

most expensive in U.S. history and helped propel new campaign finance reform. It was this first-hand experience which convinced me that our elections have increasingly come to be polluted by ever-increasing amounts of unregulated outside spending.

Millions of dollars in soft money, spending that avoided limits because of misguided legal distinctions between contributions to a candidate and independent expenditures in support of a candidate, plagued that 2000 race and almost every major Federal race since.

On my very first day in Congress, I cosponsored the McCain-Feingold Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act, which attempted to ban soft money expenditures and allowed for public financing of campaigns. The bill passed, and for a brief window, the campaign finance system became more transparent and limited. That was, sadly, short lived.

With Citizens United, the Supreme Court struck down decades of restrictions on corporate campaign spending and freed corporations to spend unlimited funds to run campaign advertisements.

The court has also allowed wealthy individuals and groups to spend with impunity, with only a theoretical restriction that they do not coordinate with campaigns, but the reality is that the FEC has dismissed 29 cases in which super-PACs were suspected of illegally coordinating with candidates without even investigating the claims.

Frustrating as it is for a candidate to contend with attacks by super-PACs or soft money, as I was, disclosure laws at least allow us to alert voters to the special interest which is behind those expenditures. Candidates being drowned out in attacks paid for by dark money, however, don't have that luxury.

Groups who raise dark money do so by exploiting IRS regulations, designating them "social welfare nonprofits," which allow them to operate tax exempt and raise unlimited money completely anonymously.

Nothing about funneling millions in secret dollars to support campaigns could be construed to be in the interest of social welfare—nothing. Social welfare nonprofits are supposed to limit their political activity, but IRS audits, even of groups that spend vast amounts of their time and budget in support of candidates, are extremely rare.

Investigations into complaints of abuse can take years, at which point an election will long be over, the damage done.

The Supreme Court has overturned decades of legal precedent, the regulatory process is at a standstill, and still, we watch billions pour into campaigns and in increasingly anonymous fashion.

Sadly, we are left with one option, a constitutional amendment that allows Congress to set reasonable limits on both donations and expenditures and shines the light of day on both.

IRAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join my colleagues to express a deep concern about the ongoing negotiations with Iran over the country's nuclear capabilities.

As many of my colleagues have noted on the floor of this House, preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon is critical to securing peace in the region and protecting U.S. interests, including our close ally Israel.

It was good to hear Secretary Kerry's recent commitment not "to shave anywhere at the margins in order to just get an agreement" and to work for an agreement that will pass scrutiny. However, media reports from the negotiations in Vienna indicate that Iran has tried to renegotiate the previously released framework and continues to demand further concessions from international negotiators.

Among the latest demands from Tehran is that all United Nations sanctions against the country, including the ban on the import or export of conventional arms, be lifted as part of any deal.

Well, I have a response to that demand: unacceptable. Lifting the arms embargo would serve only to further destabilize the Middle East and accelerate Iran's arming of Shiite militias.

The Iranians have also sought to keep hidden Iran's current and previous efforts to gain nuclear weapons capability. How can the international community know with certainty that Iran is complying with an agreement to reduce significantly its enrichment activities if the full extent of these activities is kept secret?

It defies logic that such a request should be made and makes far less sense for such a request to be given any serious consideration.

Likewise, demands to limit IAEA inspectors to select sites, to install absurd bureaucratic processes to access additional sites, and to prohibit altogether inspections of so-called military sites should be fully rejected.

Ultimately, it is critical that any deal prevents Iran from gaining nuclear weapons capabilities and ensures that international inspectors can validate their adherence to an agreement's negotiated terms. If Iran cannot negotiate in good faith, then perhaps it is time to leave the negotiating table altogether.

STRONG STEM EDUCATION POLICY

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

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, in a few short hours, we are going to be voting in this Chamber on a rewrite of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which is long overdue.

It has been 13 years since the No Child Left Behind Act was passed, and many educators and probably all Members have heard a lot of the clumsy and unworkable provisions that need a rewrite. More importantly, there are other reasons why it is time for a new law for our K-12 system.

