

he attends Western Michigan University where he intends on getting his degree in education and returning to the Holland community to teach history in his high school. At high school, he has been active in football, wrestling, baseball; he is also the president of the marching band in his spare time.

At home, he has been the role model for his younger brother and has also provided stability for his mother, who battles a physical disability. In his family, they have learned that love, compassion, and understanding are what has brought unity and strength to their family.

While in Holland, Christopher has been very active in volunteering for his community. He was awarded the Mayor's Youth Recognition Award for volunteering, by demonstrating his commitment to his neighborhood and the greater community. He volunteers on Project Pride, which is a community-wide cleanup effort. He has also helped with Little League; he has also helped with the West Ottawa Migrant program. So in addition to tutoring at school, in addition to tutoring his younger brother, in the summer he also tutors migrant children whose parents are working in the fields and whose parents travel from state to state. He has shown a great love for the next generation.

He is an active member of the Keystone Club, using his leadership skills again, what would you expect, to mentor young members of the Boys and Girls Club.

Christopher has been an outstanding contributor to the Holland community, to the community of west Michigan, and I am glad to be able to rise today and give this tribute to him and to say thank you for all that you have done for the community of Holland, the community of west Michigan, and to say congratulations for being the Midwest region winner this year.

EDUCATION IN TODAY'S WORLD

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

Mr. ROEMER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman, who we are proud of as a Hoosier; and, as he has announced his retirement this year, he will be missed.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about, in a bipartisan way, an issue that I think is the most important issue to my constituents in the great State of Indiana, whether I go to South Bend or Elkhart, La Porte or Michigan City or Middlebury or all over Indiana. Business leaders, parents, workers are talking about the importance of a great education system.

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It has been said, as education goes, so goes America. We need in this great hallowed Chamber to be able to discuss

in civil and bipartisan ways new ideas that will lead to a better education system.

Today in the Committee on Education and the Workforce, we were fortunate to have, not so much an expert on education issues as an expert on economic and fiscal issues, the chairman of the Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan testify before our committee.

We talked at length with Mr. Greenspan about how intimately education is tied to the health, competitiveness, the betterment of our civil society. We can have low inflation. We can have low unemployment rates. We can have low mortgage and interest rates. But if we do not have a prepared citizen rate, if we do not have great schools and quality teachers, if we do not have discipline in the schools and parents being involved in our children's education, then we are not going to have a continued productive economy.

So Mr. Greenspan was up before Congress to say to us, Democrats and Republicans alike, that we have to do a better job in math and science education and enticing our best and brightest people into teaching, whether that be at 18 years old or at 48 years old in mid career.

Now, I have a number of my colleagues that want to join us on the floor today to talk about the importance of education, some of the new ideas that we have talked about and fought for and articulated through the months.

We have talked about parental involvement which is one of the biggest indicators to success. We have talked about quality teachers and making sure that we get the best and brightest into the teaching profession.

We will talk a little bit more about a bill that the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DAVIS) and I have introduced to try to entice people who want to move from Main Street into our classrooms with math and science and technology expertise.

We will talk, maybe, a little bit about class size and how class size is such a large determinate about how effective a quality teacher can be. There is a huge difference between a class of 16 and a class of 26.

About professional development opportunities for our teachers, a recent survey indicated that 80 percent, 80 percent of those teachers that were polled said that they did not feel comfortable integrating technology into the curriculum and that they needed more opportunity for professional development.

We will probably talk a little bit about safe schools, drug-free schools, and discipline in our schools, and all of that within the context of local control of our schools, making sure there is accountability at the local level, that we give resources and we target programs for our local communities, and they make decisions.

So let me include some of my colleagues, Mr. Speaker. I know the gen-

tleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND), my good friend who serves on the Committee on Education and the Workforce, has talked at length about a number of these issues, including his concern for academy for principals and teachers, for leadership programs for these individuals running schools, about parental involvement in schools as being such an important indicator. He was in the committee hearing this morning when we had Mr. Greenspan.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND).

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. ROEMER) for yielding me this time and for allowing me to participate during this special order on what really should be the top priority, the top issue for this country of ours.

We have had a tremendous run with economic success and growth in recent years. We have heard testimony today from the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, Alan Greenspan, on the Committee on Education and the Workforce, very enlightening and in-depth testimony about the important role of ramping up the quality of education and the implications for maintaining economic growth and expanding the opportunity for economic achievement in this country.

We also had a wonderful second panel that testified as well with leaders in the education field who came, Mr. Haseltine, who is CEO of the Human Genome Science project; as well as Mr. Barrett, CEO of Intel Corporation talking about some of the innovative things that the private sector is doing to partner with the public sector to improve the quality of education.

There is no question that we face challenges as a Nation in order to meet the growth needs that this economy has, but to expand the opportunities for success for all people and especially for our children in this country as we embark on what appears to be an incredible journey in the 21st century of scientific discoveries and wonders that are hard to imagine at this time.

Mr. Haseltine from the Human Genome project, for instance, testified about the implications of not emphasizing enough math and science and engineering and technology in the classroom and the adverse effects that could have, then, on our ability to stay at the forefront of these discoveries.

