

awards such as the Fields medal, two Pulitzer Prizes, NASA's top award for research, and the Smithsonian Institution's Conservation award. Along with the faculty, the Gator students are among the brightest. UF admitted about 1,049 international baccalaureate students for the 2004-2005 academic year, more than any other university in the world.

So the Florida men's basketball team are excellent representatives of both the university and the great State of Florida in their focus, their persistence, and unassailable desire to succeed. I take great pride, my colleagues, in representing the University of Florida in Congress and congratulate Coach Billy Donovan and the entire university on this great accomplishment and hope for the best for next year. Go Gators.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PLATTS. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield as much time as the gentleman may consume to another distinguished member of the Florida delegation, Mr. KELLER.

Mr. KELLER of Florida. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the University of Florida's men's basketball team on their second consecutive NCAA, Division I championship. On April 2 of this year, they joined only six other teams in NCAA history to win back-to-back championships. My congratulations also go out to Coach Billy Donovan, who has done a fine job with these young men, not only leading them to back-to-back championships but also for preparing them for what lies ahead in life.

The University of Florida is a fine institution with many standout athletes. My home State of Florida and I are tremendously proud of their accomplishments on and off the field. The University of Florida is the only Division I college in history to win the national championship in basketball and football in the same calendar year. In fact, between the Gator championships in basketball and football, I don't think there will be an athlete on campus who has not met the President by the time they graduate.

Now, so many of these Gator basketball and football will be heading off to the NBA and NFL where they will have to struggle to make due on their multimillion dollar salaries. The good news for many of these other schools is that a lot of the starters will be moving on. The bad news, of course, is I am hearing they are having their best recruiting classes ever in both football and basketball. Ohio State was such a worthy opponent both in football and basketball and handled themselves with so much class, much praise is warranted to the Buckeye fans as well. Congratulations on a job well done.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PLATTS. Madam Speaker, we have got a great group of very proud Floridians here today. I am pleased to yield again as much time as the gentleman may consume to the gentleman, Mr. BILIRAKIS, from Florida.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Madam Speaker, it is with great Gator pride that I rise today to support this resolution honoring my alma mater, the University of Florida, on winning the 2007 NCAA men's basketball championship.

The Gators began this season looking to become the first team since 1992 to repeat as national champions. Everyone in the Gator nation anxiously anticipated this season's tip-off, as all five starters unselfishly returned to school in hopes of making history. And they did. They became the only team in history to repeat as champions with the same starting lineup.

Last year, this Gator team came from obscurity to win the championship. However, this year the Gators were expected to win, which made them a target for every school they played. These young men not only handled the pressure and scrutiny, but they used it to fuel another amazing title run through both the SEC and the NCAA tournament.

Madam Speaker, I believe that this basketball team represents the true embodiment of sportsmanship and teamwork. For the last 2 years, these young men won with class, not selfishness. The five starters gave up their very lucrative NBA contracts to return to the school they loved. How refreshing. In today's society, this an act that is remarkable. Believe it or not, it is remarkable. I want to commend all of them for their hard work and discipline.

I also want to recognize Coach Billy Donovan and all of his assistants for the tremendous job they have done over the years. We are very lucky to have them, and I am glad he stayed at the University of Florida.

Finally, I want to thank president Bernie Machen and athletic director Jeremy Foley, whose leadership made it possible for the Gators to be the only team in NCAA history to hold both the football and basketball titles simultaneously.

I wish the University of Florida the best of luck in continuing this remarkable trend. And on behalf of my entire family, including my sons Michael, Teddy, Manuel, and Nicholas, thanks for making our dream come true, Gators.

Madam Speaker, it truly is great to be a Florida Gator.

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

The Florida Gators team will certainly go down as one of the best teams in the history of college basketball. After winning back-to-back championships this year, Coach Billy Donovan said, "I sit up here very, very humbled, because I think I was fortunate enough over the last 2 years to coach a group

of guys that has to go down in history as one of the greatest teams of all time."