Educating our children is a dynamic process, and everything from technology in the classroom, as well as the workforce needs of our national economy, have drastically changed in the last 13 years.

Clearly, as a nation, we need to use this rewrite of Federal education law as an opportunity to equip our Nation, and particularly our children and grandchildren, with the tools they need to succeed.

One area which we all know needs updating and strengthening is the area of STEM education—science, technology, engineering, and math. Employers all across the country are desperate to try and find incoming young people into our workforce who have these skills to succeed.

The good news is, in the last 13 years, STEM occupations have grown three times faster than non-STEM occupations. In addition, the average income is two times higher in terms of the wages of STEM-educated workers compared to non-STEM. That is the good news.

The bad news is that only 16 percent of graduating high school seniors are interested in STEM. If you drill down deeper, young girls and young minorities are woefully underrepresented in the single digits.

Clearly, we need to move stronger as a nation in the area of STEM. If you look globally, China is producing 23 percent of the world's STEM degree graduates—the U.S., only 10 percent.

Mr. Speaker, if you go back 58 years ago, our 34th President, Dwight Eisenhower, confronted a similar moment of crisis in terms of our education system.

In October 1957, the Soviet Union launched the Sputnik satellite, which shocked our Nation. We realized we were falling behind and that we needed to step up our game in terms of our educational and research system. This Republican President led the charge to pass the National Defense Education Act in 1958, which boosted and set a national goal, a national priority, for science and research across our country.

At the time that he signed the bill in 1958, he said that, in both education and research, we needed to redouble our exertions, which will be necessary on the part of all Americans if we are to rise to the demands of our times.

He also noted that this bill, the National Defense Education Act, back in 1958, would "do much to strengthen our American system of education so it can meet the broad and increasing demands imposed upon it by considerations of basic national security."

Fast forward 57 years, we now have a national STEM education coalition

made up of employers like Microsoft, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the American Farm Bureau, who have come together with a core set of principles on how we can today, in 2015, boost teachers with these hard science degrees in our elementary and high schools, how we can drill down and encourage, again, underrepresented groups such as young girls and minorities to get involved and engaged in education.

We came forward on the Education and the Workforce Committee with an amendment supported by the STEM coalition, and it was rejected on a party-line vote by the Republican majority, who said that the national government had no business being involved in local and State education policy. That is totally unacceptable in terms of the challenges that our Nation faces today.

Unfortunately, the Rules Committee rejected our amendment from even being voted on today as part of the update of the No Child Left Behind bill.

Again, it is the ultimate measuring stick of the failure of this bill to address the needs our Nation faces in terms of K-12 education policy. We should follow the example of this gentleman. He understood that at times, we have to rise up as a full nation.

We can't rely on one local wealthy school district to invest in science and technology and engineering and math and leave behind other populations in this country because, as a nation, we need to come together to address and succeed and face this challenge. It will bring good things in terms of higher income and more growth for our country if we embrace these types of policies.

The good news is that the Republican chairman of the Senate Education Committee did embrace the STEM education coalition provisions, and they have put it in their bill.

Today, unfortunately, we are going to go do this exercise, this theater of passing a bill which woefully fails the test in terms of what our Nation faces today, but hopefully, later in the process, a conference committee will come together, and we will follow the example of Dwight Eisenhower and our bipartisan coalition of the 1950s to allow this Nation to have the tools to succeed.

We need to pass strong STEM education policy for our young children.

513TH AIR CONTROL GROUP DEPLOYMENT

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

Mr. BRIDENSTINE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to salute more than 40 citizen airmen of the 513th Air Control Group deploying to Southwest Asia this month in support of Operation Inherent Resolve in Iraq and Syria and also continuing operations in Afghanistan.

The 513th is the Nation's only Reserve unit flying the E-3 AWACS air-

craft. I am proud that the 513th is based at Tinker Air Force Base in my home State of Oklahoma, and it is commanded by Colonel David W. Robertson.

