

"The truth has never hurt a democracy. Since there are so many unanswered questions, an investigation will not hurt. It will once and for all end the questions of Americans and of many people around the world."

From Strongsville, Ohio, Sandy Fronius, a constituent of mine in northeast Ohio, writes:

"I am just a typical middle-aged, middle-class American, and I am deeply concerned about the possibility that the young men and women of our Armed Forces were sent into danger for no good reason. If we were lied to, I believe Mr. Bush should be relieved of his office."

Jerry Lowe from Cincinnati:

"If you as my Congressman have nothing to hide, if the Republican Party has nothing to hide, if the Bush administration has nothing to hide, then I urge you to join the crusade for truth to which all public servants should subscribe. Your constituents are watching. Restore the faith of Ohioans and Americans in the dedication of our elected officials to seek the truth and serve our country with integrity."

There are literally hundreds of more of these in Ohio, thousands, tens of thousands more of these around the country. I think people are very concerned and want to see Congress pay attention to what really happened.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HEAD START REAUTHORIZATION

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

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, this week we will consider legislation that is of critical importance to our Nation's future, the reauthorization of Head Start. This legislation is a top priority for me and for all of my colleagues in the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the Congressional Black Caucus, and the Congressional Asian-Pacific American Caucus. Today, Hispanics are the largest minority group in the United States. However, the Hispanic community has the lowest level of educational attainment of any community in the Nation. This educational attainment, this attainment gap, starts from early childhood where Hispanics are less likely to participate in preschool programs, opening an achievement gap even before the first day of kindergarten begins. The gap expands through elementary school, where Hispanic students are more likely to be held back; increases in high school where they are more likely to drop out; and continues to widen in

college where they are less likely to attend a 4-year college and less likely to obtain a college degree.

The upcoming reauthorization of the premier early childhood education program, Head Start, presents us with an opportunity to close that gap for Hispanic and low-income children. This should be a time of hope and optimism for our community. Sadly, it is just the opposite. The majority's plans for the Head Start program are a great source of anxiety for the Hispanic community.

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD a recent article dated July 14, 2003, from the Fort Worth Star-Telegram entitled, "Hispanics Worry About Head Start Proposal."

For over 35 years, the Head Start program has enjoyed great success in meeting the comprehensive development needs of low-income children. Head Start programs achieve school readiness for these children through a holistic approach and intense parental involvement. The range and intensity of services is assured because of national program standards. Sending the program to the States would fatally undermine these national standards, jeopardizing access to the comprehensive services that make Head Start effective in serving low-income children and their families.

Yet that is just what the administration proposed and the Republicans in Congress intend to do. The Republican proposal to block-grant Head Start will do nothing to strengthen the program for the growing numbers of limited English proficient, LEP, children in communities across the Nation. As we have seen with the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, States look to the Federal Government for assistance and guidance in providing services to these populations. When Federal assistance is not forthcoming, the children suffer. Instead of looking for ways to divest themselves of responsibility for Head Start, the administration and the Congress should put Head Start on a path to full funding. Currently Head Start only serves 60 percent of the eligible population in our country. Migrant and seasonal Head Start programs only reach 19 percent of the eligible children; and, listen to this, Early Head Start only reaches 3 percent of the eligible children.

As a Nation, we must do better. Every child in America, no matter their race or the income level of their parents, should have the same opportunity to obtain a quality education and reach their full potential. We have the opportunity to do this, reach their full potential, in the Head Start reauthorization bill. Unfortunately, however, the legislation we will debate this week falls far short of that mark.

In closing, I want to say that I hope my colleagues will defeat H.R. 2210 and send the bill back to the committee for more work. We can do better. And for the sake of needy children all across the country, we must do better.

[From the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, July 14, 2003]

HISPANICS WORRY ABOUT HEAD START PROPOSAL

(By Gustavo Reveles Acosta)

FORT WORTH.—The already low number of Hispanic children served by the federal Head Start program could diminish even more if the changes proposed by the Bush administration come through, several Hispanic advocacy groups said.