I happen to think that it is, not only good economically to do this to prioritize education in the country, but there are national security implications as well.

I do not think it is too bold to predict today that, with the Human Genome project, the mapping of the human body, the possible discovery of water on Mars, and a moon off from Jupiter, and the tremendous amount of biotechnological discoveries, medical breakthroughs, scientific breakthroughs, we are probably going to see more of those discoveries in the next

10, 15, 20 years than we have seen discoveries in the last 300 years in this world.

With that comes the challenge that this democracy and other democracies have around the globe that we need to do everything we can to get there first in making these type of scientific and medical breakthroughs, because they will have a profound effect on the course of human events. There are no guarantees that these scientific and medical discoveries will necessarily be used for good purposes to improve the human life.

But I have more confidence that the democracies, if we make these discoveries first, will better shape these new discoveries for the betterment of mankind as opposed to some type of authoritarian or dictatorial regimes somewhere else on the globe making these discoveries.

So it is kind of a national security issue that we are talking about as well why we need to have a national effort to improve the quality of education for our kids, an effort not unlike what we saw during the challenges posed to this country and to the free world during the Second World War where everyone in this country had a role to play, and the collective energy and resources of a Nation were brought to bear in order to achieve the common objective of defeating Nazism, fascism, the Japanese Empire in the Pacific. It was an incredible event in world history that the democracies were able to rally and accomplish that feat.

I think we face the same type of challenge in the education system now where it is not going to just take policymakers or just parents or teachers or principals being involved but every member of this country, everyone in our society should have a role in improving the quality of education.

A couple of weeks ago I had a chance to tour a lot of the elementary schools back in my district. At the time, I was releasing a report, a survey, a district-wide survey on the progress of reducing class size, knowing the success that that has reached in areas that have been successful in reducing class size, resulting in enhanced student performance as a result.

The survey for western Wisconsin shows that we are doing a pretty good job. There are some holes. Improvements still need to be made. But we are doing a pretty good job of bringing those class sizes down so that the teachers have more individual attention with the kids. There is better discipline with the classroom, more safe school districts as a result, but we need to do more in that area as well.

We heard some testimony today about the important role that parents play in the child's education. That is the number one factor to determine how well a child is going to succeed in the education system, how involved parents are going to be in their own children's education.

Now, with the advent of technology and e-mail in particular, more and

more parents are able to get more directly involved in the school system and what is happening in the individual classroom affecting their child through increased communication with the teachers of their kids and through the principals and superintendents of school districts, being able to communicate in a much more effective and efficient manner through the Internet and e-mail messages back and forth. I think it is a wonderful development.

But we also know that, after parental involvement, the next most important determinate is the quality of teachers in the classroom. We heard consistently from Chairman Greenspan and others on the panel today the importance of professional development making to ensure we get the resources to the teachers so that we have the best and the brightest, as the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. ROEMER) indicated, in the classrooms making the difference that they can.

There, too, we face a huge challenge as a Nation, a 2.2 million teacher retirement over the next 10 years. It is both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is to fill those vacant spots. The opportunity is to fill it with good quality people that are going to make a difference in the classroom.

That is one of the reasons why I and many other Members, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. ROEMER) and also the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE), introduced the Ed-Tech bill, Education-Technology bill, which will provide more resources back to local school districts for the professional development of teachers of how best to use this new powerful learning tool, the technology and the Internet, and the numbers that that brings to the classroom and how they can better integrate that technology into the classroom.

Now, computers and the Internet and all these fancy programs on the computer are not going to replace good teachers. That will never happen. But it can certainly empower the teachers to be much more effective and efficient in connecting with the kids and enhancing student performance in the classroom. So those are just a few of the issues that I wanted to raise today.

Mr. ROEMER. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND) probably has very similar businesses and schools and farms to what I may have in Indiana. I constantly find, as I visit both my small businesses and my big businesses and my unions and my chambers, that there is an overwhelming concern, probably the number one concern within the business community, and it was expressed very well today by the second panel, by people from Intel and other major corporations, international corporations, that we need to do a better job in this country of training our people in technology and math and science and school.

The business community makes this oftentimes their number one concern;

that when one walks out of an Indiana high school or Wisconsin or Florida or North Carolina or California high school, that that degree means that one should be able to walk right into a business at the local community and have certain requisite skills so that one is employable or can continue one's education someplace else.

We need to continue to challenge our public schools, which are doing a very good job, but we need to have them do an even better job in this challenging global economy.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield again?

Mr. ROEMER. I am happy to yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, just for one final thought on this subject. I was very encouraged. In fact, we are seeing a new awakening within the business community about how inextricably linked their future success and growth needs are to the education system.

We are seeing many more private-public partners being formed and creative ideas coming out of the private sector of how they can assist in improving professional development with the teachers, getting the technology into the classroom, making sure that every child, regardless of where they happen to be living and growing up, are going to have access to the important technology so we can close this digital divide and raise all our kids up so they can be competitive in what is going to prove to be a very tough and very competitive marketplace following their education careers.

