

question: What does it take to be prosperous and to have prosperity for future generations?

There are many answers to that question, but one of the keys is science, technology, engineering, and math—the STEM fields—in our educational system.

The United States needs to be able to compete in these fields on a global scale, and children of all schools should have the opportunity to develop these skills no matter where they live.

Recently, teachers in the Second District of New Mexico brought up the question: What about us? Can we use funds that are set over here in the Education Department to develop better skills in the STEM areas?

Those questions were not answered in a completely positive way—that maybe it was not possible. Therefore, the teachers put forward an idea that maybe we should just get the flexibility in, a practical suggestion for an important concept.

Teachers and educators in the Second District provided firsthand experience and developed the idea into a concept. Several teachers formed an ad hoc working group. Brian Claar from White Sands Schools, Lindsey Guerrero and Marci Hearn from Gadsden Independent School District, Marci Behrens from Las Cruces Public School District, as well as Susan Brown, Nicole Delgado, and Christina Abeyta from the New Mexico State University STEM Outreach Center, all came together and developed that concept into a proposed legislation.

Working with my staff, they actually got the bill written, and on June 25 of this year, I introduced H.R. 4973, titled: Spurring Teacher Education Movement for STEM Act, also known as the STEM for STEM Act.

H.R. 4973 increases flexibility for teacher development funds under the Rural and Low Income title of the Elementary and Secondary School Act of 1965. It allows the funds to be used for teacher development in teaching STEM.

The STEM for STEM Act also expresses the need for the U.S. to compete on a global scale. A teacher should have the high-quality professional development opportunities in STEM to increase their content knowledge and improve student learning.

Professional development is essential for providing teachers and educators with growth opportunities that then are presented to our children.

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Teacher professional development enriches the learning environment for students and educators alike. It is important for us to say thank you to those teachers who make it possible for America to compete into the next generation.

Hopefully, this bill, H.R. 4973, will provide a small element of help for the rural areas that stretch across the Western part of this country.

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. COSTA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on the importance of comprehensive immigration reform and the growing humanitarian crisis we are facing at our southern border.

It is the job of the Congress to face and resolve challenging issues like our broken immigration system. We ought to pass the bipartisan Senate bill that would provide commonsense solutions to address not only reforming our immigration system, but to deal with this immediate humanitarian crisis at our border.

Instead, the Republican House leadership refuses to allow a vote on comprehensive reform and has come up, instead, with a plan that would change the law passed in 2008 to combat human trafficking. In addition, this partisan bill will provide limited funding for this fiscal year.

Again, House leadership plans to pass a short-term fix, so that they can go back to their districts next month and say: well, we tried to fix this crisis that we are facing.

This is not how we should be solving our Nation's problems. Each day that our immigration system remains broken, jobs are lost, and our economy suffers. It is time to set politics aside and focus on fixing our current immigration system. In fact, failure to address reform is making it more difficult to deal with the thousands of unaccompanied children arriving at our southern border in hopes of finding safety.

The humanitarian crisis that we are facing is in part a result of the increasing turmoil in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, where drug trafficking, human trafficking, and violence is rampant. Families have been tortured and killed, and today, there are people who are literally running for their lives.

Atrocities are being committed in those countries, and they must bear the responsibility of addressing and resolving their issues. Mexico also has a role to play.

We in the United States must now face the humanitarian crisis this violence is causing at our southern border. In a joint statement, President Obama, along with Presidents from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, pledged to reduce criminal activity in Central American countries by promoting greater social and economic opportunity.

It is my hope that these leaders stay true to their word and demonstrate leadership by addressing the humanitarian crisis taking place within their own countries.

These young unaccompanied children must be treated in a humane and dignified way. Ultimately, these children's fate rests in the hands of our immigration judges, and those children who are not granted asylum must return to

their countries. Playing politics with this grave crisis, as some are doing, is not productive.