Hispanic advocates are calling President Bush's call to overhaul Head Start by creating eight state-operated programs "a blow" to providing service to low-income Hispanic children.

"Ours are some of the most vulnerable kids. Head Start gives them an opportunity to be introduced to English, books and ongoing health care," said Manda Lopez, executive director of the National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association, which advocates for the children of migrant farmworkers, who are mostly Hispanics.

Lopez, and groups such as the National Council of La Raza and the National Head Start Association, argue that handing over the 38-year-old program to the states will reduce funding for local grantees, diminish the quality of services and erase most of the tough oversight that is enforced under the federal program.

The reduced funding will further underserve the Hispanic population, Hispanic groups contend.

The National Council of La Raza, which will consider the Head Start issue during its national conference in Austin next week, believes that Hispanic children in areas with traditionally strong Hispanic populations are better served. But it is in communities with emerging populations of Hispanics that the most help is needed.

"States like California and Texas do much better than states like South Carolina that are barely seeing their Latino population grow," said Raul Gonzalez, a senior education analyst with NCLR.

"Given recent statistics, the next generation of kids participating in Head Start will be largely Latino, and we need to identify places where we can better serve them."

According to figures from the National Association of Head Starts, 33 percent of the nearly 1 million children in Head Start are Hispanic. The group's figures also show that only 23 percent of the eligible Hispanic population is being served.

In Tarrant County, 45 percent of the 2,500 children in the program are Hispanic.

The nonprofit group in charge of Head Start in the county, Child Care Associates, doesn't have any figures on the number of eligible Hispanic children in Tarrant County, but it estimates that about 11,500 eligible children currently go unserved.

"We are a minority majority community, and issues affecting the Latino population are definitely going to affect the children that we serve," said John A. Whitcamp, president of Child Care Associates.

"We are nowhere near the level that we need to be. And this bill is doing nothing to change that."

Although Whitcamp said his centers are well-equipped and staffed to meet the needs of Hispanics, advocates say that many centers shy away from expanding their service to Spanish-speaking minorities for three main reasons:

The overall underfunding of the program.

In areas where Hispanic populations have just recently emerged, providers think it is too expensive to hire the bilingual instructors and buy the culturally representative material that may be needed to serve Hispanic children.

The federal government's lack of enforcement to confirm that the racial and ethnic makeup of Head Start participation matches that of the community.

Even though Angelica Jones' 6-year-old son attended Head Start two years ago and her younger daughter has been eligible to do so as well, she is patiently waiting for a spot in the program.

"I think I got lucky the last time because I got in with no problems," said Jones, a stay-at-home mom who visited several north Fort Worth Head Start centers for availability earlier this week.

"I know there's a long waiting list and there are several of us who go to different [centers] to check for any spots every week."

NCLR, Gonzalez's group, hasn't officially opposed Bush's proposed changes. And although he said the bill doesn't outline a specific plan to increase Hispanic participation "by even one child," he welcomes some of the recommendations.

"The bill is by no means a perfect bill, but does allow for better assessment of communities that make sure the people in most need are the ones being served," he said.

Gonzalez said that assessment could increase Hispanic participation in areas with large or emerging Hispanic populations like Fort Worth.

Still, Whitcamp said that in the long run, the bill would hinder services in Fort Worth because the state would use some of its monies to help other state-funded children programs like CHIPS, that are struggling for a budget.

Handing over Head Start control to the states would further diminish funds by creating an additional filter of overhead costs, said Whitcamp, who oversees 40 centers throughout the country.

"We have been making the argument about our kids being underserved for years," Lopez said.

"This is not a new issue for us."

IRAQ'S WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I am here tonight to talk about something that is truly scary, the President's credibility gap. The fact that Members of Congress, the American people, and our international allies can no longer trust the evidence President Bush uses to justify war is a terrible threat to his credibility and, therefore, to America's security.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will remind Members that it is not in order to question the credibility of the President.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Do not take my word for it. Listen to one of my constituents, Roy, from San Rafael. He writes:

I was one of those who, traumatized by 9/11, trusted our government to lead us down the right path based on indisputable evidence and sound judgment. I supported their decision to go to war. I deserve to know if I was duped.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is that many people in this country are faced with a similar and terrible dilemma. Are they

to believe whether or not the administration lied to them? Are they to believe that the White House is inept, that they based a decision to send young Americans to die on faulty information?

