

brought another quarter of a million foreclosures, 223,561 families. Last year, in 2007, our Nation suffered 1.6 million foreclosures, the largest equity washout in our history. That's 1.6 million families, probably between 4 and 5 million people, who have destroyed credit and who lost their homes. Their lives have been thrown into chaos.

Despite the death grip that mortgage foreclosures are having in this country, Washington has yet to offer a credible solution. Back home my constituents are demanding to know what is taking so long. The huge jumps in foreclosures were becoming evident in 2006. Experts have forecast an even larger increase based on loan resets on adjustable rate mortgages. Still no credible action from the Bush administration or this Congress. One has to wonder why Washington has not moved more decisively to enact legislation when no congressional district has gone unaffected by this crisis. In whose interest is it to have so many Americans, by the millions, falling off the edge of the mortgage cliff?

The Bush administration should take real action. It isn't. This Congress should take real effective action. It hasn't. It is clear what will happen if we don't. Another 2.9 million loans were past due last December, signaling high rates of foreclosure to come. Another 40 million homeowners are at risk of seeing their property values decline, and 12.5 million will have either zero or negative net equity in their home. In fact, America has reached a very dangerous position. For the first time in our history, people owe more on their homes than their homes are worth. People owe more on their homes than their homes are worth. Net negative home equity.

Despite the great fanfare associated with government compacts and rescue hotlines, many servicers and investment banks are still refusing to come to the table. I've received a long list of servicers who can't be reached or who refuse to pursue workouts, including the banks that hold the mortgages that were serviced, when housing counselors and homeowners try to reach out to them at the local level. They used to call that "taking the lamb." They've disappeared, and, therefore, there is no one to work it out with.

Counseling services at the local level are overrun with desperate homeowners, many of whom could be helped if they weren't on long waiting lists for counseling assistance and could find with whom they should work out that mortgage. What good is the \$180 million in housing counseling funds we passed in Congress last year if the majority of servicers are still refusing those workouts and if that 180 million wasn't targeted to the districts that are most in need? And it wasn't.

Of those who are willing to engage in workouts, most only offer repayment plans, giving homeowners additional time to catch up with their payments. But this begs the question if home-

owners cannot keep up with their regular payments, what good does it do them to offer them a chance to catch up by making double and triple payments?

One of my constituents was offered such a "deal." He tells me that the bank will allow him to save his home if he just comes up with \$40,000 by October. This gentleman, who has lived in his home for more than two decades, has a low fixed income with no hope of coming up with such a large sum. His lender is offering concessions in name only.

A few servicers who are engaging in workouts are moving toward modifying the terms of the loans, reducing principal, lowering interest rates, extending the terms of the loan, to make them more affordable. We need much more of that. But the relatively small segment of the industry that is willing to do so, coupled with the painfully slow pace of working out individual plans, only drives America into deeper crisis.

More effective solutions should be forthcoming from this Congress, including bankruptcy bills like that of Congresswoman MAXINE WATERS and Congressman BRAD MILLER, which would allow judges now the flexibility to modify the terms of mortgage loans in bankruptcy court proceedings by lowering interest rates, forgiving penalties, reducing principal, and getting those servicers and banks to the table. Of course they don't want that. Too bad. The crisis is an American crisis and it needs an American solution.

To tread water while this disaster unfolds is wrong. It's not just about helping homeowners. It's about helping our Nation's economy and trying to rebuild the economic strength that we have lost through this deepening crisis.

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

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

EDUCATION: THE QUALITY OF OUR NATION'S SCHOOLS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from California (Mr. MCKEON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MCKEON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order this evening.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. MCKEON. Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to have this opportunity to

discuss an issue that's important to every single American family: the quality of our Nation's schools.

Twenty-five years ago this week, the National Commission on Excellence in Education issued its landmark report entitled "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform." I would like to read an excerpt from the opening of that report:

"Our Nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world... While we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and as a people. What was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur. Others are matching and surpassing our educational attainments."

Again, this report was written 25 years ago. And some of the things we're going to talk about tonight are about what little improvement we have made in that 25 years.

When this report was released, it sent shock waves through our educational system. For the first time, we recognized the threat of educational failure as a threat to our national security. And to be frank, I don't think that was overstating the case. I have personally traveled to China with other Members of Congress and seen the progress they are making scientifically, technologically, and, yes, educationally. And China is not alone. All around the world, nations are realizing that educational excellence today will mean competitive dominance tomorrow.

"A Nation at Risk" was issued nearly two decades after enactment of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The ESEA, which was the precursor of No Child Left Behind, dramatically increased Federal funding for education. Unfortunately, it didn't link that funding to a demand for results. From 1965 until enactment of No Child Left Behind in 2002, the Federal Government spent more than \$227 billion on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Yet despite that considerable investment, academic achievement flatlined during that time period.

As you can see here, the graph shows the amount of money appropriated year by year, and the blue flat line is the test results during that period.

This is unacceptable. It's unacceptable to the taxpayers, being asked to fork over their hard-earned dollars to a bloated Federal bureaucracy that fails to produce results. It is unacceptable to parents, who should be empowered to seek out a quality educational experience for their children. And it is unacceptable to our citizenry as a whole, who deserve an educational system that strengthens our prospects for the future.

"A Nation at Risk" outlined dire consequences if we, as a nation, failed

to improve our schools. In the quarter century since that report was issued, we have seen a number of positive education reform movements, each of which, if allowed to succeed, could make a real difference to students.

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I would like to discuss just a few of those reform movements now. First, *A Nation at Risk* energized those who support educational freedom. There are many that believe a lack of competition in our public schools is a major force behind their stubborn lack of improvement. Rather than permitting the educational establishment to maintain its stranglehold on educational options, we need to give parents the right to decide how their children will best be educated.

