

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect as if enacted on April 30, 2008.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. TIERNEY) and the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BOUSTANY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I request 5 legislative days during which Members may insert material relevant to S. 2929 into the RECORD.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of Senate 2929, a bill to temporarily extend programs under the Higher Education Act of 1965.

At the beginning of February, the House took the next step in the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act in passing H.R. 4137, the College Opportunity and Affordability Act.

Now we find ourselves in the near final phase of completing the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act as we work towards a compromise bill with the Senate to ensure that the doors of college are truly open to all qualified students. It's our goal to ensure that a final bill encompasses the major issues addressed in H.R. 4137, including the skyrocketing college prices and needlessly complicated student-aid application process and predatory tactics by student lenders.

The bill under consideration today, S. 2929, will extend the programs under the Higher Education Act until May 31, 2008, to allow sufficient time for final deliberations on the two bills reported out of the respective chambers. While the process of reauthorizing the Higher Education Act may be coming to a close, I would like to underscore that this does not mean that we will complete work on higher education altogether.

The committee intends to continue to address issues as needed, which include not only overseeing the proper implementation of the College Cost Reduction and Access Act and the rest of the Higher Education Act, but also, for example, ensuring availability of student loans during this challenging credit market, which the House acted on last week in passing H.R. 5715.

It has been nearly 10 years since the Higher Education Act was last reauthorized, and I believe that Members on both sides of the aisle and in both chambers are anxious to complete work on a compromise bill in this Congress, and we believe it can happen.

I look forward to completing this work with the respective Members on behalf of our Nation's hardworking families and students.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 2929, a 1-month extension of the Higher Education Act.

Over the past several months, a tremendous amount of progress has been made toward reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. The Education and Labor Committee worked in a bipartisan fashion to produce a bill that received strong support here on the House floor.

Chairman MILLER and Ranking Member McKEON have been leading our efforts to negotiate a final compromise with the other chamber, and I am pleased to report that our work is nearly done. While I support today's temporary extension of programs under the Higher Education Act, I know members of the committee, along with members of the higher education community, will be pleased to hear our assurances that this will be the final extension we have to pass. We expect conference meetings to wrap up in the next several weeks with a conference report to be brought back in the month of May.

As we move toward finalizing this broad overhaul of Federal higher education programs, our top priority must remain college access and affordability. Bolstering our higher education and student aid programs has long been a priority for Congress.

One of the issues that has received a great deal of attention throughout the reauthorization process has been the rising cost of higher education and the high levels of debt that accompany that education for many students.

As a physician, I am keenly aware of the unique challenges faced by new graduates in the medical field, who often carry hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt, yet make an initial wage that is no more than many individuals with a bachelor's degree. I am particularly concerned that high debt levels among medical graduates may be limiting career choices, and that's why I was pleased to partner with another doctor on the committee, the gentleman from Georgia, Dr. PRICE, to call for a study of indebtedness of medical school graduates. It's important that we closely monitor the impact of student loan debt on all the young people pursuing higher education so that we can ensure the value of that investment is not outweighed by the burdens.

I urge my colleagues to retain the House-passed provisions of the reauthorization bill that will help to address our Nation's looming nursing shortage, which makes health care more expensive for all Americans while delaying access to lifesaving treatment. HHS warns that the Nation's nursing shortage could exceed 1 million nursing vacancies by the year 2020. Congress has a duty to address this problem.

I want to thank my colleagues, Congresswoman MCCARTHY and Congressman MELANCON, for working across the aisle with me on this issue. This au-

thorization is a long time coming, and I am pleased to be here supporting what we expect to be the final extension before this law is finally renewed.

I urge my colleagues to support this extension.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. BOUSTANY. Mr. Speaker, I urge support of this extension as we finalize our work on the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

I join my colleagues on the other side of the aisle in supporting this measure.

I yield back the balance of my time.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. TIERNEY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 2929, as amended.

The question was taken.

