

DISASTER RELIEF

(Mr. MCADAMS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MCADAMS. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 268, the legislation that we voted on earlier today to provide disaster relief, including relief for my home State of Utah.

Specifically, this bill includes money for the Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission for critical environmental work in the Strawberry River watershed and part of the Diamond Fork drainage.

Last summer, the Dollar Ridge fire burned an area of almost 70,000 acres, centered over the Strawberry River watershed. This area has been a critical focal point of the Central Utah Project for almost 40 years. The Central Utah Project diverts, stores, and delivers large quantities of water from numerous Utah rivers to meet the needs of central Utah's citizens.

In cooperation with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the mitigation commission is working to repair tremendous damage to the area, both from the fire itself and subsequent rain and runoff events.

Water quality has suffered greatly. Money from this legislation will be used to reseed, replant, and set up monitoring stations to better respond to the future mudslide and sediment flows.

A portion of the funds will also be used to begin restoring an area in the Diamond Fork Canyon that was affected by a second fire.

I also commend my Utah colleague Representative CHRIS STEWART for his amendment to the bill, providing much-needed funding for fire protection.

HONORING JAMES C. HIGH

(Mr. ROUZER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROUZER. Madam Speaker, Columbus County and many throughout North Carolina and beyond are mourning the passing of Mr. James C. High, known to his many friends and colleagues as Jim.

As the publisher of The News Reporter, a family-owned newspaper in Whiteville for 61 years, Mr. High was a strong advocate for a free press and was highly recognized in the industry for making The News Reporter a leading community newspaper.

He has been long admired in the community for his years of dedicated leadership, service to others, and distinguished contributions to Columbus County.

Mr. High's impact went beyond just the newspaper. He helped lead the effort to create the Committee of 100 to bring industry and jobs to Columbus County.

He was influential in many different capital campaigns, including those for the Carolyn T. High Memorial Library, the Whiteville High School gymnasium, the Angel House Hospice Care Center, and many others too numerous to list.

Jim High was a vital part of Columbus County, and he will be greatly missed. His was a life lived well, and he leaves a great legacy of enrichment that will continue to benefit many.

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces the Speaker's appointment, pursuant to clause 11 of rule X, clause 11 of rule I, and the order of the House of January 3, 2019, of the following Members of the House to the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence:

Mr. HIMES, Connecticut
Ms. SEWELL, Alabama
Mr. CARSON, Indiana
Ms. SPEIER, California
Mr. QUIGLEY, Illinois
Mr. SWALWELL, California
Mr. CASTRO, Texas
Mr. HECK, Washington
Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY, New York
Mrs. DEMINGS, Florida
Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHI, Illinois

□ 1830

NATIONAL SCHOOL CHOICE WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2019, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. MITCHELL) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MITCHELL. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the topic of my Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. MITCHELL. Madam Speaker, I represent Michigan's 10th Congressional District—northern Macomb County and the Thumb. For us in Michigan, it is simple. I am from here.

I am co-chair of the Congressional School Choice Caucus with Senator TIM SCOTT from South Carolina. Today, a number of Members are gathered here on the floor to celebrate all types of school choice—from traditional public schools, to public charter schools, public magnet schools, online learning, private schools, homeschooling, and more.

Every year, National School Choice Week offers an opportunity to parents, educators, and students from around the country to come together and

share the many successes of education choice in this country.

Yesterday, I introduced a resolution in the House recognizing the importance of school choice the week of January 20 through January 26. I spent 35 years in business focused on career and technical education and workforce education. I know the importance of a preparatory education, of a K-12 education to success in the future.

I am the oldest of seven children. My family struggled. Dad built trucks on the line when he wasn't laid off, and mom worked at the Salvation Army. I was the first of my extended family to ever set foot on a college campus, never mind actually graduate. I saw, firsthand, the importance of that education and the skills I could acquire if I put my mind to it.

My mom convinced me I could be anything, and, to her credit, I became CEO of a fair-size company devoted to workforce education, to helping people gain the skills necessary for a career, or to retrain if they lost their jobs.

My company ran some of the largest welfare-to-work programs in the country back when welfare-to-work meant going to work. I personally benefitted from that alternative education when I went to college.

