



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 117th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 168

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2022

No. 7

House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CORREA).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
January 11, 2022.

I hereby appoint the Honorable J. LUIS CORREA to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 10, 2022, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with time equally allocated between the parties and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

FIGHTING FOR WORKING FAMILIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BUSTOS) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BUSTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the beginning of my final year in Congress. Throughout my five terms, I have always made working families my number one priority.

So, in my final year, what is at the top of my list to make sure that I am focusing on? Well, right now it is reinstating the child tax credit that just expired this month. Hardworking fami-

lies who are just trying to get by have come to count on that support month to month since we passed that last year.

Now, there are 71,000 families, just in the congressional district that I serve, who won't see that deposit into their bank account starting this month. So let's get to work.

In Illinois, more than half of the children living in poverty don't have a seat in the pre-K classroom. So let's get to work.

Parents across our Nation are spending a good chunk of their take-home pay for the childcare that they need in order to be able to go to work, and it is our job to help make that more affordable. So let's get to work.

I have got 1 year left in Congress and so much to accomplish, so I say to my own staff, I say to myself, I say to everybody in this body, let's get to work.

KEEPING SCHOOLS OPEN MUST BE A PRIORITY

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

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, against science and common sense, many traditional government schools continue to shut children out of the classroom.

The Biden administration has repeatedly put the political agenda of teachers' unions above the needs of children.

Throughout this pandemic, the Biden administration has ignored the concerns of parents and has, instead, crafted its COVID-19 school guidelines in accord with the demands of union bosses.

The Biden administration's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention consulted American Federation of Teachers, AFT, President Randi Weingarten for help in shaping guidance on school reopening. Entrusting a union boss and major campaign donor

to make public health decisions is completely unacceptable.

Teachers' unions took full advantage of the pandemic. They bullied and coerced the Biden administration until they got almost everything they asked for. Anytime the Biden administration resisted their demands, these unions had a meltdown, publicly shaming the administration, staging sick-outs, and making their demands even more elaborate and unreasonable.

According to CDC guidance, schools can safely stay open. The data proves that schools are not and have never been a major vector of spread. Yet, even with all the scientific data, teachers' unions are holding their ground at the cost of students' well-being.

This pandemic has taken a major toll on young people. Children, who are at the lowest risk of being made seriously ill by COVID-19, have been forced out of the classrooms by the demands of teachers' unions.

Forcing students to learn behind a screen has led to devastating consequences. According to a report by Curriculum Associates, the number of students testing at two or more grade levels below their own grade has significantly increased since the pandemic. The numbers are worse for students who are already at risk.

For example, 49 percent of third graders who come from low-income areas are now two or more grade levels behind in reading and math. This is an increase of 10 to 12 percent since before the pandemic began.

Because of school closures, many students have also been suffering from isolation, depression, and anxiety. It was alarming to read that the number of ER visits for suspected suicide attempts by teenage girls rose from early 2019 to early 2021 by 51 percent.

This is a public health crisis in and of itself yet one that is being ignored by many of the decisionmakers at both the national and local level in favor of special interest groups like the AFT.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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That is why Republicans at the Education and Labor Committee have been fighting so hard to keep schools open. We know the stakes are high.

This pandemic has made it abundantly clear that teachers' unions, as well as the education establishment, have too much power. Neither union bosses nor bureaucrats in Washington should be able to keep our children from the classroom. Access to education is an important right in this country, one that teachers' unions are belittling with their outrageous demands.

What has the outsized influence of teachers' unions produced? Less school choice, falling education standards, explicit material in school libraries, critical race theory-inspired curriculum, and years of learning loss.

Teachers' unions have become far less about protecting teachers or students and far more about promoting a left-wing political agenda. This was made clear when the teachers' unions in several major cities joined forces with the Democratic Socialists of America to demand an eviction moratorium and an end to voucher programs as conditions for reopening schools.

The longer we let these union bosses take advantage of this pandemic, the worse off our students will be. Students should no longer take a back seat to politics or special interests.

It is time to stop catering to teachers' unions and to start serving the needs of students.

RECOGNIZING EDUCATORS AND SCHOOL STAFF

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

Mr. LEVIN of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the resilient, dedicated, and understandably exhausted, yet unflagging, educators and school staff across the Nation.

I have spent my career advocating for an equitable education system, and I am a proud dad of four children who are products of Michigan public schools. In fact, my daughter Molly is currently a high school junior who is set to graduate next year. I can hardly believe it.

That is why I have been especially disheartened when I meet regularly with educators and superintendents in Macomb and Oakland Counties and hear stories of how these frontline workers navigate from one crisis to another, seemingly without end. From multiple COVID-19 waves and politicization of commonsense public health measures, like masking and vaccines, to mass shootings, like the Oxford High School tragedy in my home county of Oakland County that we are still mourning, and startling learning loss and social delays.

Mr. Speaker, our educators, school staff, and administrators are not catching a break. They are working tirelessly and meeting daily, even over hol-

iday breaks, to make sure they can provide the best learning environment for our students. Across the board, they reported trouble finding teachers, finding bus drivers, finding kitchen staff and everything in between.

Our students are returning to the classroom with immense needs in the midst of a teacher and substitute shortage. All manner of staff and administrators, including even superintendents themselves, are stepping up and entering the classroom as substitutes.

One thing is very clear: We need a societal shift to address the issues around staffing, attendance, learning loss, and the social and mental health needs of our students. As the omicron variant continues to surge, we must prioritize education and consider it a sacred public good instead of an industry, and value our educators and school staff by providing living wages, safe work environments, and ending the attacks on educators and their unions.

The pandemic has exposed long-simmering problems, as crises are wont to do. It is a time for a fundamental reset; time for us to realize that, while markets do a great job of distributing goods and services across the society, there are a few social goods that should not be determined by market forces but, rather, lifted up above them as a way to protect our democracy and make the healthy functioning of markets possible in the first place.

One is public safety. Another is access to quality healthcare for every person. A third is an excellent public education for every child, from preschool to community college.

We cannot continue to put our educators through the wringer. Longtime professionals in my district tell me they are hearing from new teachers who say they won't last a couple of years, much less decades.

My response was this: We must restore the education profession; the dignity of the education profession; the worth and the standing of the education profession, no matter how difficult it is. We must train teachers and prepare them for success, offer them appropriate pay and benefits, and support them, not only in the classroom, but in our society with the dignity and respect they deserve.

As a member of the House Education and Labor Committee, I urge my colleagues to join me in continuing the fight for robust investments and just policies to make sure our country, our economy, and our education system work for every American, not just the wealthy few.

THE DRUG CRISIS IS DECIMATING COMMUNITIES

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

Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the drug cri-

sis that is decimating communities and destroying families.

Earlier this month, the CDC released data showing that fentanyl overdoses are now the number one killer of Americans ages 18 to 45: number one killer. This data is tragic. No family should have to deal with the sudden loss of a loved one.

Fentanyl is often ingested unknowingly, and a dose smaller than the size of a penny can be lethal.

In 2021, President Biden swung open the doors to our southern border, and the impact of that continues to be negative. That decision invited drug traffickers into our country. Last year, Border Patrol agents seized enough fentanyl to kill every man, woman and child in my home State of Pennsylvania.

We cannot solve this crisis while our borders remain open. We cannot solve this crisis while the Biden administration fails to act.

This deadly drug will continue to pour into our country if we fail to build the wall. It will continue to pour into our country if we do not get the border agents the support and the tools that they need.

This issue is far too important to continue to ignore. Our communities continue to suffer. Congress should act now to make fentanyl analogs a schedule one narcotic.

The Biden administration must secure our southern border. Our communities, they are counting on us to act. We can no longer continue to let them down.

SCHOOLS NEED CRITICAL INVESTMENTS

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

Ms. GARCIA of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to the critical investments we are making in our schools. Schools are the pillars of our communities. They are the places where our children learn and grow every day. Making sure that these spaces are safe for our Nation's children is one of our most important responsibilities.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, many of these facilities are not up to the task. School boards have been sounding the alarm for years about lead pipes, poor air quality, and now COVID-19 issues hurting our children's education. And for too long, help has not come.

□ 1015

But this month, during School Board Recognition Month, I am proud to be able to tell schools in my district and around the country that help is on the way.

Thanks to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, passed by this Chamber, we are bringing billions of dollars to make safe, healthy schools for our kids. That means billions of dollars to remove dangerous lead pipes