

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR
NATIONAL GEAR UP DAY

Mr. HIGGINS. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1311) expressing support for the designation of National GEAR UP Day.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1311

Whereas Congress created the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) in 1998 to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education;

Whereas increasing the number of low-income students who complete postsecondary education is critical to the health and vitality of our communities and the Nation as a whole;

Whereas GEAR UP is currently providing essential college preparatory services to 640,000 students in over 5,000 schools across 46 States, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Palau, and Puerto Rico;

Whereas GEAR UP students are taking more rigorous and advanced courses, graduating from high school and enrolling in postsecondary education at rates significantly higher than their low-income peers;

Whereas these remarkable achievements are attributable to the selfless dedication of the students, families, education professionals, and business and community leaders involved in GEAR UP;

Whereas the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships and the Department of Education work in partnership to provide technical assistance and host national conferences to strengthen GEAR UP programs throughout the Nation; and

Whereas July 22, 2008, would be an appropriate day to designate as National GEAR UP Day: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives expresses support for the designation of a National GEAR UP Day.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule the gentleman from New York (Mr. HIGGINS) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. DAVIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HIGGINS. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. HIGGINS. Madam Speaker, at this time, I would yield 3 minutes to the sponsor of the bill, CHAKA FATTAH, the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Mr. FATTAH. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Let me thank my colleague, DANNY DAVIS, for helping to move this bill to the floor out of committee. And I also want to thank all 74 of the additional cosponsors, and this is bipartisan cosponsorship, as this program, GEAR UP, has always enjoyed bipartisan support. I want to thank MARK SOUDER and TOM COLE. And I also want to ac-

knowledge the great staff work that has been done by William Miles and also the In Step organization which is the major national organization working with GEAR UP. And we will be hosting them here on the Hill.

This acknowledges the great success of this program, over \$2.7 billion Federal investment over the last 10 years. We are in the 10-year anniversary. We see graduation rates from high school, for the largest early college awareness program in our country's history, off the charts. Some 85 percent of GEAR UP students graduated from high school, a full 20-plus points ahead of where low-income students unfortunately now graduate from high school. We see this in hundreds and hundreds of programs across our country. In rural and urban areas, on Native American reservations and State programs and in partnership programs, GEAR UP has been a tremendous success, something that in a bipartisan way this Congress can take great pride in.

And as the architect of the original legislation, I'm very proud to come and ask the Congress to support this resolution, naming this National GEAR UP Day. I spoke to the almost 2,000 attendees at the national bureau conference yesterday. I had my wife and my two young daughters, Cameron and Chandler, with me. It was a great occasion to see and meet people from 48 States with, now, GEAR UP programs. And many of our territories also are represented, from Guam and Puerto Rico.

It is a tremendous success to see the college-going rate among this population of GEAR UP students, now over 2 million young people being served at 60-plus percent, 64 percent of them going on to college.

I do want to acknowledge the great work of my colleague from southwest Texas, RUBEN HINOJOSA, who has led and chairs the subcommittee on Higher Education.

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of this resolution designating today, July 22, 2008, as National GEAR UP Day. Signed into law in 1998, Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs, GEAR UP, is a program to help increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.

GEAR UP provides 6-year matching grants to States and partnerships to offer services at high-poverty middle and high schools. Grantees serve an entire range of students from seventh grade through graduation from high school.

Thanks to the passion and dedication of students, families, educators and local communities, GEAR UP has touched the lives of more than 2 million young people from underserved backgrounds. At present, GEAR UP provides college preparatory services to 640,000 students in over 5,000 schools across 46 States, the District of Colum-

bia, and territories abroad. From California to New York, Puerto Rico to American Samoa, GEAR UP students are taking more rigorous courses, graduating from high school and enrolling in postsecondary education at rates that are significantly higher than their low-income peers.

Through these grants and scholarships, underprivileged students are being introduced to a wealth of opportunities otherwise not afforded them. Their experience and educational success serves as a model to their peers and is vital to the health of our communities.

My kids attended a school, the Glasgow Intermediate School in Alexandria in Fairfax County, where we saw literally dozens of students each year sign up for GEAR UP and improve their academic ratings and potential and go on to college later on as a result of this program. It has made a difference. And I urge my colleagues to support this resolution in an effort to elevate our Nation's awareness of this important program.

