislation that was introduced by the Democrats prior to our 1-month recess. It was a bill introduced on July 19 by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY).

This is a bill, and I will just read the title of it, it is H.R. 4892, to repeal the Federal charter of the Boy Scouts of America. This is a bill, Mr. Speaker, I hope we will all focus on and look at its pernicious motives and also take a look at the legislation's effort to try to pull the rug out from underneath one of the most important civic charitable organizations in our country, the Boy Scouts of America.

This is a bill that is designed to end the Boy Scouts of America. This is an organization that for many, many years, I think 1916 was the year the Scouts was started, I have some statistics on the organization, 90 years ago, that for many, many years has trained and nurtured many young boys and has taught them to become responsible young men and adults in our community and in our society; and because of the intolerance, because of the bigotry of some Members of Congress, they have seen fit to go on a rampage to try to eliminate the Boy Scouts of America and revoke their charter.

It is irresponsible, and I hope it is something that our President and Vice President and others will speak out on and let us know where their sentiments lie, what their positions are, where they stand with respect to the Boy Scouts of America.

I have one son who is a member of the Boy Scouts. It is a remarkable organization that has made a dramatic difference in his life. And this is all about the Boy Scout charter and its mission to try to promote the morals and values and teaching skills that will help them throughout their lifetimes.

And for anyone here in this Congress or throughout the rest of the country to attack the Scouts for such a noble mission is just inexcusable and one that I assure all of those Scouts who are concerned about the issue and others who are concerned about the future of the Boy Scouts that there are many Members of Congress that will rise and come to the aid of this important organization.

This is an issue that the critics of the Boy Scouts somehow suggest that the organization lacks a certain amount of diversity, which is not true. If we just go to the Boy Scout Web site and look at their policy statement on diversity, it says more than 90 years ago the Boy Scouts of America was founded on the premise of teaching boys moral and ethical values through an outdoor program that challenges them and teaches them respect for nature, one another and themselves. Scouting has always represented the best in community, leadership and service.

The Boy Scouts of America has selected its leaders using the highest standards because strong leaders and positive role models are so important to the healthy development of youth. Today, the organization still stands firm that their leaders exemplify the values outlined in the Scout oath and law.

It goes on, on June 28, 2000, the United States Supreme Court reaffirmed that the Boy Scouts of America's standing as a private organization with the right to set its own membership and leadership standards.

The Boy Scouts say here in their policy statement that Boy Scouts of America respects the rights of people and groups who hold values that differ from those encompassed in the Scout oath and law, and the BSA makes no effort to deny the rights of those whose views differ to hold their attitudes or opinions.

It goes on, it is a very nice statement, one that I think the Scouts should be proud of, and that all of us here in Congress should keep in mind when this unfortunate legislation makes its way through the process to revoke the charter of the Boy Scouts of America, because the Democrats have decided that this is an organization that no longer warrants support from the Congress and from the Federal Government.

So my message to Members is there is a large and growing coalition of us who will rise to the defense of the Scouts and do everything we can to make sure that the young men that are part of the organization are led by competent, capable, trustworthy leaders that are able to conduct themselves in a way that is consistent with the Scout oath.

I just want to mention that, Mr. Speaker, for the RECORD it is a very serious issue and it is unfortunate that we have to have this debate, and I think it is going to probably escalate in terms of the intensity as time goes on.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. JEFFERSON (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today on account of official business.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. BENTSEN) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. INSLEE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BENTSEN, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. STABENOW, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. DUNCAN) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. METCALF, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DUNCAN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. WOLF, for 5 minutes, today.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 7 o'clock and 36 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until Monday, September 11, 2000, at noon.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

9890. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. Act 13-402, "Closing of a Portion of a Public Alley in Square 4337, S.O. 95-94, Act of 2000" received September 07, 2000, pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Government Reform.

9891. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. Act 13-385, "Steve Sellow Way, N.E., Designation Act of 2000" received September 07, 2000, pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Government Reform.

9892. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. Act 13-384, "Andrew J. Allen Way, N.E. Designation Act of 2000" received September 07, 2000, pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Government Reform.

9893. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. Act 13-396, "Seniors Protection Amendment Act of 2000" received September 07, 2000, pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Government Reform.

9894. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. Act 13-386, "Diabetes Health Insurance Coverage Expansion Act of 2000" received September 07, 2000, pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Government Reform.

9895. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. Act 13-397, "Environmental License Tag Amendment Act of 2000" received September 07, 2000, pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Government Reform.

9896. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. Act 13-399, "Water and Sewer Authority Collection Enhancement Amend-

ment Act of 2000" received September 07, 2000, pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Government Reform.

9897. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. Act 13-400, "Conflict of Interest Amendment Act of 2000" received September 07, 2000, pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Government Reform.

9898. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. Act 13-401, "Reinsurance Credit and Recovery Act of 2000" received September 07, 2000, pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Government Reform.

9899. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. Act 13-404, "Insurance Agents and Brokers Licensing Revision Amendment Act of 2000" received September 07, 2000, pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Government Reform.

9900. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. Act 13-403, "Metrobus Ticket Transfer Amendment Act of 2000" received September 07, 2000, pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Government Reform.

9901. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. Act 13-389, "Drug Abuse, Alcohol Abuse, and Mental Illness Insurance Coverage Amendment Act of 2000" received September 07, 2000, pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Government Reform.

9902. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. Act 13-387, "State Education Office Establishment Act of 2000" received September 07, 2000, pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Government Reform.

9903. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. Act 13-418, "Freedom From Cruelty to Animals Protection Amendment Act of 2000" received September 07, 2000, pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Government Reform.

9904. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. Act 13-407, "Insurer and Health Maintenance Organization Self-Certification Act of 2000" received September 07, 2000, pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Government Reform.

9905. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. Act 13-406, "Sentencing Reform Amendment Act of 2000" received September 07, 2000, pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Government Reform.

9906. A letter from the Acting Director, Office of Surface Mining, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule—Kentucky Regulatory Program [KY-226-FOR] received August 31, 2000, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Resources.

9907. A letter from the Assistant Director, Communications, Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule—Notice of Interim Final Supplementary Rules on Public Land in Utah [UT-030-1652-PA-24 1A] (RIN: 1004-AD40) received August 31, 2000, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Resources.

9908. A letter from the Acting Director, Office of General Counsel & Legal Policy, Office of Government Ethics, transmitting the Office's final rule—Proposed Exemption