I flew the Navy version of the AWACS, the E-2 Hawkeye, both on Active Duty and as a reservist. The AWACS is the Air Force's "quarterback in the sky," calling the plays and managing the fight from an airborne platform.

I know firsthand that the AWACS is absolutely essential to projecting air power. Without it, our forces would be like an orchestra with no conductor.

Mr. Speaker, we just celebrated yet another year of independence. We should remember that our war of independence was fought almost exclusively by citizen warriors, ordinary citizens who put their lives on hold and at risk, many of them giving the ultimate sacrifice for our independence.

The 513th continues our great citizen warrior tradition. Among the citizen airmen deploying are Realtors, IT specialists, and even a pastor. We should recognize that this is a voluntary assignment. These reservists have raised their hands and answered the call voluntarily, when less than 1 percent of our fellow citizens serve in the military.

Mr. Speaker, the 513th demonstrates the value of our military's Reserve component and National Guardsmen. Looking across the 513th, you will find skill standards, capabilities, and operational readiness rates equal to or better than the Active component.

When I was in the Reserves flying the E-2 Hawkeye, I can tell you that the amount of talent that we held in the Reserve component was amazing. It was very clear that these folks had the confidence, the capability, and the institutional knowledge to carry on the tradition of excellence that was in the Navy when they moved to the Reserves.

The amount of talent and skills is also true with the Air Force. We saw it when you think about the fighter squadrons that fought in the opening days of the war in Afghanistan. The Reserve fighter squadron was the one that had the highest percentage of bombs on target.

The Reserve and the Air National Guard are critical to our Nation's military readiness. It is important to retain and even expand the reserve component size, missions, and capabilities.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, while I rise to give a special thanks to the 513th reservists deploying to Southwest Asia, let me also mention this unit's other recent accomplishments.

To say that the 513th is in high demand would be a huge understatement. In the past 6 months, the 513th has controlled training missions for over 200 fighters and bombers, supported critical flight tests, managed air operation center support in Germany, and controlled eight large-force exercises, including Felix Virgo in Louisiana,

Northern Edge in Alaska, and CHUMEX in Florida.

Mr. Speaker, let me conclude by once again recognizing the citizen airmen of the 513th Air Control Group from Tinker Air Force Base.

□ 1030

OPPOSE H.R. 5

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) for 5 minutes.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the current version of H.R. 5, the House Republican bill which seeks to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and encourage my colleagues to adopt the Democratic substitute offered by Ranking Member BOBBY SCOTT.

Let me start by reading you a quote that truly strikes me as telling of where we have come from and where we find ourselves today. On May 22, 1964, at the University of Michigan, President Lyndon Baines Johnson remarked:

In many places, classrooms are overcrowded and curricula are outdated. Most of our qualified teachers are underpaid, and many of our paid teachers are underqualified. So we must give every child a place to sit and a teacher to learn from. Poverty is not a bar for learning, and learning must often escape from poverty.

President Johnson went on to say:

But more classrooms and more teachers are just not enough. We must seek an educational system which grows in excellence as it grows in size. This means better training for our teachers. It means preparing our youth to enjoy their hours of leisure as well as their hours of labor. It means exploring new techniques of teaching, to find new ways to stimulate the love of learning and the capacity for creation.

Let's just take a moment to let that sink in.

Those were words read in 1964, during President Johnson's Great Society Speech. Almost every single point in President Johnson's remarks has direct import of the perils our education system faces today.

Teachers are still underpaid, and in so many areas, underqualified. Classroom sizes are increasing, and the quality of education is continuing to deteriorate.

Hunger and poverty continue to afflict our inner-city students in an alarmingly disproportionate rate, and disparity of resources and access to a quality education seems, at times, to continue expanding. The achievement gap between our most impoverished students remains inextricably tied to the wealth gap, and the numbers are discouraging.

Instead of moving forward by improving on and implementing lessons learned from the failed policies of No Child Left Behind, H.R. 5 guts the core intent of the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.