As a father of six, I also know that no two kids are alike. Yes, I am the father of six. You would think I would have learned after being the oldest of seven, but I didn't. We have a blended family. My oldest is in her 30s, and my youngest is 8 years old. We adopted him from Russia 6 years ago.

I know that one size of education does not fit for all children. One of my children, my daughter, who is 17 now, attends a virtual academy because those who have teenagers know that getting your child up as a teenager early in the morning to go to school is like running a zoo. It doesn't go well. So she goes to virtual school, controls her schedule, controls what classes she does that day, controls her time, and learns to manage time like we all have to learn as we get older.

My youngest son has special needs that traditional schools have not handled well. He has learning disabilities. He has dyslexia and ADHD. It has been suggested I suffer from that as well some days. So we had to find an alternative for him. Luckily, my wife was able to stay home and homeschool him, but not everyone has that choice.

Today, we are here to celebrate the range of choices of education, innovation education, and to encourage that. I would like to start by recognizing one of my colleagues to talk about education. I would like to start by recognizing and yielding time to Representative TIM WALBERG from Michigan's Seventh District.

I am proud to introduce him. He is a good friend of mine from Michigan, who also recognizes the importance of alternative education, of education options in our home State, and I now yield to Mr. WALBERG.

Mr. WALBERG. Madam Speaker, I thank my good friend and colleague from Michigan, and I appreciate the opportunity to talk about something that is extremely important.

In our Michigan State Constitution, Article VIII, section 1, it 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.”

That article—that line was taken from the Northwest Ordinance. I think it showed the wisdom of some of our Founders of this great Nation, the greatest in the entire world, that they understood that education and the means of education gave the opportunity, and, in fact, to a great degree, assured the freedom and opportunity of a Nation and the morality of a Nation that understood the wisdom that came even from the centuries and the ages.

I think we would all agree that schools should meet the unique educational needs of children, wouldn’t we? I know my colleague would agree with that. And why, then, would we question the fact that there ought to be choice? Choice in education, even as we seek choice in our daily lives is what makes America great.

School choice gives parents and children the option of allowing the children to flourish. That is the intended goal, isn’t it? Michigan has a variety of options, and I am grateful for that. It didn’t always have those same options, but we do now.

Just 25 years ago, as of this week, Michigan struck out on a new opportunity in the fact of allowing charters, public charters, to take place, and in those past 25 years, we have literally seen a million students attend Michigan’s charter schools. Has every charter been perfect or successful? No. But overwhelmingly, charters have served Michigan well as a choice, as an option.

I think of the community—a community like Detroit wherein the Detroit News just, this week, an article was written talking about the success there of the Detroit Edison Public School Academy; ranked the number one open-enrollment school in the entire city when it comes to college enrollment. Over half of the students in Detroit, a great city, now have the opportunity and take the opportunity to attend charter schools, and they are flourishing.

Michigan has a variety of options available to our 2.2 million children living in that State, including the opportunity to attend traditional public schools outside neighborhood boundaries. That is a good thing. Again, it gives choice, meeting the needs of students.

Now, I had choice, like my colleague, relative to my children. Not all people back in the 1980s and mid-1990s, when my children were going to their grade school and high school education opportunities, had the same choices. Each one of my three kids were dif-

ferent in unique ways. They learn different. They have different aptitudes and desires and longings and interests.

We had the opportunity to send our three children to public school, private school, and homeschooled, and one of our children to vocational school, as it was called at the time, for a career in technical education that changed her life, literally.

I thank God for that opportunity. We used it, not simply to make choices and have differences, but to meet those unique educational needs and opportunities of our kids, and it worked. It worked for them.

You know something, I so appreciate my good friend and colleague having this Special Order tonight, because it is a time when we can talk through some of what we would call common-sense ideas and values and beliefs, but too often we forget about it.

For instance, do parents know their children’s unique needs, unique abilities, unique strengths and weaknesses better than anyone else? I think the answer is, and that you and I would agree, that the overwhelming majority of parents—we can always pick out that dysfunctional family, and, sadly, we need to work in those areas—but the overwhelming majority of parents have a clear love for their kids, know their needs, and if given the opportunity, will make the best choices for their educational experience.