Another constituent of mine, William, from Sebastopol, wrote about what President Bush's untruths meant to him:

I love my country but I am not very proud of it right now. This administration must answer for their deception. Business as usual is not acceptable.

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And Reede from Forest Knolls, California, sums up exactly why the White House must talk about these untruths and their unwillingness to come clean about them:

There is nothing more essential to democracy than information. The administration's calculated disinformation campaign about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction is a direct attack upon our most cherished democratic values. Such flagrant contempt for the right of the people to control their government is unacceptable.

After September 11, Mr. Speaker, we all wanted to trust. We wanted to give our administration the benefit of the doubt. However, it is increasingly obvious that it is either not worthy of that trust, or it is simply not trustworthy. Either way, the administration must be held accountable for the untruths that came out of their mouths.

Don and Pam, two of my constituents from Santa Rosa, write,

One of the Bush administration's favorite words is accountability. But because of their obsession with secrecy and control, they have successfully avoided making themselves accountable. Reasons for going to war in Iraq and, beyond that, the Bush foreign policy, including preemptive strikes and unilateral action, demands accountability, accountability through thorough investigation.

Mr. Speaker, Americans want answers. They want answers from their administration, and they are getting the runaround.

My constituent, Patrick from Sebastopol, writes,

The administration's repeated use of the phrase, "attempts to rewrite history" is unbelievable. They are the ones attempting to rewrite history.

The simple fact is that the American people demand answers, and it is now up to Congress to get them.

Landis, from my own hometown, Petaluma, says it perfectly:

It is very important to be able to trust one's government. We don't always need to agree, but we do need to believe that our government is working in our best interests. Even if the current administration is able to fool many Americans, it is not fooling the world. Until an independent commission investigates possible manipulations of intelligence data, the world and, indeed, many Americans, will not be able to trust that the Bush administration is working in America's best interest.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for a meaningful investigation into the administration's statements. The people I

work for in Marin and Sonoma Counties and Americans across the country are demanding an investigation, and Congress must carry it out. I am pleased to add my voice to those of my constituents and join the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN) in his call for a bipartisan investigation into weapons of mass destruction.

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

(Mr. GUTKNECHT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

AMERICA CALLS FOR THE TRUTH

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

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, tonight I rise to acknowledge the groundswell of support for an investigation into whether or not the Bush administration made its case for war against Iraq. As proof of the growing demand for honest answers from the Bush administration, we need look no further than the support around the country to create an independent commission to investigate whether the Bush administration manipulated and distorted evidence to take the country to war in Iraq.

Now, over 300,000 people have signed this petition and hundreds of thousands of people commented. Of course, I received thousands of letters from my own district, but tonight I would like to read into the RECORD just some of the over 24,000 comments received from outside of my district in the State of California.

The credibility of this administration in front of the American public and the world at large is our most precious commodity. We must know the truth as soon as possible.

This came from Arcadia, California.

I am writing to you as a concerned citizen of this country. I believe that we are heading down a very dangerous and destructive path that is being led by the Bush administration. This country is no more special than all of the countries in the world, and American citizens are just as important as Iraqi citizens. Our actions are not preventing hostility, but I believe it is creating more violence and anger towards America. It is the outrage that stems from within that compels me to write to you and ask you to look into this matter and not merely dismiss it as another policy move.

Again, Arcadia, California.

This one comes from Dublin, California.

As a member of a military family, I am deeply concerned any time a President chooses to send our Armed Forces into danger zones. I have been appalled by the growing evidence that the President may have lied about the reasons for invading and conquering Iraq and fear that many lives may have been lost because of deliberate falsehoods.

From Pleasanton, California: