

generations, are being denied the opportunity to live to their fullest potential because they were denied the opportunity of a college education.

This year, the Education and Labor Committee is leading legislation that will significantly improve access to college with improved Pell Grants and cuts in student loans.

So, Mr. Speaker, education affects many issues that we deal with: economic competitiveness, crime and welfare. And so I'd like to thank the gentlelady from Michigan, the chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, Ms. KILPATRICK, for organizing the effort to focus on education tonight.

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

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

THE TRUE GOAL OF OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM

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

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. described the end result of education as a person having the ability to think intensively and critically. He embraced the idea that intelligence plus character should be the true goal of our education system. This truly is the goal that we must strive and work towards.

Helping our children to think is crucial; however, the blocks to build to that point are difficult to create. It takes support, resources, confidence and opportunity, but most importantly, these pieces must be available for each individual no matter who or where they come from.

Today we find our public school systems throughout America in many places in disarray, underfunded, overpopulated, and, in many districts, underattended. As a Nation, we have moved forward, and then there are times when it looks as though we're doing the Watusi, that is, two steps forward, and two steps back.

I can remember a time when, in almost any community that you went, people realized and recognized that education was the absolute key to progress.

According to the Abecedarian study, the importance of early childhood education is critical. The report shows that children who receive a formal early childhood education overwhelmingly do better in school.

Unfortunately, 55 percent of children whose families are below the poverty line do not receive a formal early childhood education. An overwhelming number of these children, whose mothers are unemployed, do not have access

to early childhood education. These numbers are astonishing, especially given what we already know.

We are engaged in competitiveness, not just in communities and neighborhoods or States, but from a global perspective, and unless children get an early beginning, they find themselves continuously behind and finding it difficult to catch up.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, one of the areas that I have a tremendous amount of concern about is the fact that African American males are graduating from high school at a rate of less than 50 percent. As a matter of fact, many of them drop out as early as third or fourth grade.

And it's my contention that they drop out because, for many of them, they have never seen a male figure with a book in his hand. They've never had a male teacher who looked like them. They've never seen a male at home with a book. And so they contend that education is a female or woman or girl kind of thing.

And we must find ways to get more male teachers in the classroom, more male teachers involved in Head Start. And we must get communities totally engaged and totally involved, so that as children grow up, they will know that education has been and will continue to be the great equalizer, and without it they don't have a chance.

So I thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Congressional Black Caucus, our chairman, Representative KILPATRICK, for setting aside this time to address education issues, especially affecting African American communities.

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

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

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INEQUITIES IN EDUCATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, today we members of the Congressional Black Caucus, under the leadership of our chairwoman, CAROLYN CHEEKS KILPATRICK, are taking time to commemorate Juneteenth and reflect on this historical event in 1865 when the news of their emancipation was finally received by 250,000 enslaved in Texas, 2 years late. And as we do so, it seems appropriate that we reflect on the inequities that continue to plague the African American community, the remedies for which are also too late.

And so, as we take the floor of the seat of government in our country, we say the time is now. Again, better later

than never for this 110th Congress to bring another message of freedom to African Americans, freedom from economic blight, from lack of access to quality and comprehensive health care, from substandard housing, and from the issue that is the subject of our discussion tonight: rundown, poorly equipped, and understaffed schools and the overall inequities in our Nation's educational system.

June also marks the celebration of graduation season across the Nation. And as we cheer millions of high school graduates, we must not forget the 1.2 million students who left school this year without a high school diploma.

Dropouts are twice as likely to be unemployed. Even those who work, for those who work the pay is low. Opportunity for advancement is limited, and health insurance is essentially unavailable.

This is a particular problem in communities of color. For African Americans and Latinos, the dropout rate approaches an astonishing and alarming 50 percent and affects all communities, large or small, rural or urban, including our territories. This high rate of high school dropout and the consequent unemployment disproportionately affect African American males. According to the last U.S. Census, the fraction of black men with a high school education or less is about 50 percent, nearly half of the black male population.

A report published by the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation last year indicated that the employment for what they call less educated black men has been in decline during the last decade, and this, despite the fact that opportunities exist to reverse this because of discrimination in hiring.

The racial difference in the labor force participation rates are sharpest for those without a high school degree. Only half of prime-age black men without a high school degree are in the labor force.

Mr. Speaker, education is everyone's issue. However, the current administration seems to have an opposing view as they propose to completely cut funding for the Dropout Prevention Program. The Youth Activities Program, under their fiscal year 2008 budget proposal, would lose \$100 million of funding compared to 2006, and Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities grant program would almost be cut by \$150 million. This funding needs to be restored. These programs are part of the solution to the dropout problem.

So we in the Congressional Black Caucus are issuing a call to action across our Nation to reduce the dropout rate and raise the graduation rate above its current level of 70 percent. Keeping our people in improved schools must be a part of the debate and be addressed as we move to reauthorize and fund an amended and improved No Child Left Behind.

Today the Campaign for High School Equity met on the Hill to address and

help us address this very issue. Among the reasons cited as causes of the persistent dropout rates are lack of parental involvement and one I heard in focus groups of young men in my own district: poorly devised and presented curricula that don't keep or stimulate our students' interests.

We urge the appropriators to include incentives to address this issue, to improve graduation rates and to ensure an increase in funding for key programs like Upward Bound in the 2008 appropriation. This program also helps to reverse our Nation's dropout rate.

Another factor that is indirectly related is one that was the subject of Bob Herbert's column last Saturday, lack of employment for teens during the high school year and in the summer. We are at the lowest national teen employment rate in the past 60 years at 33.1 percent, according to one study from Northeastern University. Again, this bleak outlook is primarily affecting Black teens.