It's as true now as ever that children are our future. And this program provides a significant and valuable step toward providing quality educational opportunities to our underprivileged youth.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HIGGINS. Madam Speaker, I would now yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas, Representative HINOJOSA.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1311, a resolution to express support for the designation of a National GEAR UP Day.

I would like to commend the authors of this resolution, my good friend from Philadelphia, Representative CHAKA FATTAH, and my colleague on the Education and Labor Committee, Representative MARK SOUDER of Indiana. They're tremendous advocates for making the promise of GEAR UP a reality for all of our youth.

GEAR UP addresses the key factors necessary to successfully navigate the college process: The aspiration to go to college, the academic preparation, understanding the admissions and financial aid processes, and having the financial resources to pay for college. GEAR UP mobilizes the community to address these factors by using Federal resources to leverage State, local and private sector resources.

GEAR UP offers a simple but very powerful bargain. It tells students and families that if you stay in school and take the challenging classes, our community will guarantee that you have the financial aid and support you need to go to college.

We have seen the power of this new bargain in south Texas. With our first generation of GEAR UP partnerships, we have seen high school graduation rates and college preparedness soar. We have seen unprecedented growth in our college enrollment.

We are fortunate to have a second generation of GEAR UP programs in south Texas. Between the Region One Education Service Center and the University of Texas Pan American GEAR UP project, we will reach over 17,000 students and their families, over 95 percent Hispanic, nearly all economically disadvantaged and the first generation to go to college. Through GEAR UP, these students and families not only know that college is possible, but they also will know how to make it a reality, forever changing the aspirations and expectations of our entire region.

□ 1715

Today I had the tremendous honor of hosting a GEAR UP delegation of more than 100 parents, students and staff from Region 1 and the University of Texas Pan American. I would like to congratulate them for representing our area so well at the national GEAR UP gathering going on here in Washington.

I shared with them the CHAKA FATTAH story and how he introduced it and how I heard the story and told him I am committed, passionate about education, and I think this is the best thing that has come out since sliced bread, I told CHAKA, and I worked hard to get the numbers we needed to pass this.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. HIGGINS. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. HINOJOSA. I say that CHAKA FATTAH is absolutely to be known here in Washington and in Congress for the great work he did in making GEAR UP the success story that it is.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution; and more importantly, to support the expansion of the GEAR UP program in their districts and across the Nation.

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HIGGINS. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS).

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 1311, and I want to commend my colleague from Pennsylvania, Representative CHAKA FATTAH, for his introduction of this legislation, and I also want to commend my colleague on the Education Committee and the chairman of the Higher Education Subcommittee, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA).

I have spent, Madam Speaker, practically all of my life engaged with low-income communities, low-income people, low-income students. And I can tell you that I can't think of any legislative enactment that has done more to assist low-income students to experience this commodity that we call higher education.

And so Representative FATTAH, I don't know if you will ever pass another piece of legislation as good as this one. I don't know how much longer

you will stay in Congress, but I can tell you one thing, if you never pass another one, you did this one and it is one of the best, one of the most effective, one of the greatest that I have seen, and so I commend you for it.

I commend again the chairperson of our committee in Education, Representative HINOJOSA. And, Madam Speaker, I think it is a great day because there is a group of people sitting in my office right now who are GEAR UP representatives, and I told them that I was going to have to leave them to come here, but I commend them for all of the great work that they continue to do.

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

Mr. HIGGINS. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, I am pleased to stand in consideration and support of H. Res. 1311 which expresses the sense of the House that today, July 22, ought to be designated as National GEAR UP Day.

The Federal education program GEAR UP, which stands for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs, is designed to foster partnerships amongst schools, school districts, business entities, and colleges and universities in order to improve public education and to increase low-income students' access to post-secondary education.

The author of the original legislation that created GEAR UP nearly 10 years ago, Congressman CHAKA FATTAH, serves as a sponsor of H. Res. 1311 and is joined by his colleagues, Representatives HINOJOSA, SOUDER, DANNY DAVIS, and 70 other Members of this body, Members who recognize the difference that attaining a quality education in a college or technical degree can make in a person's life.