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

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

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

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

#### CONGRATULATING CHARTER SCHOOLS

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1168) congratulating charter schools and their students, parents, teachers, and administrators across the United States for their ongoing contributions to education, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

#### H. RES. 1168

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

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

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

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

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

Whereas over 4,300 charter schools are now serving approximately 1,200,000 children;

Whereas over the last 14 years, Congress has provided over \$2,262,257,000 in support to

the charter school movement through start-up financing assistance and grants for planning, implementation, and dissemination;

Whereas over 365,000 children are on charter school waiting lists nationally;

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

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

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

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

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

Whereas the ninth annual National Charter Schools Week, to be held May 5 through May 9, 2008, is an event sponsored by charter schools and grassroots charter school organizations across the United States to recognize the significant impacts, achievements, and innovations of charter schools: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

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

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. TIERNEY) and the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BOUSTANY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I request 5 legislative days during which Members may insert material relevant to H. Res. 1168 into the RECORD.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, this measure supports the designation of May 5 to May 9, 2008, as National Charter Schools Week and recognizes the growing charter school movement in our Nation.

Since their inception in 1991, charter schools have grown by leaps and bounds to address various needs of our Nation's public school students. Di-

verse charter schools across the country offer innovative instruction.

With site-based control and flexibility, charter schools can make timely decisions about how to structure the school day, which curriculum best suits the needs of their students and, additionally, charter schools may form important partnerships with parents and the surrounding community.

This week charter schools across the country will celebrate the ninth annual National Charter Schools Week. This year's theme, "Growing Excellence," encourages charter schools to share their successes as part of the effort to reform public education in our country.

Today there are almost 4,300 public charter schools operating in 40 States. Their combined force serves over 1.2 million students, and 61 percent of charter schools report significant waiting lists. These waiting lists of nearly 365,000 students nationally are enough to fill over 1,100 new charter schools. Between 300 and 400 new public charter schools open each year, and nearly 150,000 new students enroll in charter schools annually.

The growing charter school movement is said to be providing opportunities for many historically underserved communities. Nationally, it is said that charter schools disproportionately serve minority and low-income students. It is reported that 58 percent of charter school students are minorities, and 52 percent qualify for free and reduced-price lunch, and many charter schools are able to achieve impressive academic results.

H. Res. 1168 expresses support for National Charter Schools Week and recognizes the charter school movement's 16-year history providing public education options based on innovation, flexibility and community partnerships.

The committee urges our colleagues to pass this resolution.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 1168, congratulating charter schools and their students, parents, teachers and administrators across the United States for their ongoing contributions to education.

This week has been designated as the ninth annual National Charter Schools Week, and it is entirely appropriate that we take a few minutes to recognize the contributions that charter schools make every day in the lives of millions of children. Charter schools are innovative public schools with a simple interest in providing a quality education to children in their community. They explore new educational approaches, such as longer school days or an extended school year, and are free from most rules and regulations governing conventional public schools. Every day, however, charter schools face unarguable facts of free-market pressures.

□ 1530

Unlike traditional public schools, charter schools must demonstrate the success of their students' academic achievements to parents, policymakers, and their communities or they face closure. From the time the first charter school opened its doors, they have risen to the challenge.

For example, charter schools made an important contribution to rebuild and strengthen Louisiana after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, particularly in New Orleans.

More often than not, charter schools meet the student achievement and accountability requirements under No Child Left Behind in the same manner as traditional public schools, but often set higher individual goals to ensure that they are of high quality and truly accountable to the public. Yet despite these innovative approaches and promising reports of parental satisfaction, charter schools across the country have struggled through a myriad of obstacles to create successful schools.

We should support the \$272.6 million included in the President's fiscal year 2009 budget request for the public charter school programs authorized under No Child Left Behind. These programs provide key points in the development of charter schools, helping cover the extraordinary costs of launching successful charters, disseminating their successful innovations to other public schools, and providing financial incentives to State governments and private lenders that help enable schools to build and renovate facilities. These programs have been a tremendous success helping to create public charter schools all across the country that work to improve academic achievement for low-income students.

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

I urge my colleagues to support the resolution.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. TIERNEY) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1168, as amended.

The question was taken.