So that is, I think, a very positive and encouraging development, and I know many of us on the committee and within the new Democratic Coalition in particular are finding creative ways of how we can foster and encourage this type of private-public partnership to achieve common objectives. I think it is the direction we need to be going in. Right now, from what I see, there is a lot of hope and promise in this direction.

Mr. ROEMER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND). I believe that that really leads us to an issue that is a very, very important one and vital one to me; and that is the quality of teachers in our schools.

The gentleman from Florida (Mr. DAVIS) and I have introduced a bill that seeks to find some new ways to bring people in mid career, maybe off of Main Street, maybe an accountant, maybe somebody with expertise in computer technology, somebody with expertise in math or science, from the private sector into the public realm of teaching. It is not a way to circumvent tough standards or teaching requirements, it is a way to still demand that that teacher has to be able to meet stringent tests to convey knowledge to kids in the classroom. But they do not necessarily have to go back, as a 20- or 21-year-old, to Ball State or Indiana University or Saint Mary's and go back

to graduate school; that there are other ways of doing this in this new global economy.

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The gentleman from Florida (Mr. DAVIS) and I have worked for about a year now on this bill. We have some bipartisan support for this bill. We almost got it enacted into law last year; we hope it will be enacted this fall. I know that he has worked very, very hard on this bill and had a number of conversations with the White House and with Republicans and Democrats and almost anybody who will listen.

I would be happy to yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DAVIS) to talk about the importance of quality teaching.

Mr. DAVIS of Florida. I think it is important to emphasize exactly what the problem or challenge our Nation faces. Over the next decade, we are going to have to hire over 2.2 million new schoolteachers in this country. It is a result of demographics, as many of our very fine teachers begin to reach retirement age, and also the terrific growth we are experiencing in all levels of grades today. In Hillsborough County in Tampa we are going to have to hire 7,000 new teachers over the next 10 years, and we are still struggling to find teachers to fill classes that started several weeks ago.

So how do we go about meeting this demand and treating this as not just a challenge as far as quantity but also quality? What can we do to really ensure that we attract the very best people to our classrooms to teach our children?

The Federal Government has sponsored a program known as Troops to Teachers, which was started by Senator JOHN MCCAIN and others, which has encouraged military retirees to move from the military into the classroom. Over 3,000 men and women have done this, about 270 in the State of Florida; and there have been some very good results. A lot of these men and women are there because they want to be there, they bring their life experience into the classroom, and they really have done a lot of great things.

In my hometown, I know of one Vietnam veteran who started a course on the Vietnam War, as a social studies class in high school; something the school district never could have provided otherwise.

So building on that success, the bill that my colleague, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. ROEMER), and I have introduced, along with other Democrats and Republicans, and that Senator BOB GRAHAM has introduced with other Senators in the Senate, would expand the program to anybody. It could be a retired fire fighter, a retired policeman, a retired businessman or businesswoman, or lawyer. We are trying to move people from the fire house or the police station on Main Street to the schoolhouse on Main Street, from the board room to the classroom.

Increasingly we are hearing from lots of people who have said this is something I am willing to do. I want to give something back to the community. I feel my life experience qualifies me to be a teacher. I am not afraid to meet those same high standards that every other teacher has to meet. Because we do not change those standards. We are simply trying to encourage people to make that transition into teaching.

Our bill provides up to \$5,000 as a grant to cover tuition and fees for someone who wants to go back to school to be a teacher and to pass the certification in their State. Our bill, also very importantly, provides funds that are available to any group that wants to encourage people to consider teaching as a second profession. It could be a chamber of commerce, it could be a university, it could be a labor union, it could be a not-for-profit organization. There are a lot of people out there that want to do this, and there is no reason why Congress should not take the lead and step up and call attention to this and facilitate people who really, on an individual basis or on behalf of a group, want to step up and help deal with this challenge.

So I simply cite this as one example of what we can do, among many others, if Democrats and Republicans will come together in the closing days of this session of Congress and deal with things that will really help our school children at home.

Mr. ROEMER. If the gentleman will yield, and the gentleman has probably had this happen to him on occasion too, but I have constituents in my home State of Indiana that know how active I have been on this issue and how enthusiastic I am about this idea, who walk up to me saying, when can we do it? I was fortunate enough, they say, to make a little bit of money over the last 20 years of my career in accounting, and now I want to give back to the community and I want to go into teaching. And if I can pass that stringent exam at the State level and if I can do an able job in that classroom of conveying that knowledge, I want to teach.

The business community is very excited about this idea. The high-tech community is very excited about this idea. As the gentleman noted, Democrats and Republicans have supported the idea. I know the gentleman has probably seen some success in Florida with this idea and people trying it too.

Mr. DAVIS of Florida. I have, and I have talked to men and women who have said to me, I want to make the transition; but before I start my job and earn a salary, I need a little help paying my tuition.

That is one of the purposes of the bill, to provide up to a \$5,000 grant. And in return, and this is important to taxpayers, in return for receiving this grant, that teacher will have to spend at least 3 years teaching in a school that has a high need for teachers. Many of these are our most challenging

schools. Many of the teacher positions that go unfilled are in math and science and special education, and there are people who have excelled in math and science who want to give something back who will make terrific teachers.