Another key education reform principle that emerged in the wake of *A Nation at Risk* was the drive to improve teacher quality. In fact, an entire section of the report was dedicated to improving teacher quality. In 1983, the report highlighted a shortage in highly qualified teachers of key subjects like math, science, and key foreign languages. It also called for innovative strategies like performance-based pay to recruit and retain effective teachers. Twenty-five years later, we are still facing a shortage of teachers in these critical subjects, and we are still fighting to be able to treat teachers as the professionals that they are by rewarding them for their performance.

Perhaps the most fundamental education reform movement that has come about in the years since *A Nation at Risk* is the No Child Left Behind Act. That is because NCLB sought to change the expectations at the very core of our education system. Instead of accepting mediocrity, NCLB demands that every child in America be given the opportunity to succeed.

You know, it's a real indictment of the educational system of the past that it was considered radical to expect every child to merely be able to read and do basic math. But that is the mentality that NCLB is trying to change. Unfortunately, despite these and many other efforts to improve our Nation's schools, we are still a long way from educational excellence. And so I would submit that our Nation is still at risk.

We have an education establishment that puts preservation of the system above elevation of the student. We have children trapped in chronically under-performing schools and parents with little or no ability to send them elsewhere. We have teachers leaving the profession because they are frustrated with a system that fails to recognize and reward success. And we have a majority in Congress that has refused to take the next step toward education reform by making much needed reforms to No Child Left Behind.

Tonight, some of my friends and I on the Education Committee are going to

take a look at *A Nation at Risk: 25 Years Later*. From where I sit, the education landscape in this country is often disappointing, yet hopeful as well. Reformers from all ideological perspectives continue to push for better schools, greater education reform, and a commitment to competitiveness that will allow us to thrive in the 21st century and beyond. Education reform is a daunting challenge, but one that cannot be ignored.

I would like to give the time now to a good friend from Delaware, the ranking member over the Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education, Mr. CASTLE.

Mr. CASTLE. I thank the distinguished ranking member of the education committee for yielding time to me, and I would like to share in his message which we have tonight. I remember 25 years ago when Secretary Bell issued *The Nation at Risk* and we had the whole discussion about the fact that America perhaps is not doing as well educationally as were other countries. I am not sure before that time that anybody had ever really tried to point the finger at that and to really reach that conclusion. We looked at our fine schools, our excellent colleges and universities, and we didn't look at some of the problems behind, and we didn't look perhaps at the fact the economy was growing on us in a way that demanded education of all children, not just of the kids that could go to the very best schools in the United States of America. But from that point on, I think there has been a focus on this.

The Congress has essentially done its job. There has been a great increase in funding of education, not as much on the local and State level, but at the congressional level there has been a great deal of funding increases. But we have seen many studies now which have indicated that the funding increases do not necessarily end up with a bottom line of our young students being educated better.

The bottom line is that we need a tremendous commitment from anybody who touches on their lives. Obviously, their parents, the teachers, the administrators in the school, the other personnel in the schools, elected officials both here in Congress and throughout the United States of America, and I think a broader understanding among all Americans, perhaps even the media, of the significance of education and how that ties in economically to what children may do in the future and to the entire future of America.

We have for many years now here in Congress under the leadership of Mr. McKEON and other leaders looked at education and made efforts to try to improve our educational status in our country. There is a distinct recognition of we need to do more in math and science, perhaps in geography and other areas as well, but that has not happened at the levels which we would

like it to happen. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which has been with us for some time, has worked to help in that area somewhat, but it wasn't really until No Child Left Behind came along some I guess 6 years ago now that we really started to make a difference as far as education is concerned.

All of a sudden, now our test scores are going up in various parts of the country. In addition, some schools who are educating their best students very well are being exposed as not doing as good a job with some of their lesser students. We now have to examine these students by various categories and we have various numbers and achievement levels that have to be met for schools to make adequate yearly progress, and that has shown that in some areas of the country and in some certain school districts, that is simply not happening. In others, it is.

I can tell you that in my State of Delaware that I have visited many of our schools. In fact, at one time or another I visited every school in our State. It's a small State. I will tell you that some of those districts have done just a wonderful job of grabbing hold of the need to make improvements in education, of getting commitment, of getting parents involved, making sure the courses are laid out in such a way that those kids could improve. As a result, we have seen test scores grow, particularly in our elementary and middle school levels, and these kids are now doing considerably better than they had been doing before, simply because they have made that commitment.

It does involve standards, it does involve assessments. Some people don't like that, and we hear some concerns about it. But the bottom line is that we are making the progress that we felt that we had to make in order to improve our schools. This must continue, and I believe strongly that we have to do a variety of things to do this. We have to strengthen the parental options which are out there, make sure they understand what they can do in terms of helping education.

We still have State and local flexibility. That is another area that we have to continue to work on, and we have passed legislation to do that. No Child Left Behind is very demanding in terms of teacher quality, and some of the aspects of teaching, which is important as well. We have encouraged the establishment of more charter schools. That is not just to establish charter schools, it is so that they can perhaps show us the way or set an example for our other schools. For that reason, the charter school movement has had a beneficial effect on education in ways beyond just the charter schools themselves.

We need to be careful with our dollars, obviously. We know that is important. The whole business of standards and assessments and growth models is important too. We need to be able to

measure how we are making progress. I am not sure that we do that quite as we should. We need to do better with reading. We have learned that if we do not teach these children how to read early on, it is going to be problematic in terms of their future education. So that is extraordinarily important.

We just had a call for more effective measurement of graduation rates by the Secretary of Education. And I have actually introduced legislation along those lines previous to that. I am a strong believer that we need to be able to measure graduation equally throughout all of our State so we can determine what the graduation measures truly are.

I believe that dealing with No Child Left Behind has not been easy. There is opposition to it. There are those that believe it is too demanding. They are reluctant to try to undertake to meet the standards that are there. Many of us who will speak tonight believe we can make improvement in No Child Left Behind. As I indicated, Secretary Spellings just in the last 2 days has issued a series of regulatory changes which she believes she can make, and she has already made some, in order to improve No Child Left Behind.

I believe that we in Congress should assume that responsibility too. That we should not just say we don't like it, we are not going to change it, because if we don't like it and we are not changing it, it's going to stay the same. We should look at the various things that we can do in order to make No Child Left Behind more meaningful if indeed there are problems as far as that is concerned.

I mentioned a growth model. That is a significant aspect of this. If we measure growth, we don't have to measure that everyone has achieved the way we would like them to, but how much they have grown, which could be a factor. I mentioned the graduation rate, which is important. A clarification of multiple assessments might be important as well.

Obviously, information to parents is also vitally important at all times to make sure that they are involved and engaged in terms of what is happening in our schools. I have seen a program in schools just the last couple of days in Delaware, and I have seen what one person in a school can do in terms of communication between the school, the parents, and the outside. I think it makes all the difference in the world, and that is something that we should be pursuing. Supplemental education services is included in No Child Left Behind, and that is another area in which we can provide services to those kids who need it the most.

These are the kinds of things we need to boost. We don't need to dismiss them or throw them out because we feel that perhaps they don't work as well as they should. They do work. They make a difference as the education of our young children is concerned.

I would call on the media to get involved with this. I think we need to look at the comparisons with other countries, we need to look at the significance of education as it applies to the economics of what kids are going to be doing in the future. There just needs to be a greater understanding among our young people that with good education, their opportunities explode in terms of what they might be able to do.

So these are all things that I think we all have a responsibility for, Republicans and Democrats alike, in Congress. I believe the Secretary of Education is doing all that she can. I believe we are still at risk 25 years later. I don't want to be at risk 25 years from now. Hopefully, together we can continue to work to make sure that American education is improved to the point that we can look at everybody else and say we have without a doubt the best education system in the world.

I thank the gentleman for yielding time. I yield back to him.

Mr. MCKEON. The gentleman didn't mention that he used to be Governor of Delaware and had occasion to visit every school. I have had the opportunity to visit his district a couple of times and it's always a real pleasure. It's interesting to be able to drive across the whole State in less time than it takes me to get from one part of my district to another.

Ms. BIGGERT, a member of the committee from the State of Illinois, I yield time to you.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Thank you. I thank the gentleman from California, Mr. MCKEON, for facilitating this discussion on the 25th anniversary of President Reagan's A Nation at Risk report and the importance of education to our economic future. I appreciate your leadership on the Education and Labor Committee. I can't think of a more appropriate event than the 25th anniversary of the report, A Nation at Risk, to review our education system and our global competitiveness. I think this report outlined the dire consequences if we as a Nation fail to improve our schools. In the 25 years since that warning, a number of things have changed. But we still face many of the same concerns raised by the report.

I remember well when this report came out. In fact, I was president of my local high school board at the time, and I know how devastated we were to find out how badly we were doing. People asked me why I wanted to be on the school board. I wanted to be on the school board because I wanted to make sure that my children got the best education available, and I wanted to work to make sure that that happened. So I was concerned about this.

I thought back on my family, and the thing that was always so important to our family was education. In fact, my father told all of us, there were four of us, that education was the most important thing, and if you got a good education, you could do most anything

that you wanted. I don't think I would be here if it hadn't been for that. But he also was a very great man, and he said, And I will pay for it.

Now when you look back at that time, it wasn't as expensive, and we think of all of our kids and grandchildren in schools now.

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But my older sister went to medical school, I went to law school and became an attorney, my brother went to law school and became a judge, and my little sister got her master's in Latin and Greek. Now, she doesn't use that too much anymore, but I think the point is that is how important education is and how it remains.

I really do worry, because it is at a time now when we have to compete on a global scale. Americans have shown their entrepreneurial skills and leadership, making the U.S. the largest and most robust economy in the world. However, we are seeing that Asia and Europe, our economic competitors, are making significant new investments in their infrastructure and human capital.

In a recent report, "The Gathering Storm," in looking at what is happening, this report shows that our competitors' investments are beginning to pay off and they are challenging the U.S. leadership in sciences, no matter how it is measured: By the number of patents, they are having more and more patents they are gaining; articles written in the scientific journals; Nobel Prizes won; percentage of the gross domestic product dedicated to research and development; and even the number of degrees.

We all know that our graduate schools have been filled with graduate students who have come from foreign countries. In the past they have been staying in our country. Now we are seeing the brain drain with them leaving.

So despite the evidence that science and education is responsible for America's preeminence in so many areas today, the 2000 Hart-Rudman Report on National Security found that "the U.S. Government has seriously underfunded basic scientific research in recent years. The quality of the U.S. education system too has fallen well below the scores of other nations." In fact, in one of the reports, we find that with other countries, we rank number 28, that is 28 under all of these other countries for our educational system.

I believe that now, more than any time in our history, we are at a crossroads. The economic prosperity of this country is the product of our well-trained workforce, and if the United States is going to be able to continue as the economic leader and have the creativity and the innovation that we need in technology, we have to ensure that our current and future workers have the tools necessary to compete.

There is not a quick fix to this problem, but there is no question that by providing the quality education to the

next generation of workers, that we are going to ensure the success of our country, and without a well-trained workforce, we could see employers moving the best jobs to other countries where workers have the skills necessary to perform that work. So we can't allow this to happen.

We have the building blocks necessary for the best education system in the world, but when we compare American students to other students, there is no question that there is room for improvement. Just ask the employers in our districts or area colleges and universities where employers are finding it more difficult to find skilled workers and where college students are having to take remedial classes when they go in as freshmen because they are not at the point where they can really do the first level of college education.

I think that certainly Congress has recognized the importance of addressing this issue. In 2001, along came No Child Left Behind. Our intention was to address the achievement gap that exists in our country between the disadvantaged children and their more affluent peers by holding the States and schools accountable for the education of all students. This law also gives parents and taxpayers information on the education that their children receive compared to other schools. So I believe that this goal continues to be supported in Congress and in the schools and communities across the country.

Now, 7 years after the passage of No Child Left Behind, I think we are now reflecting on where things are working and how we can improve the law.

I know, Mr. Chairman, you have spent so much time on this issue, and we have had numerous, numerous hearings in the last few years and this session of Congress, but also in the 109th and the 108th, and always working, and even before that since 2001, to make sure how we can improve the law. But I had thought that we would be reauthorizing this system last year, and, unfortunately, it has been held up. But it has given us time.

I remember we had one hearing with 46 people that came in to testify. It was kind of the last hearing before we thought we were going to get this bill out. I think I sat through the whole thing. But also I have and a lot of the other Members have held roundtables in our districts to talk to superintendents, to talk to teachers, to talk to parents, to talk to businesses, to talk to Chambers of Commerce, to talk to students as well, and the community, because that is what it takes to make our schools the best that we can have.

So I think that this discussion tonight will demonstrate the need to reauthorize No Child Left Behind sooner rather than later. I guarantee that our international competitors are not waiting for the U.S. to catch up. I think that we need to really proceed, really with the hope that everyone will realize that education is the basis of every-

thing that evolves for our children and our grandchildren to be a success and have a very successful life and really contribute to our country in moving ahead.

I would like to thank you for hosting this discussion tonight. With that, I will yield back so some of our other Members have an opportunity.

Mr. McKEON. Thank you very much. I really learned from your remarks. I knew you were an attorney, but I didn't know how the rest of your family had been benefited from education. It is good to learn about each other, and, again, as you said, the importance of education, to get on the ladder to climb to achieve the American dream. We here tonight, all of us, want to see that every child in America has the full opportunity to achieve their full potential.

Now let's hear from Mr. DAVIS, the gentleman from Tennessee. I am glad to have you with us.

Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee. Thank you, Mr. McKEON. Thank you for your leadership in the committee.

No Child Left Behind was signed into law before I was elected to Congress. It was signed into law in 2002 with the intent of increasing the overall achievement of students in elementary and secondary schools.

As written, the law requires the following: Annual assessments in math and reading in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school; reports on overall achievement and progress made by different groups of students; school accountability; high quality teachers in every classroom; increased parent information and choice; and State achievement standards and testing.

This law has far-reaching implications. I wanted to hear from the people both directly and indirectly involved with No Child Left Behind, also known as NCLB, so last year I held a roundtable discussion on NCLB in my district. Participants included parents, teachers, school superintendents, school board members, members of the business community and Chamber of Commerce, and representatives from the House Education and Labor Committee and the State and Federal departments of education. Most people agreed that No Child Left Behind is working, but reforms are necessary.

As I came to Washington, I found Washington is the only place where when something is supposed to expire, it doesn't expire. It just continues to move on. No Child Left Behind should have been reauthorized last year. It has not come up for reauthorization yet, and I think that should happen.

Many important issues were raised during my town hall meetings. A few of the main concerns were schools and school districts making adequate yearly progress, or AYP; meeting the teacher qualifications as set forth by No Child Left Behind; and the impact that special education students and Limited English Proficient students are having on local schools and school districts.

There are a lot of people with a lot of common sense back in the mountains of East Tennessee. Most teachers in my district believe they should be held accountable. That is just common sense. But it is like a three-legged stool. You can't only hold a teacher accountable and expect to get good results. It is like a three-legged stool. Teachers need to be held accountable, but also you need moms and dads to be involved in the education of their students, and also you need the students to become involved and work hard to make a difference. It really doesn't matter how good the teacher is. If you don't have moms and dads and the student involved, you will still get poor results. Teachers need to teach, not parent.

Ideally you will have a good teacher, you will have parents that are involved, and a student who is willing to work hard. While this isn't always the case, we must do everything we can in our power to see that it is there for most children. We need to continue to move every child forward, and bring those in the lower end of the percentile forward, but without holding those at the higher end back.

Students must be challenged and encouraged to learn. Students should not be counted in several subgroups. For instance, one child may be in both the English as a second language and children with special needs categories. Every student should be moving forward, but not every child can get to the same point. Most students can get from point A to point Z, but there are some students, special needs students come to mind, that may only go from A to B to C. They all should be moving forward, but you have to use some common sense when you pass legislation.

Also the way graduation rates are calculated need to be reviewed. People who decide to make the effort to go back to school and get their GED should be included in the graduation rates.

Let me give you an example. I have a school in my district in Hawkins County, Tennessee, that only had eight graduating students, eight students in their 12th grade. Four of those students received college scholarships. Doesn't that sound amazing? You have 50 percent of your students receiving college scholarships. However, one student dropped out, so now you have seven students and four students out of seven receiving college scholarships. So fully half of that class received scholarships. But one student didn't graduate, and because of that and the small number of students in Clinch School back in Hawkins County, Tennessee, that school is considered a failing school.

We need to reauthorize No Child Left Behind, and we need to fix some of these problems that I have mentioned tonight. Graduation rates, GED, English as a second language, those are some of the things that I hear that need to be fixed as we move forward into reauthorizing No Child Left Behind. These problems are fixable, and

we need to fix them soon. We need to address these problems and reauthorize No Child Left Behind quickly.

Thank you for yielding your time, and I yield back.

Mr. McKEON. Thank you. Now I am happy to yield to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. Walberg).

