

presidential homes and libraries to science centers and art and children's museums, they encourage curiosity, they provide a source of enjoyment as well as education, and they preserve our country's great history for every generation.

I'm sure there is not a person among us who does not have a cherished memory of a visit to a museum. Museums are unique places in our communities. They come in every variety and size. Their collections and the ideas they share cover the broad spectrum of human endeavors—science, history, nature and art. There is a museum to satisfy and peak the interests of everyone of us.

Museums are public forums. They provide an environment rich with opportunity for intergenerational learning and sharing among children, parents, and grandparents. Museum visitors can come to know the struggles and accomplishments of different cultures and achieve a deeper understanding of their own family's, community's and country's history. But most importantly, museums are fun places to visit.

I have always loved museums and have been fortunate to have a number of world-renowned museums in my own district: the Buffalo Museum of Science, the Martin House Restoration Corporation, the Italian Heritage Museum & Cultural Center of Western NY, the Baker-Cederberg Museum and Archives, the George Eastman House, Landmark Society of Western New York, the Memorial Art Gallery at the University of Rochester, Rochester Historical Society, Rochester Museum & Science Center, the Strong Museum and the Susan B. Anthony House. These museums are so diverse; clearly any person could find the perfect museum in which to explore a unique interest.

But it is not just my constituents that have benefited from the presence of museums. All Americans do, because there are museums in nearly every Congressional District across this country. And they help our economy. Museums play an important role in promoting travel and tourism and driving economic development. They bring heightened local and national visibility to communities and their artists, scientists, and educators, and they spend \$5.2 billion a year serving the American public. Most museums operate as small or mid-sized community institutions, offer free or reduced admissions at least one day a week, work with local schools to enhance curriculum and education of students and families, and employ paid staff and dedicated volunteers.

In addition to educating and entertaining, museums undertake the immense task of preserving and protecting the more than 750 million objects in their collections, ensuring that they are publicly available to our citizens for this and future generations.

H. Res. 389 recognizes "The Year of the Museum" as a celebration of great American cultural, history and traditions. I urge my colleagues to join me in recognizing the vast public service provided by the museums in their own communities by supporting this resolution.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support H. Res. 389, supporting the goals and ideals of the Year of the Museum. This year marks the centennial of the American Association of Museums, and in turn we celebrate the museums throughout our nation that educate, entertain, and enrich local communities. I am

proud to say I am a cosponsor of this resolution.

There are more than 16,000 museums in the United States that protect and share our cultural heritage. Museums help us understand who we are and where we came from. They preserve our history, our artifacts, and our art, and they display it in ways that increase our understanding of familiar and foreign cultures and of the universe itself.

History comes to life for the millions of children who visit museums every year. 11,000 American museums have educational programs for schoolchildren of all ages. Museums annually spend more than \$1 billion and 18 million hours to educate children through school programs such as guided field trips, traveling exhibits, and professional development for teachers.

The 12th District of New Jersey is home many diverse museums, including the New Jersey State Museum in Trenton. In addition to exhibits on local history, the State Museum offers a wide array of educational opportunities to children, including family oriented educational workshops and a planetarium. From the vast fine arts collection of the Princeton University Art Museum, to the learning opportunities available at the Vietnam Era Educational Center, I am proud of the benefits that all of the 12th District's museums provide to our community.

I support the goals of the Year of the Museum and I am proud to join my colleagues in supporting this resolution.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GUTKNECHT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 389.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF NATIONAL MENTORING MONTH

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 660) supporting the goals and ideals of National Mentoring Month.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 660

Whereas youth mentoring is a centuries-old concept, through which a dependable adult provides guidance, support, and encouragement to help a young person become a responsible, productive adult;

Whereas mentoring, when done well, helps young people stay in school and improve academically, boosts self-esteem and communication skills, and improves the chances of going on to higher education;

Whereas there are thousands of mentoring programs in communities of all sizes across the United States, focused on building strong, effective relationships between caring and responsible adults and young people who need positive adult role models;

Whereas in spite of the great benefits mentoring provides, America has a serious men-

toring gap, with more than 15 million young people currently in need of caring adult role models;

Whereas the demand for mentoring far exceeds the current capacity of local mentoring programs and the number of adults who currently volunteer as mentors;

Whereas on December 22, 2005, the President designated January 2006 as National Mentoring Month to focus the Nation's attention on the essential role mentoring plays in the lives of young people;