The love for the game and each other, the hustle and hard work that the players exemplified the past 2 years is something they certainly learned from their head coach, Billy Donovan. At the young age of 41, Coach Donovan is now in some elite company being one of only four active coaches to have won multiple championships.

I extend my heartiest congratulations to Head Coach Donovan, all of the hardworking players, their fans, and all members of the University of Florida family, including another distinguished graduate of the University of Florida who I would be in trouble with if I didn't mention when I go home tonight. My next oldest brother, Mark Platts, graduated in 1987 with a master's degree from the University of Florida.

I am happy to join with my chairwoman as well as my colleagues from Florida in honoring this exceptional team and all of its accomplishments and wish them continued success, unless they are playing my alma mater in the years to come.

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

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Madam Speaker, again I encourage my colleagues to pass H. Res. 298. And congratulations again and certainly may they have a great future.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. HARMAN). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 298.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. PLATTS. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

CONGRATULATING CHARTER SCHOOLS FOR THEIR ONGOING CONTRIBUTIONS TO EDUCATION

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 344) congratulating charter schools and their students, parents, teachers, and administrators across the United States for their ongoing contributions to education, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 344

Whereas charter schools deliver high-quality education and challenge our students to reach their potential;

Whereas charter schools provide thousands of families with diverse and innovative educational options for their children;

Whereas charter schools are public schools authorized by a designated public entity that are responding to the needs of our communities, families, and students and promoting the principles of quality, choice, and innovation;

Whereas in exchange for the flexibility and autonomy given to charter schools, they are held accountable by their sponsors for improving student achievement and for their financial and other operations;

Whereas 40 States and the District of Columbia have passed laws authorizing charter schools;

Whereas charter schools improve their students' achievement and stimulate improvement in traditional public schools;

Whereas charter schools must meet the student achievement accountability requirements under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 in the same manner as traditional public schools, and often set higher and additional individual goals to ensure that they are of high quality and truly accountable to the public;

Whereas charter schools give parents new freedom to choose their public school, routinely measure parental satisfaction levels, and must prove their ongoing success to parents, policymakers, and their communities;

Whereas charter schools nationwide serve a higher percentage of low-income and minority students than the traditional public system;

Whereas charter schools have enjoyed broad bipartisan support from the Administration, Congress, State Governors and legislatures, educators, and parents across the United States; and

Whereas the eighth annual National Charter Schools Week, to be held April 29 through May 5, 2007, is an event sponsored by charter schools and grassroots charter school organizations across the United States to recognize the significant impacts, achievements, and innovations of charter schools: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) acknowledges and commends charter schools and their students, parents, teachers, and administrators across the United States for their ongoing contributions to education and improving and strengthening our public school system;

(2) supports the eighth annual National Charter Schools Week; and

(3) joins the President in calling on the people of the United States to conduct appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities to demonstrate support for charter schools during this weeklong celebration in communities throughout the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PLATTS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Madam Speaker, I request 5 legislative days during which Members may insert material relevant to H. Res. 344 into the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Madam Speaker, I want to thank Mr. BOUSTANY for introducing this resolution to honor National Charter School Week. He has been the sponsor of this resolution for the past 3 years, and we appreciate his leadership on this issue.

Charter schools across the country are marking this occasion by opening their doors to the community and inviting them to learn about the role of charter schools in public education. With over 3,600 charter schools educating nearly 1.1 million children, charter schools have changed the landscape of public education. Almost 250 schools are created each year. Committed parents and students and community leaders have led the way, creating charter schools to meet the needs of the local community.

Charter schools are free from regulations but not accountability. There are model charter schools that are producing good outcomes for their students. The public school system in this country continues to generate innovative strategies for educating all children. Quality charter schools represent one model for this innovation.

On the occasion of National Charter School Week, I want to commend the 90,000 public schools in this country that are working hard to provide opportunity for children across the country. I urge my colleagues to support our Nation's charter schools and to vote for this resolution.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PLATTS. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to my friend and colleague from Louisiana (Mr. BOUSTANY).