There is no reason we should not get this done. We have a perfect opportunity to be a part of the solution. The President has proposed \$25 million to fund this. Senator MIKE DEWINE in the Senate is a strong supporter of this proposition. We need to get it done in this session of Congress, and we need to be part of the solution in dealing with the increasing shortage of teachers.

Mr. ROEMER. I appreciate the gentleman's hard work and articulation of why this is such an important piece of legislation. And the gentleman has noted that we have Senator DEWINE, a Republican from Ohio, and Senator GRAHAM, a Democrat from Florida, trying to work the Senate side on this. We are certainly working with Republicans and Democrats here in the House to try to get this passed as well.

The gentleman mentioned that we based our bill on a previously successful program called Troops to Teachers, where we have somewhere between 3,000 and 4,000 individuals, many of them still in high-need areas where we have a paucity, a shortage, of qualified teachers; where turnover and retention is even higher in some of these rural and inner-city areas. These individuals have brought specific, for the most part, math and science skills into many of these schools. So it has been a winner for public education, it has been a winner for a transition from military to other civilian life, and it has been a winner in terms of retention problems that we are having to deal with in public education.

Mr. DAVIS of Florida. The most recent example of this, if the gentleman will yield, is the New York City School District. The chancellor of the New York City School District, Mr. Hal Levy, has instituted a program he calls the New York Teaching Fellows; and he is succeeding in inspiring men and women to leave their jobs and go into teaching.

We need to be a part of that solution by having financial aid programs that are tailored to help people pay their bills while they are making the transition into teaching.

Mr. ROEMER. I thank the gentleman from Florida for his time and his hard work on this bill.

The gentleman from Florida talked about men and women going into teaching, and I think Mr. Greenspan today also touched on that, in responding to a very important question from the gentlewoman from California, who also serves on the Committee on Education and the Workforce with me. I would like to yield to her to talk a little about a program she is working on about equity, about fairness, about women getting into math and science programs; and maybe she will further

articulate on what Chairman Green-span talked about today in reference to her question.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Well, I thank the gentleman for inviting me to be part of this conversation with him this afternoon on this special order.

I will be talking about my "Go Girl" bill, but before I do that I have a few other thoughts on education that I would like to share with the gentleman in this conversation. Because I think it all works together, by the time I get to my "Go Girl" thoughts, and how important it is that we have women in math, science, and engineering in this country.

When I first came to Congress in 1993, my number one priority was to make education the number one priority in this Nation, and I was honored and delighted to be placed on the Committee on Education and the Workforce with the gentleman from Indiana. We sat side by side, if I remember correctly, and that was when the gentleman's first child was being born. So now 8 years later, the gentleman has a much larger family, and I have a few different ideas about education. My commitment has not changed, but what has changed is my understanding of what it takes for our children to be ready to learn when they enter the classroom.

We can have the best schools and the best teachers in the world, and we must; but our children will not enter the classroom ready to learn if we do not take some steps that are missing right now. If we have the best schools and the best educators, it will not matter if they are not ready to learn. So let us face it, if today's children are lucky enough to have two parents living with them in their home, chances are that both parents are in the workforce, they work outside of the home, and it is our children that are being left behind. It is not parents' fault. They are working hard, they are commuting long hours, they are working long hours, and they are doing that for one reason only and that is to support their families.

The fact is that 66 percent of our mothers with children under age 6 are working; 77 percent of mothers of school-aged children have jobs. Compared to 30 years ago, parents are spending nearly 52 fewer days a year with their children. Fifty-two days less a year with their children. That is almost 2 months in time. So we have to give parents the tools they need to bridge the gap between work and family so that their children will be prepared to succeed when they become adults. I would suggest that there are some tools that we must include so that parents can do a better job and so that we can do a better job for parents and relieve some of their pressures.

First of all, I believe we need to have universal voluntary preschool. I also would support paid family leave, school breakfasts, and quality child care programs, thinking of those four programs as being key to preparing children to

be ready for school when they enter the classroom.

I am the Chair of the Democratic Caucus's Task Force on Children, and we are heading up an effort to ensure that our children's needs are considered in every vote we take in this Congress, and that we develop a comprehensive children's agenda that will help to prepare our children for the challenges that they will face now and the challenges that they will face as adults.

Paid family leave is a key tool. It is a tool we can use to make sure that our children get off to a positive start. Study after study has shown that the first three years are critical to a child's development. Provisions must be made for families to be with their children at this critical time at the beginning of their lives.

I have introduced legislation with Senator CHRIS DODD of Connecticut to allow States to establish paid leave programs so workers can care for newborns or newly adopted children. We know that the Family and Medical Leave Act has done a lot to help families, but most families cannot afford to go without a paycheck. In fact, a recent study found that nearly two-thirds of employees who needed family leave did not take it because they could not give up their family's income. It is our children who are paying the price because their parents need to earn a living, and that is not right. Parents should not have to choose between financial stability and their children's emotional stability.