Mr. Walberg. I want to thank my colleague and friend and ranking member from California (Mr. McKeon) for allowing this discussion tonight, and to start off I think by portraying reality here of the billions of dollars that have been invested. And I certainly wouldn't say wasted, but the investment of billions of dollars into education certainly has not, according to this chart, and I think reality, shown the impact we would have dreamed of, expected and desired.

I think that is why the discussion that we are having tonight is so good, especially centered around reauthorizing a major component that there has been a lot of hopes and dreams about, No Child Left Behind, producing in this country a greater quality and achievement in education.

I don't pride myself in being a contrarian, but on this issue, I am somewhat of a contrarian.

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I hearken back to the Northwest Ordinance, that great statement that is included in many of our State Constitutions that says religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.

And I think that last section, where it says schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged, is where we are interested in tonight. It is our concern. It is our desire to encourage schools and the means of education.

That statement, that directive from the Northwest Ordinance is found, as I said, in many State Constitutions including that of my own State of Michigan.

The fact of the matter is that as a result of many redundant programs, well meaning though they may be, and yet programs and mandates that are put on our system, we have encumbered education to the point that it is very difficult on the ground in the unique classrooms that we have in every school district, with every student in the classroom who is a different student than the student sitting next to them.

Having three children and having gone through the public education system, the private education, and alternative system at some point in time in their educational experience, I know that even those three children from the same family learned in different ways and thankfully had the options available to them that met their needs at each step along the way, at least as much as possible, allowing achievement.

So, frankly, as we come to reauthorizing No Child Left Behind, it would be my preference that we would not; that we would end No Child Left Behind and turn it back to the States, turn our dollars and our interests toward giving opportunities for higher education, which in this country sets the standard for the rest of the world. Industry and business technology, working hand in hand with higher education, then to be an assist to establish patterns for our elementary and secondary education to bring them to the point of a completion, at least to that point, so that they can go on into higher education, trade schools, or in industry and business, and achieve, knowing reality and to a point as well, I understand that No Child Left Behind will most likely be reauthorized in some form. So, for that reason I would certainly plead for flexibility.

Having done that, I have cosponsored legislation that has been given the name A-PLUS, which would allow that flexibility for States to be brought forward, that would allow States that had taken a purpose statement to produce schools and the means of education that would foster growth in our government, in our society, in our educational classrooms, that would give opportunities for States to opt out of No Child Left Behind having proven that they had in place a plan for providing data that was good, evaluation that was quality, and an educational program that was moving toward excellence.

For example, I was the product of public education all the way through and even entering into university. My mother and three aunts were public school educators, beginning most of them in one-room schools teaching, and then moving into the Chicago public school system.

My daughter-in-law is a public school teacher on the south side of Chicago, a gifted teacher, a teacher who her first year taught as a full-time substitute because of the need in a special needs classroom where the teacher, out of frustration one day, got up, walked out of the class, and never came back. My daughter-in-law was given the opportunity to work with these young people who needed an education, needed someone who would invest themselves in their little lives, a fourth grade classroom.

My daughter-in-law Erin absolutely loved her first year of teaching as a substitute, a full-time substitute. She had the freedom without some of the paperwork, some of the criteria, both of the Illinois and Chicago public school systems, but also No Child Left Behind. She saw achievement with the opportunity to meet with parents, to provide expectations, but also the opportunity to work in partnership with them and working with these special needs students to see improvement along the way.

Thankfully, she received a full-time appointment to that same classroom

the next year as a full-time teacher, and soon found out that, with the weight of paperwork and regulation that was redundant upon each other coming from the Federal on down through the State and through the Chicago system as well, she was greatly frustrated to the point of wondering whether she was cut out to be a teacher. Fortunately, with good counsel from her administration and, I must admit, from my wife and myself as well, she continued and saw impact. And yet, the frustrations of not having the flexibility to deal with individual needs almost scuttled her attempt at teaching.

One final point I would make, Mr. McKeon, is from my own experience in going through seven No Child Left Behind hearings across my district in each of the seven counties, and having teachers, administrators, school board members and parents speak to the issue of No Child Left Behind and reauthorization, speak to the issue of highly qualified teachers and the frustration that that produces in some of our smaller school districts, rural school districts in trying to deal with that, yet having qualified teachers who are achieving well in the classroom, and yet because of the requirement for highly qualified that No Child Left Behind puts in place, the frustration that comes.

I stood in a special needs classroom at a local intermediate school district, and I watched a young man who, as I understand it, had no mental difficulties but great physical difficulties to the point that the only way that he could be administered a test was by verbal administration of that test from his teacher. And with his blinking of his eye once for yes, two for no, he took the test. But then I watched as the teacher went through that same test a second time to make sure that she had achieved answering right according to what he had indicated. Now, that adds time. And when you add redundancies and lack of flexibility all the way from the Federal Government on down, it frustrates education and it takes away the opportunity of some of these great teachers out there and committed parents, school boards, and students to meet the needs of their students, in their classrooms, in their communities.

So my friend from California, I would applaud you in pushing further that, not only would we most likely reauthorize, but that we would produce the flexibility that allows creativity to abound in our classrooms, parents to be involved, teachers who want to teach and not just be social workers or mother confessors at times, but to be in the role of teaching and working side by side with parents and the flexibility that can only come by understanding that schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.

Mr. McKeon. I thank the gentleman. And as Mr. Davis said earlier, in the meetings that he held with his people

in his district he heard some of these same problems, some of the same complaints. And that is why we really need to reauthorize the bill to fix those problems.

I have been here now almost 16 years, and I have yet to see a perfect bill. And when a bill is passed, by the time it goes through the process here and finally is passed and signed into law, and then the regulators get their shot at it, write the regulations, and then by the time it is implemented throughout 50 States across this great country, it doesn't necessarily finish up the way you started out or even to achieve the goals that you had.