Mr. BOUSTANY. Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Pennsylvania for yielding time to me.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 344, congratulating charter schools and their students, parents, teachers, and administrators across the United States for their ongoing contributions to educational excellence.

Charter schools are public schools that are created by teachers, parents, and other members of the community as innovative means to educate students and to stimulate reform in the public school system. As public schools, they must serve students from all backgrounds and educational abilities.

In exchange for greater accountability for student achievements, these schools are exempt from many local and State regulations. Grassroots support for charter schools continues to grow, from one school in the 1992-1993 school year, to over 4,000 schools serving over 1 million students in the 2006-2007 school year.

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The demand is simply remarkable. The charter model itself is playing a

critical role in these schools' success. Its flexibility and accountability are allowing individuals with nontraditional backgrounds and relentless attitudes to create high achievement cultures. These charter schools are setting new standards about what's possible and about what we should expect from all our public schools. Indeed, charter schools are shattering low expectations and breaking through long standing barriers that have prevented large numbers of at-risk students from achieving educational success.

Charter schools are usually among the top performers in big city school districts and often rival the highest performing schools in surrounding suburban districts. These high performers are setting important examples about what public schools can achieve with disadvantaged students.

More and more data indicates that charter schools deliver promising results for student achievement. In an analysis of almost three dozen charter school studies, a vast majority found that overall gains in charter schools were larger than in other public schools, sometimes in certain significant categories of schools such as elementary schools, high schools or schools serving at risk students.

Yet, even with these outstanding results, of the 40 States that have passed charter school laws, 25 States and the District of Columbia have some type of legislative cap on charter school growth. These caps serve as blunt instruments that do not lead to high quality schools. Instead of stifling growth, States should focus on providing the resources, oversight and accountability that helps charter schools thrive.

We know what produces high quality charter schools—dedicated students, parents, teachers and principals, rigorous approval processes, conscientious oversight and sufficient resources, including facilities funding. We should work to replicate these models of best practices and apply them to local school districts throughout the country.

It is my hope that the charter community will continue to build on its 15-year history of providing a high quality option in public education that is based on innovation, freedom from red tape, and partnership between parents and educators, an option that is giving new hope to disadvantaged and minority families across the country.

I also appreciate the contribution charter schools have made in ongoing efforts to rebuild and strengthen my home State of Louisiana after Hurricanes Rita and Katrina, particularly in New Orleans.

For these reasons, it is my honor to congratulate charter schools and their students, parents, teachers and administrators across the United States for their ongoing contributions to education, as well as recognizing this week as National Charter School Week. I commend President Bush for his recent

proclamation, "recognizing the important contributions of charter schools," as well as my good friends and colleagues, Mr. PLATTS and Mrs. MCCARTHY for bringing this resolution to the floor.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Connecticut, Mr. CHRIS MURPHY.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlelady from New York and the gentlemen from Pennsylvania and Louisiana for bringing this resolution before us.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of this resolution to recognize the contributions of charter schools to education. So often we talk about the crisis of America's schools and our educational system, but it's equally important to take some time to recognize the good that's being done. That's why I welcome this opportunity to acknowledge the impact that charter schools are making in our education system nationally.

In congratulating charter schools, I want to also acknowledge the work of all of our administrators and our educators in our public school system and our public charter school system as well. Noncharter public schools remain the bedrock of our educational system, and we need to make sure that we are doing everything here in Congress and at our State level to make sure that our public schools have the opportunity to succeed.

But charter schools are growing because, when done right, they're working. They represent a network of committed and innovative administrators, teachers and parents whose great determination and resolve complement the public education system. This national network of 4,000 charter schools infuses hope and possibility into communities. In Connecticut alone, there are 16 charter schools educating over 2,500 students.