We also have to look at the fact that learning does not start on the first day of kindergarten. Children are growing and changing from the day that they are born. By providing parents the option of participating in a voluntary universal preschool program, we will be giving all children, not just the parents who can afford to send their children to preschool, but all children a chance to start school ready to learn. Programs like Head Start and Early Head Start show us that pre-K programs work, and parents should have the option of enrolling their children in a structured, quality pre-K program.

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As I have said, with parents working hard, children are spending more and more time in child care. So we must ensure that child care is available to all children and that child care will be able to ensure for these children that they will be ready to learn, also, so that the child care is quality child care, and oh, my, would it not be nice to pay child care workers what they really should be earning?

But in particular, I want to talk about parents with infants and toddlers. They have the hardest time finding quality child care because they are working, especially those in the workforce that work nontraditional hours, weekends and nights, we need to do more so that there is child care avail-

able for children under age 3 and for parents that work nights and weekends.

But it is just not young children who are coming to school unprepared. Our children in school also face challenges. Now, we have title XI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act which I wrote and saw signed into law in my first term in 1995. We need to expand title XI, because title XI allows schools to use more of their Federal funds for in-school support services, so that their students and families have those services available and convenient to them, services such as after-school programs, mentoring programs, tutoring and counseling programs, really services that could help young people address their fears, their angers, their frustrations before they result in tragic consequences like we have experienced this last year at our high schools.

Also, students cannot learn when they are hungry. It is proven that students who eat breakfast do better on tests, they are more well behaved in the classroom and they miss less school than those who do not eat breakfast. In spite of the good economy and because parents are so busy, many children, not only poor children, start the day off without breakfast. My pilot Federal school breakfast program which is under way in five school districts around the country is the first step toward universal school breakfast.

So even within the classroom, many children face challenges. They face challenges that make it hard for them to receive a quality education, and we must have quality education accessible to all children. So that means building new, modern schools that are welcoming to those who are disabled, that provide the technical background and experience and equipment that they need so that they are all learning on a level playing field. And in the high-tech global economy we have, those that graduate without computer skills are going to be left behind, pointblank, they will be left behind, as if we were teaching kids without books or without pencils or without paper.

That is why we have to make sure that minorities and women do not continue to lag in training in math, science and technology. Females make up slightly more than 50 percent of our country's population, but less than 30 percent of America's scientists and less than 10 percent of engineering graduates are women.

That is why I have introduced, now we will talk about Go Girl, that is why I have introduced the Go Girl bill to encourage a bold new workforce of energized women who will go into math and science and technology careers, careers that pay well, careers that are in great demand. Go Girl is legislation that will create a mentoring program to help girls from the fourth grade, because it is shortly after the fourth grade when they become sixth graders and on that for some reason girls lose

interest in science and math. We have to do something to encourage them to become interested and to stay interested in high tech careers.

I do not believe, as our colleague said earlier, that education is only a job for our teachers. We have to have parents involved in their children's education. It has been proven that parental involvement is what makes the difference quite often in a successful student and a failing student. Parental involvement needs to be made a national priority for all schools, all families, and all people. These are just some of the fundamental ideas that I have that I think we in Congress can do something about to ensure that education in America is the best in the world. We must not only look at school buildings but we have to have school buildings. We also have to look at the problems children face before they enter the classroom. Only by seeing the whole picture can we give every child a chance to learn and a chance to succeed.

Children are only 25 percent of our population but they are 100 percent of this Nation's future. Our children must have every opportunity to succeed because there are going to be many challenges in this 21st century. Their future depends on it and the future of this Nation depends on it.

Mr. ROEMER. I thank the gentlewoman for her articulate comments in looking at education across the spectrum and across the board. She did mention the need to try to get to children at earlier and earlier stages because there is so much great, ripe potential there for our children to learn at 2 and 3 and 4 and 5 years old. She also serves on the Committee on Education and the Workforce. When we looked at the existing Head Start program that is about 35 years old and we tried to put more emphasis in the Head Start program on what we found out about how much more children can learn now in the year 2000 than what we suspected in 1965, we tried to move it a little bit more away from some sitting services to more quality education. But still we only have sometimes 40 or 45 percent of some of the eligible children enrolled in that Head Start program, and I know she is a big proponent of that early education and quality Head Start programs.

Ms. WOOLSEY. It was a hearing with Dr. Ed Ziegler, the father of Head Start, that started me on the road to preparing children for school, even though I know my major effort is that all children have the best education in the world, but getting them ready for this education. We had a child care hearing and, of course, he was there to talk about the successes and some of the learning experiences of Head Start. Dr. Ziegler said, before we even started, "I have learned that no matter how good we make Head Start, if we don't take care of our children and have parents involved with them the first, from zero to 3 years old, the best Head Start

programs in the world will have less of a chance of success." When I talk about universal preschool, I use Head Start as my model. So the gentleman is right. We have to make that available, on a voluntary basis. We do not want to force people to send their children to preschool if they can keep them home and want to.

Mr. ROEMER. I thank the gentlewoman from California. In reclaiming my time, with respect to Head Start and parental involvement, what we have also tried to do with that Head Start program is devise some programs at night for parents to come in and work with the children directly so that they gain some of the skills and education to help teach their children some of the things, or reinforce with the children some of the things that the Head Start programs are trying to teach their children. But the gentlewoman is absolutely right. The key indicator, the very most important indicator for a child's success in education is parental involvement. If those parents are not involved, we can have the teacher quality and we can have the professional development and we can have the local control and the good ideas to reinforce charter schools and public choice, but that parental involvement is so critically important.

Ms. WOOLSEY. I think what the gentleman is referring to, teaching the parents at Head Start, is parents being the first teacher. That is where it starts and that is where it ends with our children. The better the parent knows how to parent and how to teach their children by example in general, the better that child is.

Mr. ROEMER. I thank the gentlewoman from California for her very helpful comments.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to segue into, we talk about parental involvement in terms of being a key in respect to helping our education system improve, but we also need legislators here in this body that have direct experience with our schools and know what role we should play and what role we should not play. The gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) who I am going to yield to has got not only experience as a parent with some of his children teaching but he has got experience as a superintendent. The gentleman from North Carolina has worked tirelessly on education issues in this Congress, construction issues, education issues, quality teaching issues, technology issues.

I yield to the gentleman from North Carolina.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. I want to thank my friend and colleague the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. ROEMER) for yielding and secondly for hosting this special order today.

I was seated there as the dialogue was going on and could not help but think, when I was the State superintendent of schools in North Carolina back in 1996 contemplating running for Congress, I could not help but think it

is amazing what a few years have done to the dialogue in this body. In 1996, I was so irritated as State superintendent trying to work in my State of North Carolina with 1.1 million children and listening to the teachers and administrators so beaten down here in Congress, talking about abolishing the Department of Education, doing away with child nutrition, cutting moneys, block granting, all those things that scared the people to death who were out there nurturing and caring for children, many of whom came to school each day to the safest place that they would arrive, and we have talked about that, where the teachers had to feed them breakfast and love them before they could teach them because unfortunately they did not get the kind of nurturing that every child did have to come.

It is good to know now we are having more dialogue now across the aisle about the ability of this Congress to do something. I am glad our colleagues on the other side of the aisle are starting to pay some attention. I hope that before we finish this 106th Congress that we will heed to a number of the issues that have been addressed already but which I will not try to repeat. But I think it is important, a number of the pieces that you have worked on and been a cosponsor on. The whole issue of character education that we have included not only in higher education but now we have included in the reauthorization act. I thank the gentleman for his help on that. We have used it in North Carolina and it absolutely works in increasing academic achievement and reducing discipline in our schools.

I sought this office when I came to Washington for only one reason and really one reason only. I wanted to come and help change the tone of the debate. I wanted to help make education work at the national level. Since I have been here and was sworn in, I have worked, as the gentleman knows, with my colleagues really on both sides of the aisle to help shape, where I could, meaningful legislation that will help our communities do a number of things, one of which that you are a cosponsor of as are, I think, most of the Members who have been here today, the truth is about 228 Members have now signed on to a bill for school construction.

All these things. New teachers. We are talking about 100,000 teachers we have to fund this time, and I happen to believe we ought to fund those teachers and not block grant it. Funding for teachers, that is what parents tell me they need. I got a letter out of my local paper today that I am going to share with our friends in a few moments. But it is so important that we make sure that we help build schools and we do help reduce class sizes.

The gentleman and his wife have several children. How would you like to be teaching 28 or 30 of them in your house each day?

Mr. ROEMER. I do have. We just had our fourth child, a little girl, Grace. I

have Patrick, Matthew and Sarah. The job of a teacher today, and I think the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) in talking to his wife and talking to him on many occasions late at night around here, I have heard about his children who are no longer the age of my children, 7, 6, 3 and 40 days old, but they are teaching, they followed you into the education profession. Oftentimes the gentleman and I have talked at length about the importance of parental involvement. Some of our children are going to school without that parental involvement, without one parent following through on homework, on keeping them diligent about what they need to do to follow up on school work. We are demanding of our teachers not just to teach the three Rs, reading, writing and arithmetic but they are responsible for ethics, character education, values. Some of the children are bringing problems from the home into the classroom.

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And when that classroom has 26 of those children in it, that is quite a challenge. So the gentleman brings up an excellent point.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. If the gentleman would yield, I have a letter here that was a letter to the editor. It was in our State paper, the News & Observer, just this morning on this very issue. A teacher had written a letter talking about class size and how important class size is, and in addition to that, how important it is to have a classroom large enough to teach.

My colleagues know we will hear so many people talk about, well, this school was fine when I was there. It was a different world then. We were talking earlier about high tech and our people in the business community, not only just high tech, the people who work, run small businesses.

It is important for them to have a well-educated employee who comes in, but it is important also for them to understand that their business is different than it was 25 years ago, and so are our schools and so are their needs. But this parent said, her name is Kimberly Clay, in Raleigh, North Carolina, she said, just a few days ago I visited my daughter's class. She happens to be a 4th grader.

She had 31 students in the classroom, 31, and those children come with any multitude of issues. The gentleman talked about those who come from different backgrounds, and that is true; and we have children who need special help in languages, specialty help as a result of a number of disabilities they might have; but the other side of it is also a number of students who may come to school sick, we sort of forget that sometimes, simply because the parents cannot afford to put them in daycare, and they have to work and the teachers have to handle that. Medication has to be dispensed and the list goes on and on.