And so we have a process where every 5 years on our committee we look at the bill again and we go through a reauthorization process, and say, what did we do wrong? What can we do to fix this? What can we do to make it better?

And you brought up the point, special needs students. Definitely something needs to be done there. I remember visiting a school in my district and going into a special needs class and seeing a student there that was carried in on a gurney. And the teachers, the caregivers there that day spent their time just making sure that the child is given the things that are needed for life; they fed him through a tube. There wasn't much education going on there. I think that was a very important program, but maybe it should be considered a help program to give the parents a little relief at that time. But, to say that that child is going to learn to read, common sense would dictate that is not the fact. So, we have a 3 percent waiver for some of those students. Maybe that should have been larger. But that is what we addressed through the reauthorization, and that is why it is very important we get that done.

I would like to yield now to the gentlelady, Mrs. FOXX, who has been a teacher, been a college administrator, and done a lot of things in education.

Ms. FOXX. I want to thank the gentleman from California for his leadership on this special order tonight, and thank him for his leadership on the Education Committee as chairman and now as ranking member.

I grew up in the mountains of North Carolina in a house with no electricity and no running water, with parents with a sixth grade and ninth grade education. My husband grew up in a similar situation, both his parents totally illiterate. But we both give credit for the success that we have had in life to public school teachers and principals who took an interest in us when we were in school and encouraged us to utilize our talents by staying in school and by going on to college. So I in no way disparage the role of teachers or the role of education in our society. In fact, I trumpet it because it has been so important to me. And I spent most of my life working in education, as the gentleman from California said, and it

has been a wonderful opportunity for me.

However, I have great concerns about the role of the Federal Government in education in our country, and I will continue to express those concerns because I remember very well my own excellent education in a county that had very little money. The school buildings weren't wonderful, we had almost no science lab, but we had excellent teachers again who cared about the students. And I would put up that education against anything that is happening in the country today.

Now, I am happy to serve on the Education and Labor Committee. And last year, when talks began in the committee on the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind, I did what I often do, and that is to look at the genesis and the history of the legislation. And it was a real revelation to me at the time that No Child Left Behind legislation is simply the latest reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, called ESEA by people in education, which was created in 1965 by President Johnson in the midst of the war on poverty. Most folks are unaware that the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was in fact the seventh reauthorization of this 1965 legislation. So when you hear it talked about, very few people ever make that connection.

Now, I heard a lot of criticism of No Child Left Behind before I was elected and after I was elected. And so one of the things that I did last year in my district was to have a forum with parents, teachers, and administrators about their concerns with No Child Left Behind; and the people who came to that forum gave me a lot of information that has been very helpful to me in helping to formulate what I think we ought to be doing with No Child Left Behind.

Part of the very important feedback that I received is that teachers and principals welcome appropriate accountability for Federal education funding. Teachers and administrators don't want to do away with accountability. What they are concerned about is having appropriate accountability.

Now, I want to talk a little bit about title I, and I know some of my colleagues have mentioned this before. Title I of No Child Left Behind, or the ESEA Act as it used to be called, is the largest single grant program in the U.S. Department of Education. It has been around since 1965. But between 1965 and 2002, American taxpayers funded almost \$200 billion through title I spending with little or no discernible effect in improving the educational opportunities for disadvantaged children, which was the original intent of the law.

I think most of us realize that it is not just funding that improves academic performance or gets anything out of programs. But, many of the Federal programs and regulations have simply not improved the performance of disadvantaged children as a group.

My long-standing position has been, and continues to be, that the education of America's youth would be better served if Washington bureaucrats were removed from the equation. Control and accountability should be returned to local communities, where they can effectively make changes in the areas they know need it most.

□ 2200

So I am disappointed in what looks like the direction that the majority is taking in Congress now, which is to eliminate much of the accountability that was put into No Child Left Behind, or the ESEA, when it was reauthorized in 2001, but simply put more funding into it. I think that is going in the wrong direction. We know that 9-year-olds have made more reading progress in the last 5 years than in the previous 28 years combined.

We can achieve excellence in education by encouraging the kind of accountability that promotes locally focused education and ultimately well educated young people. Parents, students and educators need more choices in the way No Child Left Behind is administered. The current my-way-or-the-highway approach to the Federal funding of education is broken, and imposing a top-down mechanism shortchanges millions of students and parents.

A good system will have more flexibility and will put the best decision makers in the driver's seat. Those are the parents and local educators who know what works best for students and should have the greater control and input.

We know in almost every program that a Federal Government one-size-fits-all approach does not work. It doesn't allow for tailor-made solutions to the unique situations facing school systems in every single district in America. What works in one State doesn't work in another one.

Reducing the role of the Federal Government makes sense for students who are not served by cookie-cutter policies promulgated by Washington bureaucrats.

There are many of us who believe that education is not the province of the Federal Government at all. However, we also know that efforts to remove the Federal Government from education have not passed and they are not going to pass. So the best thing that we can do is to make sure that we have accountability for the money that is spent in education, as we should have accountability in every program that takes Federal dollars.

Mr. Ranking Member, I am going to yield back to you.

Mr. McKEON. Thank you very much, and I would like to yield now to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. GARRETT).

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. I thank the ranking member for all of your work in the area of education.

I think the chart at my left points out the dilemma that the previous

speakers have been making. This chart shows the involvement of the Federal Government with regard to dollars, and it also reflects the issue with regard to their involvement with regulation and the like.

From 1966 up to 2000, as the Federal Government became more involved, dollars spent increased. And as the years have gone on, what is the result of that, basically a flat or no increase in education.

