

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 LHHHS 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

ago, and it is my special privilege to acknowledge him for he came as the regional leader of the NAACP more than four decades ago to Houston, Texas, and he never forgot the routing and the importance of educating our young people about the emancipation.

So I stand today to be able to chronicle the history and to thank those who are now fighting the battle to preserve Freedman's Town in Houston, Texas, a town that was formulated by freed slaves right after the Emancipation Proclamation that is now under siege by those who would desire to disrupt the few remaining historic buildings and blocks and, if you will, bricks that make up the street, cobblestone bricks. I pray that the energy of those remaining, Reverend Samuel Smith, Captain Roberts, Reverend Robertson, will hold on, and the number of churches that are in that area, that we will fight for the establishment of a Freedman's Town corridor in the name and in tribute of Juneteenth and the emancipation of our people.

Let me cite for those a depictive picture that shows both celebration and shock as Major Gordon Granger came into Galveston to be able to announce that these yet humble servants, these slaves, were yet free.

Let me quickly go to the language that was offered to me in remarks made by Curtis Faulkner. I want to read, first of all, just a few brief words from the message of Abraham Lincoln during the emancipation: "Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this administration will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance, or insignificance, can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation. We say we are for the union. The world will not forget that we say this."

So he spoke of saving the union, but he also laid the ground work for the Emancipation Proclamation.

He continued: "Other means may succeed; this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just—a way which, if followed, the world will forever applaud and God must forever bless."

This was the genesis of the emancipation of slaves, but yet we are still wracked by discrimination and disparity. So when I speak of education and No Child Left Behind, I use Houston as an additional laboratory, testing the fear of children and not the learning of children. We want to reform so that all of our children can learn. Poor funding for underperforming schools, a failure of this administration that never decided to fund. Closing schools, lack of pay for teachers, all of that is meaningful.

I close, Mr. Speaker, by saying this. Freedom is not enough and you do not wipe away the scars of centuries by saying now you are free. We want the emancipation to be known in our hearts. We want a national holiday for

the Juneteenth. And I look forward to working with my colleagues to commemorate, celebrate, and be reminded of the sweat and blood and tears of those who stand here today.

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

(Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### JUNETEENTH/BLAIR'S BILL

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

Mr. RUSH. Mr. Speaker, I stand here today, along with my congressional Black Caucus colleagues, in recognition of Juneteenth Day. It is fitting for us to not only acknowledge where we have been in the past but also to evaluate where we are today as a people.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most pressing issues in the African American community remains the issue of education. Many of my colleagues have outlined the progress and the challenges that many African American students face as they strive to acquire the educational benefits that every American should receive.

In the words of the great African American leader Malcolm X: "Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today."

Education is, of course, the key to a bright future. And it is the vital ingredient in finding success and achieving the American Dream. While African Americans have come very far, educationally, there is still much work to do at the Federal, at the State, at the local, and at the family level to ensure that all of our students are learning and are being given the chance to succeed.

Today, Mr. Speaker, African American females, in particular, are achieving gains in education that were previously unheard of. Black females are graduating from college, graduate school, and post-graduate school at record levels. And this is something we can all be proud of and take comfort in.

However, Mr. Speaker, there are still many problems. Today, our Nation has more African American men in prison than in college. In many urban cities, Black males are dropping out of high school at a rate of 50 percent and even less are going to college.

One problem that many of our young students face is the issue of gun violence that pervades our community. Mr. Speaker, we have to make the schools and the neighborhoods that we live in safe for our students. We must address the gun violence that is plaguing so many of our communities.

African American males under age 30 are nearly nine times more likely to be

murdered than a white male under age 30. African Americans make up only 13 percent of the population of our Nation but in 2001 suffered almost 25 percent of all firearms deaths, and 52 percent of all firearm homicides.

Mr. Speaker, just days ago, on May 10, a student, Blair Holt, was riding home from school on a public bus and was fatally shot while trying to shield a young female friend from a gunman's bullet. Blair Holt was an honor student with plans to attend college, and instead, his young life was prematurely taken for no reason at all. Mr. Speaker, this school year alone, 31 Chicago public school students have been murdered; 31 students have lost their lives; 31 students have not given their talents, their skills, and their abilities to make this world a better place.

While this statistic is true for the schools in my district, gun violence is all around. Gun violence is prevalent in so many of the communities all around this Nation. And we must put an end to this domestic terrorism that is destroying communities and making our constituents live in fear. As elected officials, it is incumbent upon us to enact legislation that would help reduce the flow of guns into our communities and help our struggling and frustrated law enforcement departments all across this Nation to keep track of those who possess guns and where those guns are.

I have introduced H.R. 2666, Blair's bill, which would implement a Federal gun licensing and registry program. This bill will help law enforcement track over 200 million guns that are too often ending up in the hands of criminals, young people, and gang members.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2666 is a step in the right direction. We must do all that we can for our Nation's children.

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

(Ms. CLARKE addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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#### GETTING SMART ABOUT IRAQ

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

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I have come down to this floor more than 200 times to hold the administration accountable for its actions in Iraq. Since then, we have seen it all, from freedom fries to "the surge." During these dog days of summer, however, we can't relent. We have to join together as never before because this administration is moving in new and even more dangerous directions in foreign policy. Let me give you an example.

Several weeks ago, the administration confirmed what I had been saying