It is the height of hypocrisy that Republicans want more border security, but have refused to allow a vote on a comprehensive immigration reform bill that would in fact provide more funding to secure our borders. That makes no sense. We have spent billions of dollars on border security, but clearly, our border is not yet secure.

The comprehensive immigration reform bill passed by the Senate in a bipartisan fashion requires that a long-term plan be developed and executed with an initial \$8.3 billion in funding to focus on securing the borders today and an additional \$6.5 billion in funding to be spent over the next 6 years to in fact secure our border.

What we need now, more than ever, is an open and honest discussion on the House floor about the relationship between immigration reform and this humanitarian crisis. Therefore, I urge my Republican colleagues to join together, in a bipartisan fashion, like they did in the Senate, to find an effective and humane short- and long-term solution to this crisis, which is directly related, in my opinion, to fixing our broken immigration system.

ABLE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. CRENSHAW) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CRENSHAW. Mr. Speaker, this morning, I want to bring attention to proposed legislation known as the ABLE Act, or Achieving a Better Life Experience. It is something that is important to me and to a lot of Members of the House.

I first filed this legislation 7 years ago. Since then, we have come a long way. Today, 377 Members of the House and 74 United States Senators are cosponsors of this legislation. There is no piece of legislation in the Congress today that enjoys more bipartisan, bicameral support than the ABLE Act. Tomorrow, the Ways and Means Committee in the House will take up this legislation, and I hope that they will pass it with a favorable vote.

Just what is the ABLE Act? It is a piece of legislation that attempts to help those individuals with disabilities achieve their full potential. How does it do that? Well, it allows individuals with disabilities to set up a tax-free savings account. They take that account, it grows tax free, and they can use the proceeds, as long as they meet qualified expenses.

Those individuals face challenges that you and I can sometimes hardly imagine. They might be medical, transportation, education, or housing needs. We already allow other individuals to use tax-exempt savings accounts to help them.

If you want to save for retirement, you can set up a tax-free savings account called a 401(k). If you want to set

up a tax-free savings account to help you go to college, you can do that through what is called a 529. If you want to help with your health care, you can set up a health savings account. It seems only fair that we level the playing field and allow those individuals the same opportunity.

Let me introduce you to someone by the name of Sydney Leach. She lives in Jacksonville, Florida. Today, she is a fifth-grader at Crown Point Elementary School. She has Down syndrome. When she was born, her proud mom and dad, Stacy and Jeff Leach, made a commitment to make sure that she would not only have a happy life, but that she would be able to realize her hopes and her dreams and her full potential.

Soon they realized that when you raise a child with Down syndrome, you face challenges that a lot of people can't imagine. Unlike her classmates, she had to have special behavioral counseling. She had to have special medical care. She needed individual counseling. So it was difficult.

Her parents then found out that if you have Medicaid, you are limited to \$2,000 for the amount of assets that you can have in your name. If her parents or loved ones wanted to give her a gift, they jeopardized the care that she needed.

So the ABLE Act seeks to correct those inequities. It says that you can, number one, set up a tax-free savings account and let those proceeds grow. Number two, it won't count against your \$2,000 limitation on assets.

This is America, home of the American Dream. Individuals with disabilities ought to be able to live the American Dream, just like you and I. They ought to be able to have an education and work on their own, if they can. They ought to be able to save for the future. The ABLE Act allows them to do just that.

We live in a great, prosperous country. Sometimes, we are called upon to speak out for the people that can't speak out, to stand up and seek justice for those that can't seek justice on their own.

The ABLE Act will have a positive impact on millions of people with disabilities all across this land. That is worth fighting for. I hope soon the ABLE Act will become the law of the land.

HEALTH EQUITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM) for 5 minutes.

Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, last September, I was honored to welcome the Tri-Caucus Health Disparities Summit to my home State of New Mexico. The Center for Health Policy at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque brought experts from all over the country together to talk about what they

are seeing as providers, researchers, and patients; and we heard that communities of color continue to face substantial cultural, social, and economic barriers to obtaining quality health care and achieving equitable health outcomes.

Several of my colleagues in fact joined me at that summit, and we all pledged not to just acknowledge these disparities, but to act to provide the tools and resources necessary to achieve health equity. That is what the Health Equity and Accountability Act does.

It is a comprehensive bill, developed with significant stakeholder input, that would build on the gains of the Affordable Care Act and put in place the policies and the infrastructure needed to eliminate health disparities.

The bill sets national standards for culturally and linguistically appropriate care and includes programs to address diseases that disproportionately impact minority communities. It also provides grants and scholarships to build diversity in the health care workforce and extends funding to strengthen the health IT infrastructure in minority communities.

These provisions are just part of a larger strategic approach because problems like this really are more systemic. We can't just add some funding here or make a policy change there and walk away. This takes thoughtful, comprehensive policy to make a substantial long-lasting difference on issues like this.

I would like to commend my colleague, Congresswoman LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD from California, for her leadership on this bill. It is not easy to put together a bill of this size in consultation with dozens of Members' offices and more than 300 stakeholder groups, but she managed to do just that, and I thank her for putting together one of the best versions of this bill I think Congress has had before it.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

CHAPLAIN JENNIFER NIELSON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RODNEY DAVIS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and work of Chaplain Jennifer Nielson of the 108th Sustainment Brigade. I believe it is important that we recognize and value the work performed by our country's military chaplains.

Following an initial deployment as an enlisted soldier, Jennifer Nielson became a chaplain while waiting to fulfill a second deployment in Kuwait. As a resident of the capital city of Springfield, Illinois—which I am proud to represent—Jennifer has served as a Wounded Warrior chaplain, providing support for our Nation's veterans, and has organized yellow ribbon events welcoming home our returning veterans.

Currently, Chaplain Nielson is working with the National Guard's Family Program Division, providing support and counsel in Illinois. Because of her unyielding support and compassion, I am proud to recognize her service today.

As we take time this week to recognize the chaplains who have bravely provided spiritual guidance to their fellow servicemen and -women throughout history, it is important that we also acknowledge those who carry on their traditions and thank them for their service.

Chaplain Nielson has faithfully served her country for the Illinois Army National Guard, and I am proud to honor her and the rest of the dedicated chaplains supporting our troops across the globe.

HONORING TEACHER CYNTHIA DIPERT

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss today if I weren't able to honor a former teacher of mine who made an impact in my life that she may never have known.

When I was 7 years old, my family moved from Des Moines, Iowa, to Taylorville, Illinois, and almost a week later, I was sitting in a brand-new classroom as a second-grader at South Elementary School in my hometown of Taylorville, Illinois.

A young graduate student teacher who was doing some work in that classroom came up to a very shy boy who was determined not to talk to anybody in class that day. That was me. When she knelt down beside my desk, all the heads of my classmates around me turned and welcomed me as one of the new kids in that second grade class.

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That confidence that Mrs. Cynthia Dipert gave me that day was confidence that built up throughout my elementary school career, junior high, and high school. Frankly, maybe that instance—maybe that gesture of compassion that Cynthia gave me that day—helped lead me here to this great institution we call the House of Representatives.

Now, Mrs. Dipert went on to teach my daughter. I always enjoyed going to parent-teacher conferences when my daughter was in Cynthia's class. Then we saddled her with my twin boys in the exact same class, and I thought I would enjoy going to parent-teacher conferences then, too. However, I walked in one day, along with my wife, and we asked Cynthia, Why is a bloody hand hanging from the ceiling? It was fake, of course. She said, Oh. Your son sits there, and I am reminding him that he needs to raise his hand before he talks.

I think, Mr. Speaker, we might need to have props like that here in the House of Representatives sometimes.

It is hard for me today to stand here and think about those fun times I had and the impact that Cynthia Dipert had on so many kids—my own, me, and those of so many people in my hometown of Taylorville—as she is not going