Two points, one point on the issue of accountability, and the other on new approaches. In the area of accountability, the question we have to ask is accountable to whom? The gentleman from Illinois made my case for me when she said that she was concerned about her kids and therefore she decided to run for the local school board.

I would suggest that the best place to get accountability is just as she did, locally, from the local school board, teachers, principals and the like. If you ask most parents who is a local teacher, they will know. If you ask who is the local principal, they will know. Ask most parents who is the Secretary of Education in Washington or the bureaucrats down here making the rules, they unfortunately will not have a clue. And yet what we have been doing over the last several decades is having them have greater accountability and responsibility than the teacher and the principal.

The second point is the approaches. I agree with the ranking member on this in that it is great that we have so many new approaches tried in schools across the country. The problem is when you get to a Federal level, two things happen. Sometimes you potentially nationalize some of these, and that is good if you pick out the good ones. But if you happen to pick out some of the bad ones, such as whole language in California, and that had a dismal track record and result, you can end up having a terrible effect on the entire national education system.

My second point is, and the ranking member made a good point on this, Washington doesn't move as quickly as local school boards. Sometimes it takes 5 years or more to reauthorization and even more years to get something done in the district. We can move more quickly at the end of the day.

I conclude with this. Accountability to whom, it should be accountable to the local teachers and the principals, not to somebody in Washington.

New approaches, it is better to be done locally. And as we move forward and move to reauthorize No Child Left Behind, I just throw out a modest, simple proposal, allow those States who need the Federal Government to tell them and dictate to them how to run their schools and so forth to stay in No Child Left Behind. But allow those States who have parents or community leaders or principals who feel that they can get it done by themselves without the Federal Government, allow those

States to opt out, but also to keep their own tax dollars in that State so they can decide how their education money will be spent.

Mr. McKEON. I am happy to yield to another member of the committee, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Souder).

Mr. Souder. I thank the ranking member, and I just wanted to share a few thoughts.

Many of us on the Republican side have been involved with education for many years. It was my first choice when I was elected in 1994 to go on the Education Committee, much to the shock of everybody on our side. And it has been a challenge because I believe education is the responsibility of the States and local; and yet I passionately believe in the importance of education.

I don't know how we are going to compete in the international marketplace if we don't compete on math and science, and if we don't have everybody at basic reading levels where they have an opportunity to blossom. If they don't know how to read, they will not be able to learn how to compete in a worldwide marketplace.

And frankly we are not going to do it with cheap labor. We have to do it with value-added labor. We have to have education at the core of any system that we have. The challenge we have in the Federal Government is that the State and local seem to not want to raise their taxes. They don't want to do the funding. They want to come to the Federal Government for the money, and then they don't want any strings with the money.

If you ask the Federal Government for money, you are going to get strings. Many of us want to minimize those strings where the thousands of flowers bloom, but we are still going to have measurement.

I was one who didn't like the national testing idea because I am afraid that a national curriculum is going to be abused by either side to try to drive their ideological agendas. Nevertheless, there has to be some kind of measurement. We need some measurement. If we keep increasing Federal aid to education, then we need to increase accountability.

In the parts of No Child Left Behind that are difficult, I know the administration likes to ask, Well, which child would you leave behind? But the problem is if your goal is just to focus on those who are going to be at the lower echelons, we have diverted money to minimal gains in some cases at that level, and backed off in our math and science and in our upper and middle end to the net result that we haven't really moved the system.

Nobody argues that No Child Left Behind hasn't made tremendous progress at the lower echelons. Part of the question that schools are legitimately asking right now with the special needs kids, with English as a second language kids, how can they meet continually higher standards? At some point we are more likely to get slower progress or

hit a wall, and we are trying to work that through with any new bill.

But there are going to be measurements, and measurements are never completely fair. But he who pays the piper picks the tune. To this degree, you want more money from the Federal Government, you are going to get more regulation. We need to be responsible.

I hear people say, My daughter is a teacher. She gets frustrated with this because they have to teach to the test. That is partly why I have a concern about the test. I went to an amazing school in New Orleans that got hit by Hurricane Katrina. It is a 100 percent school lunch program, and nobody is failing to pass the test.

I asked, Do you teach to the test? She said, No, these are principles that we should have been teaching anyway. So if we teach the principles, they will pass the test.

What we are really commenting on, is the test measuring what we want to have, and is that the skill. And if the test is in fact measuring that, then you aren't teaching to the test. But it needs to be fair. Schools with high ESL, schools with high special needs kids are going to need accountability.

I thank you for your time and your leadership.

Mr. McKEON. Let me just say No Child Left Behind I think has made a good improvement for the purpose that it was originally passed for. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act was passed in 1965 to help, as was stated earlier, the have-nots, to help them get up to where the haves are.

The test scores show that since No Child Left Behind has been put in, we have the highest testing for African American and Hispanic children in the history of the testing. A lot of things have been misunderstood about NCLB. What it was was a law that said we want kids to learn basic math and we want them to learn to read, and the States set the standards and implement the bills. Some States went much further, and the Federal Government got blamed for what we actually did. The important thing is that we get it reauthorized, that we fix the problems that have been mentioned many times here tonight.

I thank the Speaker for his patience, and those who have been listening, I thank them and I think we will follow up with another one of these because there is much more to be said about education and the reauthorization of the ESEA, better known recently as No Child Left Behind.

Mr. REGULA. Mr. Speaker, with the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act, NCLB, our nation made a commitment to closing the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers and to changing the culture of America's schools so that all students receive the support and high-quality instruction they need to meet higher expectations.

The critical part of this challenge, at the high school level, is reducing the number of young

people who disengage and drop out of school and, conversely, increasing the number of students who graduate from high school and go on to higher education or get a job in the workforce.