I do not think we have a lot of colleagues who really understand that

today, what we really place on the shoulders of a teacher; and then we say to them, but we want you to turn out the best students in the world, and we want them to be better than they have ever been; and by the way, we cannot control your salaries up here, so we are not going to pay you too much, but we still want you to do a good job.

This parent was saying, it is impossible, talking about this teacher being able to teach them with all they need to do, and nurture 31 children. It is impossible for the teacher, who is excellent, let me repeat that again, the teacher, who she has already identified as an excellent teacher, to address those children's needs, let alone the remainder of the class. Because there were a couple of children with very special needs in this class.

And she talks about Wake County, which is a county this was written about. They subsequently improved their test scores, and they have been over the last several years one of the leading ones in our State; and she talks about the need for better facilities. The facilities are inadequate as we continue to increase student enrollment.

I think we have a lot of colleagues who forget that. We talk about needs, but we forget enrollments are the largest today in America they have ever been in the history of this country. Fifty-three million students are in our public schools today, as a result of what we call the baby boom echo. That means the baby boom who is having babies.

And if my colleagues will remember, Secretary Riley has released a report that over the next 10 years that number is going to grow even more dramatically, and in my home State of North Carolina, the projections are that we will be the fourth fastest-growing State in America for students in that age group.

We are growing fast now. We have children in closets and converted gyms. You name it, they are there. It is very difficult to teach. One of the real challenges, and I saw it this morning on the local news here in D.C., a Maryland school, where we are starting, and it happens in North Carolina I am sure it happens in Indiana and if the Members will check in their home schools, they will find it is happening all across America because our schools are getting bigger. And they were built years ago. We have not increased the size of the media center.

We used to call them libraries. We have not increased the size of the cafeteria where children have lunch. Can my colleagues imagine a small child having to eat lunch at 10 o'clock in the morning? And that happens in this country. It happens in my home county, my home State; and we passed a \$1.8 billion bond issue, incidentally, at the State level in 1996 to help the local units, and they are raising taxes to build schools, but they are growing so rapidly across America that they need help.

Mr. ROEMER. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman mentioned this case from a teacher in his home State, North Carolina, of 31 children in one classroom; and it just brings home what we have been saying over the last hour: parental involvement, class size, quality teacher, discipline, character education in that school and some professional development opportunities for the teacher are keys for that school room to work.

Let us say with those 31 children that six of them are at risk of dropping out, five of them may have some kind of learning disability or have a prescription of Ritalin, and then there might be another five that are gifted and talented, and the teacher needs to spend more time with them. So right there, we have a number out of that 31, we probably have 16 children or so that are somewhere in between.

What does that teacher do with 31 kids? Should there be some role in a partnership, not mandating from Washington, D.C., that we say this to our local schools, but giving local schools some of the resources and some of the opportunity to say, if this is a big problem in our local community in North Carolina with 31 kids in the school room, we want to do something about it?

Mr. ETHERIDGE. I think the gentleman is right, and as the gentleman knows, we have a number of things we are working on, one of which the gentleman is a part of. I have introduced legislation, a number of others have, there was one yesterday the Rangel-Johnson-Etheridge bill for school construction at the Federal level providing that at the Federal level we will only pay the interest, \$25 billion, to be allocated across the country. The local units will sell those bonds, build the buildings to help give that relief. Because in a lot of places, the real problem the schools have is space.

Teachers are a problem. Space is a problem. All these other things are a problem, but even if we allocate the 100,000 teachers, we have to do it hand in hand with the locals and help them build the space; and I think it is absolutely imperative that we do it.

During the recess, we released the report, not unlike the report mentioned by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND), on K through 3 showing the number of schools, classrooms that had more than the 18 optimum we are trying to get to in K through 3. What we found out, there was over 90 percent.

Now, I mentioned the gentleman's children and mine earlier, we love all three of ours. And they were great youngsters. They were great youngsters, and they are outstanding young people today. But I shudder to think if I had to teach them everyday and I had 28 or 30 of them with their varying personalities as bright as they are and their different interests, I admire the teachers. God gave us mothers, and that was great. But he also gave us

teachers, and that is even better. Because they are great people; they deserve our admiration and all of our praise.

I visited one school, and I will not forget it, I went in. They had so many trailers on the campus they called it the trailer park. Now, teachers can teach in that, but the problem is we do not have the space, we do not have the opportunity to move around and interact with students like we would like to. The real problem is, when it rains, guess what happens? They get wet and go into the main building. They go to the bathroom. They go to the cafeteria. They go to the media center. They present a part of the linkage of that school, and we can do better and we have some wonderful teachers in this country with hearts of gold doing the Lord's work in all kinds of conditions.

I think at a time when we have the opportunity in this body to form that partnership, we ought to do it. We have a bill pending now, as the gentleman well knows, with 228 congressional sponsors from those on both sides of the aisle. I think it is incumbent upon the Republican leadership who runs this House to bring that bill up and allow us to vote on it.