Whereas the month-long celebration of mentoring will encourage more individuals and organizations, including schools, businesses, nonprofit organizations, faith institutions, and foundations, to become engaged in mentoring; and

Whereas National Mentoring Month will, most importantly, build awareness of mentoring and recruit more individuals to become mentors, helping close our Nation's mentoring gap: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

(1) supports the goals and ideals of National Mentoring Month;

(2) acknowledges the hard work of individuals and groups who promote mentoring and who are observing the month with appropriate ceremonies and activities that promote awareness of and volunteer involvement with youth mentoring; and

(3) recognizes with gratitude the contributions of the millions of caring adults who are already serving as mentors and encourages more adults to volunteer as mentors.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H. Res. 660.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Nebraska?

There was no objection.

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in honor of National Mentoring Month, which actually was celebrated in January, but we were not here in January, so we are doing it a month late. I would like to honor the contributions of the thousands of mentors and mentoring programs across the country that work so hard to provide young people with support and assistance.

And I would like to make a personal reference here, Mr. Speaker, in that I spent most of my previous career, 36 years, working with young people, and I saw many changes during that period of time, certainly great changes in the family. The out-of-wedlock birth rate was 5 percent in 1960; today it is about 35 percent. So a huge increase.

And at the time that I first started my coaching career, the number of children living with both biological parents was 90 percent. Today it is roughly 50 percent. And we currently

have 22 million fatherless children in the United States today. And I worked with many young people who were without fathers, and I saw the devastation that this lack of a father caused in their lives.

I also witnessed many cultural changes during that 36-year period. We have become the most violent Nation in the developed countries for young people, currently lead the world among developed nations in suicide and homicide rates. Certainly drug and alcohol abuse has increased dramatically. And, of course, gang activity, many people are aware of the increase there.

And also some of the influences of the media have not all been that positive. Some of the television, some of the movies, some of the Internet activities, some video games certainly have been somewhat pernicious and not been helpful to our young people.

So if we look at history, we realize that most great civilizations decline and fall due to internal factors, not external consequences. And so if we look at Rome, to some degree the British Empire, Soviet Union, we see some of those things occurring. And I think it is important that we not be caught off guard here in the United States.

It is difficult to legislate or mandate solutions to some of the problems that I have outlined briefly here, but I would like to remind the fact that mentoring does work. An adult who has no vested interest in a young person, who is not a parent, not a grandparent not a teacher, no one who is paid to come and spend time with that child, makes a tremendous impact on that child's life if they simply care enough to show up and spend time, because it indicates to that young person that they are worth something, that they are worthwhile. And so we see some dramatic changes.

My wife and I have been involved with a mentoring program which currently mentors 2,900 young people, mostly in the State of Nebraska. We have done some research through Gallup, the polling company, and they have found that absenteeism, in a good mentoring program, is reduced by 80 percent, absenteeism from school. We find that discipline referrals go down by about 70 percent, grades improve by 40 percent, and also pregnancy rates go down significantly. Substance abuse is decreased by 40 to 50 percent. Gang activity is reduced substantially.

And some things improve and increase. Graduation rates go up. And personal hygiene and personal relationships with parents and peers also tends to improve.

So a mentor is someone who cares. And we have so many young people in our country today who simply do not have an adult in their life that they can count on, somebody that cares about them unequivocally and will always be there for them.

A mentor is also someone who affirms, who says, I believe in you, I see some talent, I see some possibility. A

mentor is someone who provides a vision of what might be possible. So mentoring is critical. Mentoring does work.

And Congress has responded. We had an amendment to No Child Left Behind called Mentoring For Success, which I was able to introduce. In the last 5 years we have provided \$184 million of support for mentoring programs around the country. This is supported, of course, by Chairman BOEHNER.

Another mentoring program was funded to the tune of \$168 million, and this is for children of prisoners. It was through HHS and supported by the President. And currently it costs about \$500 per mentoring match, and so we reach undoubtedly 600,000, 700,000 children through these programs.

Mentoring is cost-effective. It costs \$500 to mentor a child. It costs \$25,000 to \$30,000 to lock someone up in prison. And the average meth addict will cost the State that it resides in roughly \$47,500 if they are addicted to meth because of crimes committed and other abuses.

So at the present time, Mr. Speaker, it is estimated that we need roughly 18 million mentors in the United States, children who badly need somebody in their life. We currently are able to supply roughly 3 million, so we are 15 million short. And what we have done in Congress is helped; certainly been a step in the right direction.