Because of the importance of improving high school performance, NCLB requires secondary schools to meet reading and math targets for all of its students that are established by the State—just like all public schools. However, secondary schools must also meet State-established graduation rate targets in order to meet the requirements of the law. The law also authorizes the School Dropout Prevention Program whose purpose is to provide grants to States and school districts to assist in the dropout prevention and school re-entry activities.

As several national studies have found, a staggering number of youth fail to graduate on time. For example:

About one-third of our students—approximately 1.23 million each year—leave high school without a diploma.

Black and Hispanic youth are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to drop out of high school. In 2005, 6 percent of non-Hispanic whites ages 16 to 24 were not enrolled in school and had not completed high school, compared with 11 percent of blacks and 23 percent of Hispanics.

A student's decision to drop out of school has long-term consequences that not only affect the individuals themselves, but the society at large:

Dropouts from the class of 2006 cost the nation more than \$309 billion in lost wages, taxes and productivity over their lifetimes.

If the nation's likely dropouts from the class of 2006 graduated, we could save more than \$17 billion in Medicaid and expenditures for uninsured care over the course of those young people's lifetimes.

If high schools and colleges raise the graduation rates of Hispanic, African-American and Native American students to the levels of white students by 2020, the potential increase in personal income would add more than \$320 billion to the U.S. economy.

Increasing the graduation rate and college matriculation of male students in the U.S. by just 5 percent could lead to combined savings and revenue of almost \$8 billion each year by reducing crime-related costs.

A high school diploma and further postsecondary education or training is critical in today's global economy. Dropouts are unlikely to have the minimum skills necessary to function in today's increasingly complex and technological workforce.

Graduation rates are a fundamental indicator that our nation's public schools are doing what they are intended to do: Enroll, engage and educate youth to be productive members of society.

However, there have been some concerns raised over the availability and quality of data on graduation and dropout rates and how they differ from State to State. This is based largely on whether the individual State has developed strong standards for its high schools. For example, even though NCLB has improved the reporting of data, a few States continue to have wide gaps in their data and can not accurately calculate graduation or dropout rates from 1993 to 2002.

To deal with this problem, yesterday, Secretary Spellings issued proposed federal regu-

lations to establish a uniform formula to calculate graduation rates. In particular, States would be required to adopt the formula, largely based on a rate agreed to by the National Governors Association, NGA, by 2012.

I agree with the Secretary that this must be done. Only by knowing how well or how poorly States, schools, and school districts are educating students can we ensure that every student receives an excellent education.

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

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ALTMIRE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the 30-Something Working Group which the Speaker is a member of and I know will join us down here for an hour in the future, we hope to be joined later this evening by one of the senior members of the 30-Something Working Group, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK).

We come down to the House floor as some of the younger Members of the Democratic Caucus, and we try to do it every week to really focus in on how the issues affecting this Congress are specifically challenging younger families in this country. How the neglect of the past 12 years trying to be remedied by the new Democratic majority here are affecting those families that are just starting out, those issues maybe can be best talked about and best addressed by those of us who are the younger members of the House represented by the 30-Something Working Group.

We thank the Speaker for constituting the working group and allowing us to come down and share our thoughts.

It is remarkable as a first-term Member, Mr. Speaker, to see the transition of views and transformation of priorities and issues that you hear about as a first-term Member, going out and holding office hours as I do at supermarkets throughout my district, holding town hall meetings every week or 2 weeks throughout the district.

I remember back in February of 2007 when I held my first big, large town hall. It was a nerve-racking occasion as a first-term Member of Congress, and I remember thinking there was only one subject to hold that town hall meeting on, and that was the war in Iraq, dominating the conversation as it seemed to here on the floor of the House and in the halls of the United States Congress.

The President had proposed his new strategy to introduce 35,000 to 40,000 new troops into Iraq, clearly working against the will of the majority of the American people who had said all across this Nation in November 2006 that they wanted a new direction in Iraq.

And now fast forward a year later to town halls that I am holding, as well as other members of the 30-Something Working Group and Members on both sides of the aisle, and you hear a very different tune.

People are still talking about Iraq. The situation hasn't gotten any better, and you can make the very plausible argument that things have gotten worse in Iraq over the last year. Even as the surge has moved forward, the political willingness of the Iraqis to take control of their own country has moved backwards.

But what we are hearing very clearly from the mouths of our constituents in town hall meetings and office hours across this Nation is that there is economic trouble. There is trepidation on behalf of families throughout this country as to the economic future that they face as families and that our communities face going forward.

□ 2215

And it's real. The numbers are getting worse. The amount of homes facing foreclosures, the number of workers being laid off, even those people who have jobs finding that the salary increases they thought were coming are being postponed, the amount of overtime hours that they used to rely on, cut back, many more part time workers, more temporary workers.

I don't know, Mr. Speaker, whether we're in a recession or not. I'm not an economist. But I know that people are facing real trouble back in Connecticut, as they are throughout the rest of this country.

And I don't think it takes a rocket scientist on this floor or anywhere else in the country to figure out how we got here. You know, this isn't just about the jobs that are being lost. This isn't just about the themes are being foreclosed upon. This is about the fact that thousands of families, millions of families around this country and in the Fifth District of Connecticut have no more room in their budget to take any more hits.

Energy costs going up at a pace that families and seniors can't sustain; health care costs going up to the point where businesses celebrate when they hear that their premiums are only going to increase by 10 percent in a given year. You add that all together with an economic slowdown, and you put millions of families at risk throughout this country.

And it should be no surprise that we've gotten to the place that we are today because for 12 years, while our friends on the other side of the aisle controlled this House, while President Bush staked his claim to the White House, we have had absolute neglect when it comes to energy policy.

So the families throughout this country today are hurting, while oil companies are making record profits, record profits; not just for the oil industry, but for any company in the history of capitalism in this country, record profits for the oil companies, while we have