As Mr. Herbert said: "This is the flip side of the American dream. Kids who grow up poor and never work at a regular job tend not to think in terms of post-graduate degrees, marriages, careers, and the cost of educating the next generation. A steady job could make all the difference. Along with the paycheck comes a sense of the possibilities. Kids develop a clearer understanding of the value of education and are more likely to stay in school."

No Child Left Behind created widespread pressure to improve academic achievement. While many districts have struggled to meet benchmarks set by this legislation, far too many of our children, especially African American children, are still being left behind.

We need to apply the same pressure, focus, and funding to improve the educational environment and experience and to provide the tools that are needed for education success in all of our schools.

The enslaved Africans in Texas waited 2 years to finally hear the word that they were free. Let us not have our young children and people wait one minute longer for the education they need and the future they deserve.

EDUCATION

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

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, forty years ago, the U.S. was number one in the world in high school graduation rates. Today it ranks 17th.

About 1/3 of the students who enter 9th grade each fall will not graduate from high school with four years, if at all.

High school students living in low-income families drop out of school at six times the rate of their peers from high-income families.

Drop out rates are especially high in communities of color: Only about 55 percent of African American students and 52 percent of Hispanic students graduate on time from high school with a regular diploma, compared to 78 percent of white students.

In my district, in Oakland, the graduation rates for African American males is 26 percent, compared to 57 percent is the graduation rate for white males.

In this country, there are about 2,000 high schools that produce the majority of dropouts.

Six million students throughout America are currently at risk of dropping out of school. Students who fail to graduate from high school are more likely to participate in criminal activity than students who do graduate. Likewise, students with low levels of achievement in high school are more likely to engage in crime than students with high levels of achievement.

For example, The Harvard University Civil Rights Project and the Urban Institute Education Policy Center conducted a study on K-12 schools in California. The Center estimated that Oakland's 52 percent dropout rate costs the state \$14 billion in lost wages, crime and jail time.

Investing in education would save millions of dollars in crime related expenditures annually.

The statistics are staggering and tell the story. Approximately 75 percent of state prison inmates did not complete high school. High school dropouts are 3.5 times more likely than high school graduates to be arrested in their lifetimes. And a mere one percent increase in high school graduation rates would save approximately \$1.4 billion in costs associated with incarceration costs, or about \$2,100 for each male high school graduate.

We must do better by our children. Nothing less than the future of this country is at stake. That is why I am committed to effective reform that can transform high schools and keep students at the greatest risk of dropping out on the path to graduation.

I'm proud to support authorizing legislation that will soon be introduced which will help address some of the reforms that are needed and that is why I'm proud to be an advocate on the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education subcommittee working to appropriate funding to address the crisis in dropouts that our country is facing.

Clearly, we need increased investments in programs that keep kids in school and learning.

SCHOOL COUNSELING BILL

On the Labor, Health and Human Services subcommittee, I worked with my colleagues to include \$61.5 million for elementary and secondary school counseling in the FY08 bill that is currently working its way through our committee. This is a 77.5 percent increase in a program that the President would have eliminated. These funds enable school districts to hire academic counselors, psychologists, and social workers. The additional resources will be targeted to improving and expanding academic and mental health counseling to middle and high school adolescents. This significant increase is a tremendous step toward addressing the crisis in counseling in our schools.

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Another critical tool we have in our arsenal to fight drop out and to keep kids off the street and for preventing youth violence is our nation's after school programs.

The fact of the matter is that between 3-6 pm the rate of juvenile crime triples.

On LHHS subcommittee, we were able to provide a \$125 million increase over FY07 levels for a total of over a billion dollars for the 21st century community learning centers. This

program is a formula grant to states which in turn distribute 95 percent of the funds on a competitive basis to local school districts, community based organizations and other organizations is for after school activities that make sure that young people have alternatives to getting into trouble.

UPWARD BOUND / TRIO AND GEAR UP

I want to echo the comments of my colleagues here tonight about the problems we are fighting as it relates to the Absolute Priority regulation and the concerns over the loss of funding for numerous previously funded grantees including 30 percent of our HBCU's and Mills College in my district. I know that working together we will resolve these critical issues and I want to specifically thank BOBBY SCOTT and GWEN MOORE for their leadership on the Education Committee and on this issue.

We all understand just how critical these programs are that provide a variety of outreach and support services to encourage low-income students to enter a complete college. That is why I'm pleased our L-HHS subcommittee was able to provide a \$40 million increase in funding for the TRIO programs and a \$20 million increase for the GEAR UP program.

COMMEMORATING JUNETEENTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am very humbled to be able to join my colleagues of the Congressional Black Caucus to celebrate and commemorate Juneteenth and to celebrate it on the very day that we have commemorated it over the years.

June 19 is a special time for Texans. And I would like to, in this very brief time that I have, weave in and out of the history of the meaning of Juneteenth as we reflect upon where we are in 2007 in the education of our young people.

The failures of this administration are stark, shocking, and extensive. And it is hopefully on this day that maybe a morsel of what many of us have been saying will be caught by someone in the administration to be able to reassess and to be able to think about the remaining time of their tenure in the White House and create a new and different legacy of the educational process of minorities in the United States of America.

With that, let me thank DANNY DAVIS for the celebration that we were able to participate in and his leadership on the issue of Juneteenth. I would also like to thank Curtis Faulkner of Fort Worth, who is involved in Juneteenth Heritage and Jazz Festival. I would also like to be able to thank Dr. Ronald Myers, who has been working for years with the National Juneteenth Observance. I would also like to be able to remind my fellow Texans and Houstonians of Reverend C. Anderson Davis, who brought to us the Emancipation Day celebration in Texas. We lost Reverend Davis just a few weeks