So I am pleased that we can at least acknowledge what has been done, and National Mentoring Month has certainly increased awareness and shown the importance of mentoring and the need for more mentors across the country.

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

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Nebraska for his leadership in bringing this resolution recognizing National Mentoring Month to the floor today. Since he arrived in Congress, the coach, as he is so often called, has worked to make youth issues a priority both on and off the field, and this resolution is another example of his dedication to this effort.

As we celebrate mentoring today, I am reminded of the words of Coretta Scott King when she said: I am fulfilled in what I do. I never thought that a lot of money, nor fine clothes, the finer things in life would make you happy.

Mentoring is not a material good. It does not involve lots of heavy spending or working long hours to achieve monetary greatness, but mentoring truly is one of the finer things in life. It is a valuable activity that gives all involved a sense of happiness and connection that material things cannot.

A mentor, of course, is often an adult, who, along with parents, provides young people support, counsel, friendship, and a constructive example. The average mentor spends 8 to 10 hours a month with his or her mentee

on activities such as reading a good book aloud, visiting museums or going to the playground.

When a young person is matched with a caring, responsible individual, this relationship often makes a positive difference in the quality of life for that young person.

For much too long we have focused on providing remedies to problems that only address negative behavior, rather than looking at ways to promote the positive and healthy development of our young people. This resolution directs us to focus on what children need in order to grow into healthy, safe and well-educated adults, making sure that children have access to a caring and responsible adult relationship.

Mentoring opens young people's eyes to a brighter future, and every young person deserves that opportunity. Unfortunately at this time there are simply not enough mentors to go around. Only about 1,000 of the more than 1 million school-aged children in the Chicago area are fortunate enough to have a mentor. Nationally more than 15 million young people currently are in need of a caring adult role model.

In Chicago and across the country, it is clear that the mentoring framework is in place. Now we just need more people to volunteer their time to help change the life of a child. Research shows that young people who are mentored have a stronger attachment to school, higher graduation rates, and decreased involvement with drugs, gangs and violence.

This bill recognizes these positive outcomes and acknowledges the hard work of individuals and groups who promote mentoring. Mentoring is a strong investment in our children and in the future of our country. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am indeed pleased to join with Representative OSBORNE and my colleagues in celebrating the essential role that mentoring plays in the lives of our young people.

Again, I commend the gentleman from Nebraska for his outstanding leadership in bringing these kinds of issues to the forefront and to the attention of the Members of this body.

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

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

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS).

□ 1530

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of House Resolution 660. I want to thank my colleague from Nebraska for his work stressing the need for mentoring in our Nation. It has been a pleasure to work with Congressman OSBORNE over the years to emphasize this great need for mentors.

Just yesterday a young woman from my San Diego community dropped by my office to share her story of how a

mentoring program changed her life. She came from a difficult family situation as a teenager and sought help from the Turning Point program at the YMCA Youth and Family Services in San Diego. There she found the help and the guidance of mentors who helped her in turning her life around for the best and eventually enrolling in college and setting some very ambitious personal goals. With the help of mentors, she learned the skills and confidence needed to make it in life, including how to communicate and how to build self-esteem. And she also learned practical skills in the 18-month program such as how to budget finances and how to approach job interviews.

Mr. Speaker, her story is a perfect example of the power and impact of mentoring. Those who receive the help and the support of a mentor are likely to help others and to do good. As an adult she now works as a staff member of the Turning Point program, returning the gift of mentoring to young at-risk youth who face similar circumstances. Her experience also shows that mentoring is not only about helping people facing difficulties, but giving them the strength and the drive to chart their own course and to discover their own strength and talents. Her talent now is helping others change their lives for the better.

We are hearing a lot right now about the need to make our young people competitive and to push academic standards, but let us also guide our children and give them the self-esteem and the courage to face the world and all its obstacles, particularly those young people who face substantial obstacles. Our children need the wisdom and strength of someone who cares. And I know as a school board member I would often run into teachers and principals who came from what we would call tough neighborhoods, and I would ask them what made the difference, because they would share with me that a lot of children they grew up with were in jail, and some had died, young people, and they shared that the one person, that one teacher that showed an interest, that one community member who always looked out for them, that one member who really would not let them get away with things growing up. It is always important to have that special someone there who cares.

As a proud sponsor to H.R. 660, I want to urge my colleagues to support the resolution before us today and to recognize the need to promote mentoring.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the proposed bill, H. Res. 660, "Supporting the goals and ideals of National Mentoring Month."