Charter schools are infused with an imagination. Moreover, these schools are effectively engaging students around innovative and aggressive curriculum. They are setting the bar high and they are getting results. As we consider solutions for improving math and science education and increasing the number of high school graduates and students matriculating to colleges and university, we should remember the contributions that charter schools are making to the education of our Nation's children.

Again, Madam Speaker, I commend the tremendous dedication of all educators. Their unsung sacrifices are critical to ensuring the success of America's youth today and the skill of tomorrow's workforce.

I urge all Members to support this resolution.

Mr. PLATTS. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to support House Resolution

344, congratulating charter schools and their students, parents, teachers and administrators across the United States for their ongoing contributions to education.

Charter schools are innovative public schools with a simple interest in providing a quality education to children in their communities. They explore new educational approaches, such as longer school days or extended school years, and are free from most rules and regulations governing conventional public schools.

These schools meet the student achievement and accountability requirements under No Child Left Behind in the same manner as traditional public schools and they often set higher individual goals to ensure that they are of high quality.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join with my colleagues from New York, Louisiana, Connecticut, elsewhere around the country in recognizing these innovative public schools, and I am proud to recognize this week as National Charter Schools Week.

I commend President Bush for his recent proclamation stating, quote, "recognizing the important contributions of charter schools," as well on the executive branch side; and again urge a "yes" vote for this resolution.

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

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Madam Speaker, again, I would like to thank the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BOUSTANY) for introducing this legislation, and I urge my colleagues to support House Resolution 344.

As you can tell, today we have been talking about the children of this Nation on so many of our different issues. And again, I am very happy to work with my colleague on the committee, Mr. PLATTS from Pennsylvania.

When we talk about our children and the future of the Nation, obviously, education is the most important thing. So, again, it has been a pleasure introducing these resolutions.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, as we celebrate charter schools I want to recognize the Youth Connection Charter School (YCCS) operating in my Congressional District. The Youth Connection Charter School (YCCS) has a unique mission and purpose. It has been said that education is the great equalizer—it is the key to success.

The mission of YCCS is to provide individuals who have dropped out of school an opportunity—to drop back in and receive a quality education. Since its creation in 1997, YCCS has graduated more than 5,700 students who had previously dropped out of traditional high schools. Just think, what would have happened to those students if YCCS was not available to them. They likely would have become another statistic.

Clearly, the data shows that students who drop out are more likely to be unemployed. In fact, the unemployment rate nationally for high school drop-outs was 29.8 percent in 200. (Dept. of Labor). We know that students who drop out are more likely to be candidates for prisons. A total of 75 percent of America's

state prison inmates are high school drop-outs, with only 59 percent of America's federal prison inmates completing high school (Harlow, 2003). We also know that high school drop-outs are more likely to be receiving public assistance and living in poverty. These negative consequences lead to the destruction of a community and country. Students who drop out are less likely to be married or see a doctor on a regular basis. The benefits of a high school education move society forward economically and socially. A person with a high school diploma is more likely to be employed, live longer, and become a productive part of society.

The impact of YCCS and its involvement as the only charter school in Illinois providing alternative educational services focused primarily on drop-outs can be seen throughout education. In 2005, YCCS placed in the upper third for school performance in reading by CPS in comparison to all of the other 76 high schools in the city of Chicago.

Conversely, we know that a quality education opens the doors of opportunity and provides hope for a brighter future. An investment in the education of young people who have dropped out of school saves our city and state taxpayers' money. The Alliance for Excellent Education reports that a 1 percent increase in high school graduation rates would save approximately \$1.4 billion in incarceration costs yearly. Additionally, a 1-year increase in average education levels would reduce arrest rates by 11 percent.

I am pleased to honor the outstanding work of the Youth Connection Charter School.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 344.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBER TO PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 11 of rule X, clause 11 of rule I, and the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following Member of the House to the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence to fill the existing vacancy thereon:

Mr. GALLEGLY, California

COMMEMORATING THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ABOLITION OF THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

Mr. PAYNE. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 272) commemorating the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, as amended.