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

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the

Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

### HONORING THE RECIPIENTS OF THE EL DORADO PROMISE SCHOLARSHIP

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1155) honoring the recipients of the El Dorado Promise scholarship, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

#### H. RES. 1155

Whereas the 2000 United States Census determined that El Dorado, Arkansas, had a significantly lower percentage of residents with degrees from institutions of higher education and significantly higher percentage of families who fell below the poverty line than the national average;

Whereas it is increasingly important for students to obtain a college education in order to keep up with the demands of the modern workforce and global economy;

Whereas the El Dorado Promise scholarship is a tuition scholarship, created and funded by Murphy Oil Corporation, which enables all eligible high school graduates of the El Dorado Public School District in El Dorado, Arkansas, to attend any accredited 2- or 4-year, public or private, college or university;

Whereas school enrollment in the El Dorado Public School District has significantly increased since the El Dorado Promise scholarship program was established, despite a 15-year trend of decreasing enrollment;

Whereas the El Dorado Promise scholarship program increased the number of El Dorado High School students who chose to attend college after graduation by 20 percent; and

Whereas on April 30, 2008, El Dorado High School students who received El Dorado Promise and other academic scholarships sign academic letters of intent for the colleges they will be attending upon graduation: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

(1) congratulates the recipients of the El Dorado Promise scholarship for choosing to further their education;

(2) observes that April 30, 2008, is the second academic signing day for graduating El Dorado High School students receiving El Dorado Promise and other academic scholarships;

(3) acknowledges that the El Dorado Promise scholarship program is important for the revitalization of southern Arkansas; and

(4) recognizes the organizations and corporation involved in this program for their efforts to ensure that children from southern Arkansas, who might otherwise struggle in financing a college education, are able to attend college.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. TIERNEY) and the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BOUSTANY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I request 5 legislative days during which Members may insert material relevant to H. Res. 1155 into the RECORD.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the recipients of the El Dorado Promise scholarship.

The El Dorado Promise scholarship is a tuition scholarship which allows all students who graduate after attending all 4 years of high school in the El Dorado Public School District to attend any accredited 2- or 4-year college or university. While the enrollment in the El Dorado Public School District has decreased over 15 consecutive years, the establishment of this scholarship has seen enrollment in the district significantly increase. This scholarship program has also increased the number of students going to college after graduating high school by 20 percent.

Mr. Speaker, these numbers are very impressive and I commend the students who have taken advantage of this wonderful opportunity.

As you know, many students are struggling to pay the rising costs of tuition across the country. Additionally, students are graduating with more debt than ever before, and are working harder and harder to pay back their college loans. This growing college crisis has serious implications not just for students and families, but also for our Nation's economic future. In order to maintain our economic leadership in the world, we must make aggressive investments in our current and future workforce.

Scholarships and grants similar to the El Dorado Promise scholarship, such as Georgia's Hope Scholarship, and California's CAL Grant continue to help students achieve their goal of going to college and alleviate the debt burden they carry after college.

Once again, I congratulate the recipients of the El Dorado Promise scholarship, and I thank the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) for offering this resolution.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 1155 which honors the recipients of the El Dorado Promise scholarship.

On April 30, 2008, El Dorado High School students who received the El Dorado Promise scholarship signed their academic letters of intent for the colleges and universities they will be attending upon graduation.

Thanks to funding provided by the Murphy Oil Corporation, the Promise scholarship gives El Dorado students an additional opportunity to pursue higher education. The scholarship provides up to 5 years of tuition and man-

datory fees for undergraduate post-secondary education for students entering college immediately following high school.

To be eligible for the program, students must have attended local schools for at least 4 years. The annual scholarship is limited to the highest yearly rate charged by an Arkansas public university, currently \$6,010, but the oil company has factored inflation into the program, and plans to be in place for 20 years.

In this era of global competitiveness, it is increasingly important for students to obtain a college education in order to keep up with the demands of the modern workforce. We know how important higher education is both to individuals and to our Nation. A college degree can be a ticket to the middle class. It helps individuals prepare for good jobs, and it allows them to pursue new skills in a changing economy. Higher education also has important societal benefits. College-educated citizens are healthier, more civically involved, have lower unemployment rates, and use fewer government benefits.

The El Dorado scholarship program has increased the number of high school students who choose to attend college after graduation by 20 percent, so it is my pleasure to acknowledge the El Dorado Promise scholarship program for its important role in the revitalization of southern Arkansas; and to recognize Murphy Oil Corporation for its efforts to ensure that children from southern Arkansas who might otherwise struggle in financing a college education are able to attend college. I urge my colleagues to support the resolution.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. TIERNEY) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1155, as amended.

The question was taken.

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

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

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

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

#### CHARLTON HESTON

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1091) honoring the life,