I have seen that. I have seen that in upper-income strata. I have seen that in lower-income strata. I have seen that in rural communities. I have seen that in urban communities. I have seen that in suburban communities. Parents generally want the best for their kids, and that includes education.

So, for us, to support and encourage choice, and with that choice, to certainly hold accountable, but nonetheless to encourage choice and for parents to make those choices for the best interest of their kids, I see that as an American way. Having the option to choose the learning environment, the styles of education that works best for the student, whether it be through charter school, private school, home education, or traditional public school, having choices allows students to grow and find their sweet spot.

I saw that with my kids, and I want that for all children. So I thank Representative MITCHELL for encouraging us to think this through during this special National Choice Week and to double our efforts to say we want kids to be educated, we want to give them that choice, we will support that, and, in fact, then we will promote quality in education.

Mr. MITCHELL. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Michigan for joining us tonight in talking about school choice, as he sees it. You see, parents have a choice to give their kids a chance, in many cases a chance that their ZIP code or their learning limitations otherwise would limit them from.

Let me give you an example. In K-12 education, I was regularly placed out-

side the classroom at a desk to work independently on projects. Why? Well, because I asked too many questions. That isn’t exactly a learning model we would endorse these days.

My senior year of high school, I was asked to attend one class each semester by the assistant principal, debate and public speaking because, again, I asked too many questions, and it was easier for everybody if I just took exams and wrote reports rather than go to class because it was simpler for the teacher.

See, school choice is not about public versus private schools. It is not about the school system. That is a false dichotomy. It is about creating an environment in which the students’ needs are met. They are met to gain skills, not to meet standards, not to get grades, but to have the skills necessary to be successful in their life.

Let me give you one quick example before I turn it over to my colleagues. Aley Minton from Port Huron, part of my district, has a story I want to tell.

She was skeptical about educational choice until dire circumstances drove her to enroll both her sons in a cyber school, not unlike my daughter.

The St. Clair County family’s old brick-and-mortar school left them in a difficult place by not adapting to the special needs for their children.

She says: “Our family chose to utilize school choice because our youngest son is epileptic and our oldest son is dyslexic.” She knows how one son was struggling academically while the timing and intensity of his seizures interfered with him regularly going to school and maintaining full school hours. Her other son with dyslexia was having a difficult time keeping up with school work.

Now in their sixth year at Michigan Connections Academy, the Minton boys are making great strides in their freedom to learn how best for them. She says: “When we first started virtual learning, our oldest son was on a second-grade level in the fifth grade. He is now on grade level, being successful”. Their needs are being met, and, guess what, they are happy going to school.

Let me take a moment and ask another of my colleagues to join us, Congressman ANDY BIGGS from Arizona’s Fifth District. He knows firsthand, given his experience with the State, the success with school choice models as Arizona continues to be a national leader in providing options for parents and their children and for educators.

I yield to Congressman ANDY BIGGS from the Fifth District of Arizona.

Mr. BIGGS. Madam Speaker, I thank Representative MITCHELL. I am grateful for this opportunity to highlight National School Choice Week, which will be next week, January 20 through 26.

Like many in Congress, I believe the path to success for our Nation’s youth is through quality education. The best way to provide quality is to create competition in the education marketplace.

For decades, students and families had few options when they went to choose education for their children. Today, there is a flourishing education marketplace. Some States have erased school district lines, directly creating choice within their traditional public school systems. Many others have embraced charter schools and dual-enrollment programs, and still others have provided educational savings accounts for parents and allowed voucher programs to assist families with offsetting the cost of private school tuition.

Educational options should meet the variety of unique needs of students. I am glad to see leaders across the country understand those needs and promote policies that provide an abundance of options.

Nearly 30 years ago, my wife and I studied the options available to us as parents as we went to educate our children in Arizona. At that time, there were very few options. I took the required general certification test that allowed us to home educate our oldest children.

□ 1845

As our family and children grew, so did educational choice in Arizona. Our children are each unique individuals with varying talents, abilities, and interests. Homeschooling worked for some of our children, charter schools for others, and, even within the charter schools, different charter schools worked for different children. But each of our children received a quality education that allowed them to flourish and which prepared them for life.