It would pass. The President would sign it, and we could send that money out to help local schools. It is in no way meddling, because they would have total control over it; all we would do is pay the interest. Those are the kind of partnerships that the business community would applaud. They are the things that the parents want to happen.

The years that I served, 8 of them as State superintendent of the schools in North Carolina, and my colleagues have heard me say this on the floor before, I have never had a child, I never had a student ask me where the money came from. They do not really care. They just know they do not have as much in some communities as others. We have a great country. We have one of the wealthiest countries ever in the world, and there is no excuse at a time of prosperity when we cannot do the things we need to do for children to prepare for the 21st century and give every child that opportunity.

Because I truly believe education is the one thing that levels the playing field, and that is what you fought for all of your life. I would not be here today if it were not for public education, and most Members of this body, if they would be honest with us, would not be here either.

And I think we have an obligation to the next generation to reach out and help when we can. There have been times when we could not do that in the past. We did not have the resources. We now have it. We can join with the President in making sure we put out that 100,000 teachers; we can do the staff development we need, start planning for the future and also provide the resources to build schools.

Mr. ROEMER. I thank the gentleman from North Carolina for his remarks

and for engaging in the colloquy with me, as I have engaged with my friends from California, Florida, and Wisconsin here over the last 50 minutes or so; and I want to conclude where I started, and that is as education goes, so goes America.

As we are able in a bipartisan way in this body to work together in a civil manner, Democrat and Republican alike, to try to work to give our local public schools more arrows in their quiver to try to solve some of the problems that they are engaged in right now, whether it is parental involvement, which we quite frankly do quite a lot about; but if it is the quality of teachers, we have some ideas that they might want to try, class size reduction.

There are some ideas out there, many of them have started at some of the local levels that we have shared with other communities: professional development opportunities, such as the Eisenhower program, character education, discipline, safe schools, safe schools from drugs and drug dealers.

These are some of the things that the Democrats and Republicans should be able to work together on as we did work together in a few instances on charter schools and public choice; on the education flexibility bill that my good friend, the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE), and I worked on and we worked on some of the ESEA together before the agreement fell apart.

So for the benefit of these children, for the benefit of an economy that needs better-educated children, for the benefit of our civil society and the way that this body and this Chamber should work in working together and sometimes we will politely or adamantly disagree, let us try to get Democrats and Republicans to work together on the single most important issue to most citizens today, and that is improving our public education.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COVERAGE

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

Mr. GREENWOOD. Mr. Speaker, this evening, several of my colleagues and I want to talk about prescription drug coverage. I want to talk about one of the most important issues that this Congress is deliberating upon and one that we believe there is a solution to and particularly a bipartisan solution.

I want to begin by reading from a letter that I received from a constituent of mine, a 70-year-old widow. She actually has some prescription drug coverage, but it is a \$500-per-year limit, and this is what she writes: "I am in pain daily, and I cannot correct the problems because of financial difficulty. I have stopped taking Prilosec, which cost \$285 per month, Zolof, which costs \$100 per month, Lossomax,

which also costs \$100 per month, Zanaz, which costs \$100 a month and Zocor, which costs over \$100 a month. I need these drugs filled monthly and simply cannot afford them.

I am also in need of a pain pill, Viox, approximately \$89, and I have not been able to purchase it. I have cried myself to sleep over this dilemma."

Mr. Speaker, those words touched my heart when I read that letter, and that is why I have read it today, and I read it in many places across this country. My constituent does not care whether Republicans solve her problem or whether Democrats solve her problem or whether the Congress solves her problem or whether the President solves her problem. What she cares about is whether the pain goes away. What she cares about is whether the glaucoma that is making her eyesight weak is cured. What she cares about is whether she's depressed.

We have an opportunity now, right now, still this year, to put people before politics and solve the problem of my constituent, and solve the problem of elderly women and elderly men and disabled men, women and children all over this country if we can provide a prescription drug benefit.

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This House has passed a benefit. I just want to talk about how we got here. In 1965 the Medicare program was created and it was a milestone in American history. Prior to that time, if you became elderly and you lost your health care, you lost your job, you retired. Unless you were among the fortunate, you really were without and devastating illnesses shortened life and certainly lessened the quality of life for many of our elderly.

So the Congress, in 1965, did exactly the right thing, created the Medicare program, a wonderful thing, a wonderful part of Americana. But in those days, I do not think they even really gave serious consideration to creating a prescription drug benefit. Why? Because prescription drugs were not used nearly as frequently as they are today, and also because they had just bitten off a pretty big piece, in terms of the cost and the complexity of the program, to assure hospitalization care, to assure doctors' visits were going to be paid for. It was a huge accomplishment.

Now, in the 35 years that ensued between the creation of Medicare in 1965 and today, our constituents have told us, with increasing frequency, with increasing poignancy, that they are making horrible decisions between choosing to pay for the prescriptions that their doctors tell them they must have and putting food on the table; between taking the three or four pills that they are prescribed per day or maybe only taking one because they are trying to stretch out their medicines, which really is not in the interest of their health.

The Congress has not done anything. Congress has not done anything for 35