H. Res. 1311 was introduced on June 26, 2008, and was considered by the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform on July 16 where it was approved favorably by voice vote.

Madam Speaker, the sole purpose of GEAR UP is to encourage millions of young Americans to succeed in middle and secondary school, to study hard and to make right choices to be prepared for college, and ultimately degree completion. Unlike any other Federal program, GEAR UP, through its partnerships, State projects and the thousands of practitioners that carry out its mission, has provided direct services to millions of aspiring students throughout every corner of our country. From tutorial services right here in our Nation's capital to precollege workshops and career fairs held at Buffalo State College in my home State of New York, GEAR UP is telling children that despite your circumstances you too can start early, set high expectations and be prepared to pursue and succeed in post-secondary education.

From the GEAR UP American Samoa Community College program to the dozens of University of California GEAR UP sites, this program is shaping and developing a whole new generation of leaders and scholars.

For this reason, I stand to join my colleagues, the thousands of GEAR UP professionals here with us today on the Hill, and the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships in support of designating July 22 as National GEAR UP Day. In celebration of the program's 10 years of success, I urge my colleagues to vote in support of H. Res. 1311.

Mr. SOUDER. Madam Speaker, I wish to speak in support of this resolution.

Ten years ago, Mr. Speaker, I worked with Congressman FATTAH to author GEAR-UP, and it has been a delight to continue to work with him throughout my congressional career to support this important initiative. For example, as part of the ongoing higher education reauthorization, we were recently able to improve the program to encourage more funding for college scholarships. So I was very pleased to be able to introduce this bipartisan resolution with the Congressman expressing support for the designation of a National GEAR UP Day.

Over the past ten years, GEAR UP has sent countless disadvantaged students to college, including many participants in Indiana's 21st Century Scholars program. It is fitting now to look back and appreciate all the success we have seen. According to the U.S. Department of Education, for example, more than 85 percent of the second class of GEAR UP students graduated from high school in 2006, a rate 20 percent higher than other low-income students and more than 10 percent above the total average for all students.

Madam Speaker, as we mark GEAR UP's 10-year anniversary, it is also fitting to discuss the many challenges that still face lower-income students attempting to finish college. These challenges are many and varied, but there is certainly more that the Federal Government can do. GEAR UP is an excellent example of the type of program that can make a real difference in kids' lives, but it is also a reminder that tough work lies ahead. I look forward to working with Congressman FATTAH and other members on both sides of the aisle to find more solutions to the problems facing these communities.

Madam Speaker, I congratulate GEAR UP for a very successful first decade, and wish it even more success in the years ahead. Once again, I strongly support this resolution and ask that my colleagues support it as well.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. HIGGINS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1311.

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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

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

SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF A NATIONAL GUARD YOUTH CHALLENGE DAY

Mr. HIGGINS. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1202) supporting the goals and ideals of a National Guard Youth Challenge Day.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1202

Whereas many of America's youth who drop out of high school need avenues, guidance, and encouragement toward self-sufficiency and success;

Whereas 1,200,000 students drop out of high school each year, costing the Nation more than \$309,000,000,000 in lost wages, revenues, and productivity over students' lifetimes;

Whereas 33,000,000 Americans ages 16 to 24 do not have a high school degree;

Whereas high school dropouts can expect to earn about \$19,000 per year compared to \$28,000 for high school graduates;

Whereas nearly 30 percent are unemployed and 24 percent are on welfare;

Whereas approximately 67 percent of Americans in prison are high school dropouts;

Whereas the goal of the National Guard Youth Challenge Foundation, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, is to improve the education, life skills, and employment potential of America's high school dropouts through public awareness, scholarships, higher education assistance, mentoring, and job development programs;

Whereas the National Guard Youth Challenge Program provides military-based training, supervised work experience, assistance in obtaining a high school diploma or equivalent, development of leadership qualities, promotion of citizenship, fellowship, service to community, life skills training, health and physical education, positive relationships with adults and peers, and career planning;

Whereas the National Guard Youth Challenge Program represents a successful joint effort between Federal and State governments;

Whereas since 1993, the National Guard Youth Challenge Program has grown to 35 sites in 28 States, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia;