In 2002, January was deemed National Mentoring Month to recognize the importance that mentoring has on our Nation's youth. The demand for mentors stems from the growing need of our Nation's youth to have positive role models in their life that can provide them with the critical support and guidance necessary for them to succeed.

Without external support they are less likely to graduate from high school, and more likely to engage in criminal behavior. In contrast, youth matched in mentoring programs are 46 percent less likely to use illegal drugs and 37 percent less likely to skip a day of class. Additionally, youth in mentoring programs show increased self-esteem, self-confidence and self-worth.

The benefits of mentoring do not stop with the youth. Research by the Commonwealth Fund shows that 83 percent of adult mentors "learned or gained something personally from their mentoring experience," suggesting that mentoring is a positive experience for the both the mentor and the youth.

Further, by involving individuals and organizations, such as non-profits, faith-based institutions and businesses, we strengthen our communities—something that each of us works diligently to accomplish on a daily basis.

In my district in Houston, we have worked to foster this relationship through several mentoring programs. Two key institutions are the Volunteer Houston Mentoring Institute and the National Big Brothers, Big Sisters Program, both of which are working with area schools to administer successful programs. Volunteer Houston and the Houston Independent School District entered into a partnership to ensure that at-risk high school students have mentors to help them achieve academic success. Last year, the national Big Brothers, Big Sisters Program matched 225,000 youth with mentors, 1,500 of which are in the Houston program.

Both of these programs illustrate that significant progress has been made, but there is still much to be done. Nationally, there are as many as 15 million young people that make up what is known as the mentoring gap, or youth in need of mentors. In my district this is of particularly grave concern, as 5,300 youth displaced by hurricane Katrina are enrolled in the Houston Independent School District. They have sustained both psychological and emotional burdens, and could immediately benefit from a mentoring program.

In order to extend the great benefits of mentoring to all of those in need of services it is important to recruit new volunteers and expand the scope of operations.

With that said, I join my colleagues in supporting the goals and ideals of National Mentoring Month, recognize the need for increased awareness, and stand to recognize those selfless individuals and organizations that make mentoring a priority, often without the praise they deserve.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I am so glad to be here with my colleagues Supporting Goals and Ideals of National Mentoring Month.

As House Resolution 660 so accurately states, "mentoring is a centuries-old concept, through which a dependable adult provides guidance, support, and encouragement to help a young become a responsible, productive adult." It goes on to conclude that when properly carried out mentoring "helps young people stay in school and improve academically, boosts self-esteem and communication skills, and improves the chances of going on to higher education." I could not agree more.

In Michigan, we proudly recognize the contributions made by Mentor Michigan, led by Governor Jennifer Granholm, and the First Gentleman Dan Mulhern. Two individuals who lead by example and serve as mentors them-

selves. I was recently privileged to join the First Gentleman at a presentation on mentoring at the First Presbyterian Church in Mt. Clemens, Michigan where he spoke passionately and effectively not only about the meaning of mentoring in his own life but the broader impact it has for our Michigan community.

This program exemplifies what happens when government and community actively work to make certain all of our youth develop lasting relationships with individuals who are stable and caring. By developing a state-wide network of mentoring programs, Mentor Michigan has fostered support and unity among programs that accomplish what so often gets overlooked, encouragement and guidance of youth. Mentoring programs throughout the state are work in conjunction with Mentor Michigan to promote three simple values.

First, that every child has the right to a stable, caring adult in his or her life. It is so easy to take this for granted. In Michigan, over 237 programs connect youth with high quality mentors that are dedicated to helping children reach their aspirations and guiding them through fulfilling their needs. Mentor Michigan recruits and connects dedicated mentors with effective programs.

Second, everyone is responsible for the well being of our children including individuals, businesses, nonprofit and faith-based organizations, education institutions, and government. "It takes a village to raise a child," says an old African proverb, and Mentor Michigan knows that a safe, well developed network of resources is a vital way to show that community involvement matters in shaping the way young people see the world. Mentors satisfy needs and programs that value mentors such as Mentor Michigan should be commended.

Third, volunteering is a significant way for people to enrich their lives by giving of themselves to children in their community. Youth energize the world around them and working with youth energizes the individuals who take up the challenge. Over 99 percent of Michigan's mentors have recommended mentoring to others. Mentor Michigan programs provide Americans the opportunity to develop young leaders of tomorrow.

