we know that, from the Education Department's projected growth study, the problem is going to get radically worse in the next decade.

Madam Speaker, our schools are bursting at the seams. School children are being forced to attend classes in trailers. And educators struggle to teach in appalling overcrowded conditions and unsafe classrooms.

This Congress must act and act now to address this urgent problem. As a former school superintendent of my State's public schools, I know firsthand that the quality of a child's physical surroundings does make a difference in his or her ability to learn. Modernizing our school infrastructure will improve academic performance.

North Carolina citizens approved recently a $1.8 billion investment in our education infrastructure. Congress must do the same. And I call on this Congress to do its part.

Madam Speaker, we must pass school construction legislation and do it now.

□ 1015

AMERICA NEEDS AN ACROSS-THE-BOARD INCOME TAX CUT

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

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Madam Speaker, America needs an across-the-board income tax cut. The average American family still pays more in taxes than it spends on food, clothing and shelter. This Congress, I think, has an obligation to cut taxes again.

Last year's tax cut was a positive step in the right direction, but it did not go far enough, for far too many Americans received little or no benefit at all, particularly singles and seniors.

Instead of picking winners and losers among overtaxed Americans, it is time to cut taxes across the board. I have introduced a bill, the Taxpayer Relief and Protection Act, that would cut marginal income tax rates 5 percent across the board.

This tax cut will ensure that every American who earns a paycheck will be able to keep a little more of their hard-earned money.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to cosponsor the Taxpayer Relief and Protection Act. An across-the-board income tax cut is the fairest way to provide the American people with the additional tax relief that they need and deserve.

SENATOR FEINGOLD: CHAMPION OF CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

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

Mr. KIND. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to my friend and colleague from Wisconsin, Senator RUSS FEINGOLD. Senator FEINGOLD for 5 years has courageously championed campaign finance reform. The debate this week in the United States Senate is a tribute to Senator FEINGOLD and Senator MCCAIN's perseverance in the face of strong opposition.

While passage of the McCain-Feingold bill is not guaranteed, the Senate at least has been given an opportunity to cast an up-or-down vote on it. We in the House have been denied the right to any debate and vote on campaign reform.

Now, many of my friends in the Republican Party have argued that our first step must be to investigate any campaign violations that occurred during the 1996 elections. I agree. As a former prosecutor, I believe that anyone who violated the laws of this country must be held accountable.

Simply investigating the abuses, however, ignores the largest problem, that most of the worst problems of the campaign system are legal: Soft money, unregulated issues ads, and independent expenditures from groups accountable to no one.

Madam Speaker, these are the real problems of our campaign system and the citizens of Wisconsin have asked us not to accept ''no'' for an answer on this.

THE IRS: LAWLESS, ABUSIVE, OUT OF CONTROL

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

Mr. DUNCAN. Madam Speaker, a few weeks ago Newsweek Magazine had on its cover these words: ''The IRS: Lawless, Abusive, Out of Control.''

Now, these are not my words. This was Newsweek Magazine, a very mainstream publication. When Newsweek Magazine describes any Federal Agency as lawless, abusive, and out of control, things have gotten pretty bad. But when it is the IRS, an agency that touches all of us so personally, this is an especially horrendous situation.

About 85 to 90 percent of the people want us to drastically simplify the Tax Code. There is no good reason why we should have a tax law that is so hopelessly complicated and convoluted and confusing. Yet will we do it?

Well, Madam Speaker, do not hold your breath. The IRS would lose much of its power and some extremely big businesses would lose some of their tax breaks. Very powerful interests are fighting tax simplification, so we will probably do little more than just cosmetic changes around the edges.

CONGRESS' SCHEDULE SHOULD ''WORK'' FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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

Mr. GREEN. Madam Speaker, I stand here today for my 1-minute to talk about our schedule in Congress. And even though personally I think we enjoy it, I heard 2 weeks ago we have a vote schedule that a French trucker would strike for.

What we need to do is deal with tax reform, IRS reform. We need to make sure we continue that balanced budget effort and safeguard Social Security first, just like the President said here in January.

We also need to work on modernizing public schools. We need to make sure we have the teachers and the smaller class sizes there to help make sure those children are prepared for the next century.

The other thing that hopefully we will do this session is establish a Patient's Bill of Rights, whether it is the Norwood bill that we have or a number of other bills that are being introduced to set some parameters on people getting health care. That is what this Congress needs to deal with.

Madam Speaker, we do not need to have a schedule that is light. We need to have a schedule that works for the American people.

THE CHERRY TREE

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

Mr. DELAY. Madam Speaker, last Sunday, the Nation celebrated George Washington's birthday. Washington was known for his honesty. We all remember that story of how he admitted to chopping down the cherry tree.

Now, if that were Bill Clinton, he would have blamed Ken Starr and the vast right-wing conspiracy for chopping down that poor cherry tree. We might say that Bill Clinton has a credibility problem.

So, Madam Speaker, when he says we should reserve the surplus for Social Security, I think we all need to be very, very careful. We know Bill Clinton wants to spend more money. In fact, as the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN) just said, his budget has close to $100 billion in new Washington spending programs. Now that is a lot of cherry trees.

When it comes to the surplus, I believe the money belongs not to Washington bureaucrats, but to the American people. Madam Speaker, let us not allow the President to spend that surplus.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. EMERSON). Members should be reminded not to make personal reference to the President.

HMO REFORM

(Mr. ROTHMAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1