Four of our children have graduated from college, the fifth has attended college, and our youngest is in her freshman year of college. My wife and I are pleased with their successes and are deeply appreciative of Arizona's liberal school choice policies that allow every child an opportunity to thrive and grow in a school that is the best fit for them.

Today, in Arizona, there are more than 550 charter schools, with 186,000 students enrolled in the 2016–2017 school year. That is an increase of 6,000 students, or almost 6 percent over the previous school year, and makes up about 17 percent of all of Arizona's public school students.

But school choice doesn't stop with charter schools in Arizona. We also offer scholarships funded by State tax credits to help make private schools more affordable, as well as education savings accounts that help more than 5,400 students and their families choose the educational option that is best for them.

I firmly believe parents and students should be in the driver's seat when determining which educational path best fits their needs. They can only do this if local, State, and Federal leaders continue to reduce involvement in education decisionmaking.

Again, I thank Representative MITCHELL and the leaders here today

and those who are working for school choice across this country, those who are fighting for policies that benefit students and their families.

Today's youth will be our future leaders in this great Nation, and even in the world. It is, thusly, imperative that we provide them with the highest quality education to ensure they have the foundation necessary to become the leaders we need.

Mr. MITCHELL. Madam Speaker, I thank Congressman BIGGS for sharing his experience and background. I really appreciate him taking the time this evening to talk about the importance of school choice.

As he notes, education should be measured by skills gained, not by standardized tests, not by grades, but what young people can do as they move through an educational process, begin postsecondary education, and start careers. Because long-term, ultimately, the assessment is not what a standardized test said; it is what you can get done in a day and what you can achieve.

Part of that is an exposure to STEM—science, technology—vocational skills, trades. The reality is we don't do enough in the education system to give those choices to young people. In many cases, where they live limits their access to those options.

I have an example of neighbors of mine. Their son wishes to take a vocational program that is offered in the school on the other side of the county line.

Now, ironically, by the way, it is closer if he goes there, but because of the funding limitations in the school systems, he can't. Again, we don't want to limit young people's choices. We want to give them options.

In order to make education options more available, students, parents, and school choice advocates must work together to get out the information of why it is so important, what difference it makes.

Let me give you a couple more examples.

Natalie Fenchel testified before the Michigan Civil Rights Commission in July of 2018 talking about school choice. She says:

There are a lot of misconceptions about charter schools.

Fenchel said:

I really got a lot of benefits from going to a charter school and continue to go throughout my college career. Especially with my nursing school, I feel so well prepared.

She lives in Traverse City, by the way, northern Michigan.

Traverse City is pretty rural, and charter schools really provided a second option for me. Grand Traverse Academy provided so many benefits that would be unable to be achieved for rural students that otherwise it would be difficult. I'm just really grateful I went to a charter school. It's helped me pursue my nursing degree.

Let me give you one more example I think will kind of tell the story of school choice and school options.

Kendra, now at Howard University, says:

Things could have turned out differently if I didn't have the opportunity to pursue a different educational path when I was younger. Thankfully, my parents were given the option to exercise school choice, which is, unfortunately, not the norm for every student.

Kendra is right. It should be the norm for every parent and every student.

We can't wait, nor should we, for government policy to fix it. There should be no Federal policy. I am not here advocating a Federal policy for school choice. Rather, I am advocating that we make those options available through sharing information, highlighting models, encouraging States and communities to make sure they are meeting the needs of young people across America because, as Congressman BIGGS notes, the future of America is those young people.

Parents, not Washington bureaucrats—I suggest, not bureaucrats in States—know what is best for their children. School systems, educational options, and funding options for that education need to be determined by the parents, working with their children as they get older.

School choice enables communities and local educators to focus upon preparing young people for the future, again, rather than preparing them for standardized tests, grades, or to push them into a model.

We need to stop with the whole idea of putting a round peg in a square hole and saying that is the best we can do, because America can do better for our young people.

Ultimately, our number one priority ought to be and needs to be getting children, getting kids an effective education that will enable them to pursue their lives going forward, whatever career path they choose, so they are prepared to be successful in this world today.

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

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2019, the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. TLAIB) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. TLAIB. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

HONORING DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. ON HIS 90TH BIRTHDAY

Ms. TLAIB. Madam Speaker, I rise today to take a moment as we honored Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on his