Whereas since 1993, over 77,100 students have successfully graduated from the program, of whom 80 percent earned their high school diploma or GED, 26 percent entered college, 18 percent entered the military, and 56 percent joined the workforce in career jobs;

Whereas the National Guard Youth Challenge Program has successfully helped our Nation's dropouts; and

Whereas the National Guard Youth Challenge Program can play a larger role in serving and helping America's youth: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the United States House of Representatives—

(1) supports the goals and ideals of a National Guard Youth Challenge Day; and

(2) calls upon the people of the United States to observe such a day with appropriate ceremonies and respect.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from

New York (Mr. HIGGINS) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. DAVIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HIGGINS. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, as a member of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, I rise to join my colleagues in consideration of H. Res. 1202 which supports the goals and ideals of National Guard Youth Challenge Day.

H. Res. 1202 was introduced by our colleague and ranking member, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. DAVIS) on May 15, 2008. This resolution was considered by and reported from the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform on July 16, 2008, by voice vote and has the support and cosponsorship of 62 Members of Congress.

In America today, we are facing an epidemic of young men and women dropping out of high school. Even with programs like GEAR UP, each year we continue to see that nearly a million and a quarter students fail to graduate from high school, and that there are approximately 33 million Americans between the ages of 16 and 24 who have not earned their high school degree.

These facts help to highlight the importance of recognizing the efforts and achievements of the National Guard Youth Challenge Program. The National Guard Youth Challenge Program strives to improve the education, life skills, and employment potential of America's high school dropouts through public awareness, scholarships, higher education assistance, mentoring, and job development programs. The program can be found in 28 States as well as Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia and at each site you can find a difference being made in the lives of so many deserving young people.

Since it began in 1993, the National Guard Youth Challenge Program has assisted over 75,000 students. The success rate is astounding: 80 percent earn their high school diplomas or GED, 26 percent enter college, 18 percent enter the military, and 56 percent join the workforce in career jobs.

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman from Virginia for sponsoring the measure at hand and given the significant contribution that the National Guard Youth Challenge Program makes to our nation, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H. Res. 1202.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, today I ask my colleagues to join Congressman DICKS and me in honoring the students and graduates of the National Guard Youth Challenge Program and the people who support them by passing H. Res. 1202.

Nearly 7,000 students drop out of high school every day, putting each of them at risk for drug use, gang violence, and abusive relationships. The National Guard Youth Challenge Program is a 17-month voluntary intervention program that gives at-risk youth a chance to develop and grow in positive ways.

What few people realize is that the National Guard Youth Challenge Program is the second largest mentoring program in the United States. The program emphasizes service to community, leadership development, team building, life skills training, health education, physical activity, educational and vocational instruction, citizenship, positive relationships with adults and peers, and career planning.

Since its inception in 1993, over 77,000 former high school dropouts have graduated from 35 youth challenge programs in 29 States, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. Seventy-four percent of these graduates have earned their high school diploma or GED, and each year 25 percent go on to college, 20 percent enter the military, and 55 percent join the workforce in career jobs.

A joint State and Federal effort, the National Guard Youth Challenge Program is growing and continuing to make a difference in the lives of our youth.

We hope you will join us in supporting the past, current, and future students of this program, and the goals and ideals of a National Guard Youth Challenge Day.

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

Ms. HIRONO. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 1202, a resolution that supports the goals and ideals of a National Guard Youth Challenge Day.

This measure celebrates the success of the National Guard Youth Challenge Program. Implemented by the National Guard in participating states, the program aims to address the growing national epidemic of high school dropouts by improving the education, life skills, and employment potential for "at risk" youth through military-based training and supervised work experience. The program is fundamental in giving young people a second chance to obtain their high school diplomas and to become productive citizens within their communities.

The National Guard Youth Challenge Program is results-driven and cost-effective. Since its inception in 1993, nearly 80,000 students have graduated from the program, and more than 90 percent of its graduates earn their high school diploma or GED, go to college, enter the military, or join the workforce.

When I served as Lieutenant Governor of Hawaii, I met with program participants and staff on numerous occasions and was impressed by the achievements of its graduates. The National Guard Youth Challenge Program has made a lasting impact on young people