Michigan is the only state with such a focus on tracking and assessing its mentoring programs. It is estimated that over 30,000 Michigan youth benefitted from having a mentor in 2005. I feel privileged to know such outstanding devotion to the generation of tomorrow and very proud to honor it today.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in recognizing the great contributions mentoring programs make every day to a better America of tomorrow.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, I urge support of H. Res. 660. I want to thank Mr. DAVIS of Illinois for his support.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GUTKNECHT). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 660.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof)

the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

### HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 657) honoring the contributions of Catholic schools.

The Clerk read as follows:

#### H. RES. 657

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

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

Whereas the total Catholic school student enrollment for the 2005–2006 academic year is about 2.5 million and the student-teacher ratio is 15 to 1;

Whereas Catholic schools teach a diverse group of students;

Whereas more than 27 percent of school children enrolled in Catholic schools are from minority backgrounds, and nearly 14 percent are non-Catholics;

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

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

Whereas January 29 to February 4, 2006, has been designated as Catholic Schools Week by the National Catholic Educational Association and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

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

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

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE).

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Res. 657.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Delaware?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 657 offered by the gentleman from Minnesota. This resolution increases the awareness of Catholic education while honoring the contributions of America's Catholic schools.

January 29 through February 4, 2006, has been designated Catholic Schools Week, an annual tradition in its 32nd year and jointly sponsored by the National Catholic Education Association, as well as the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

With this resolution we recognize the vital role Catholic elementary and secondary schools play in providing a values-added education with high standards of quality and excellence to the over 2.4 million students enrolled in Catholic schools across the country. In just my home State of Delaware, there are over 30 Catholic schools.

According to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic schools have a graduation rate of over 98 percent, and about 97 percent of Catholic high school graduates go to postsecondary training at 4-year colleges, community colleges or technical schools. This success could be also attributed to the importance Catholic educators place on character and morals. By making the development of moral and social values an integral part of the curriculum, Catholic schools are ensuring that their students are not only good academically, but also good citizens.

The theme for Catholic Schools Week 2006 is "Character, Compassion, Values." This theme resonates with the Catholic schools this academic year in particular. Catholic schools demonstrated an enormous amount of character and compassion in their response to the devastating hurricanes that hit the gulf coast last year. In the wake of this national disaster, more than 300,000 students were displaced from their homes, schools and communities. Catholic schools opened their doors and hearts and welcomed these students into their classrooms. They provided these children with the opportunity to continue their studies without stopping to consider how to cover the costs of that education. Instead, the Catholic schools knew their first priority was to educate these children, and, second, figure out how to cover the greater costs they incurred.

In addition, the Catholic schools in New Orleans proved to be the most resilient by becoming some of the first schools in the hurricane-damaged area to reopen their doors to students.

I appreciate the great work being done by Catholic schools, their administrators, and teachers, as well as their parents and volunteers. Catholic schools carry out their servant mission by building the academic achievement, character, and values of their students.

I again commend the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KENNEDY) for introducing this resolution, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution recognizing the contributions Catholic schools make to our society.

Both public and Catholic schools provide a strong foundation for our Nation's children. While our public schools educate the vast majority of our children, our Catholic schools provide an excellent and enriching alternative.

I have attended Catholic schools myself. I received a high-quality education from these schools and have benefited greatly. Sister Jean and Sister Jerome taught me to read and master phonics. Sister Hilary taught me Latin, which I in turn taught also. They were the greatest influence outside of my family. They not only challenged me intellectually, but forced me to examine my own personal formation.

At St. Mary's I learned the greatness of God and the dignity of humanity. In Congress, my basic principle is that government's role is to promote, protect, defend and enhance human dignity. I examine every bill on these principles of human dignity that I learned at St. Mary's. Children across America have benefited from the same positive influence a Catholic education had on me. H. Res. 657 recognizes and celebrates our Catholic schools for this contribution.

I believe that one of the greatest aspects of the American education system is its diversity. The goal of American education is to provide anyone with the opportunity to succeed. Catholic schools are a critical part of that equation, teaching critical values and providing their students with beneficial and life-enriching experiences.

The contributions which Catholic schools make to our Nation and our children strengthen our society and our place in the world. Our children have more opportunities because both Catholic and public schools can provide them with a high-quality education. Together these two sectors of our education system will work to ensure our excellence in the world.

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

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KENNEDY), the sponsor who has undertaken to pursue this resolution.

Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from