

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

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROTHMAN. Madam Speaker, American families are being denied proper health care. They are being denied the right to see specialists, the right to go to the emergency room, and they have to battle just to get reimbursements for legitimate medical procedures.

The problem is that managed care for health insurance companies has become more about managing the profits for these health insurance companies than about managing the quality of health care for America's families.

We can no longer afford to have health insurance company clerks making health care decisions for our loved ones. That is the job of our doctors and our nurses.

There is a bipartisan bill put forth by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD), a Republican, that would make health care insurance companies accountable. I am a cosponsor of that bill, as are 223 of my colleagues.

Madam Speaker, it is time we bring the Norwood bill to the floor so that we can give the American people what they deserve: a health care system accountable to them. Health care insurance companies must be made accountable when they wrongly deny coverage and reimbursements to patients.

NOTHING TO SHOW?

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

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, how many times have we heard the White House or their attack dogs on their behalf repeat the lie that the Starr investigation has cost \$40 million and has nothing to show for it; \$40 million and produced no results; \$40 million and turned up nothing? How many times, I ask? How many times have we heard this?

Turned up nothing?

Madam Speaker, all the Clinton associates, Cabinet officials, and business partners who are now sitting in jail might have a different view. In case James Carville and other apologists for political corruption and government fraud need a little help with their memory, we prepared a list for them. Let us take a quick look at that "most ethical administration in history."

Four independent counsels appointed by Attorney General Janet Reno; Cabinet Secretary Mike Espy, indicted; Cabinet Secretary Henry Cisneros, indicted; Cabinet Secretary Ron Brown, indicted; former Arkansas Governor Jim Guy Tucker, convicted of fraud and conspiracy; President Clinton's business partners, Jim and Susan McDougal, convicted of felonies and now sitting in jail; and the list goes on.

Nothing to show? That is simply wrong. There is a list and it is longer than I have given.

HEALTH CARE CONSUMER BILL OF RIGHTS

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

Mr. WYNN. Madam Speaker, good morning. We can tell it is an election year because my Republican colleagues rush down to the well yelling "Tax cut, tax cut."

I think the President is correct. He says we need to be fiscally responsible. We need to save Social Security first. We need to look forward to future generations. There may be, however, something that we can agree on and that is a Health Care Consumer Bill of Rights.

I believe consumers need protection. The President has issued an Executive order saying that Federal employees, Medicare recipients, Medicaid recipients will all have that assurance. But we need it for all Americans.

A recent California study showed that 42 percent of the patients in HMOs have encountered problems with their health care delivery service. My State of Maryland took the first step and implemented a guarantee to emergency room care. We need to do that. We also need to guarantee the security and privacy of medical records. We also need to ensure that Americans can gain access to health care specialists when they need them.

Madam Speaker, we need to take the "medicrats" out of the health care business. We need to make sure that all Americans have a Health Care Consumers Bill of Rights.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIPS

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

Mr. ARMEY. Madam Speaker, I have good news this morning. Low-income children in D.C. are a giant step closer to a good education.

The Senate has passed the bill, which I had the privilege of introducing in the House, to provide opportunity scholarships in the District of Columbia. With this legislation, 2,000 poor children will be able to attend the public, private, or religious school of their choice. Only one thing stands between these children and a brighter educational future: President Clinton's signature.

The teachers unions may be determined to kill this bill. They may pressure him to veto it. But the parents of D.C. are saying: Sign the bill. In fact, one out of every six eligible children in D.C. wants an opportunity scholarship. That is right, 7,500 low-income children have applied for a voucher from a local private charity called the Washington Scholarship Fund. That is 17.2 percent of the eligible population.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, only 1,000 of these children will actually get

a scholarship. That leaves 6,500 children empty handed, stuck in crumbling schools that are failing them.

Madam Speaker, we cannot abandon these children to another year of failure. If the President will not listen to me, I hope he will listen to his fellow Democrats. I hope he will listen to Floyd Flake, to JOE LIEBERMAN, to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. LIPINSKI), to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HALL), to JOE BIDEN. These courageous Democrats have risen above politics and reached across the aisle to help these children.

Madam Speaker, thousands of needy families in D.C. want hope. President Clinton can give them that hope. He can give them a choice. He can sign the bill.

UNITED STATES-PUERTO RICO POLITICAL STATUS ACT

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

Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ. Madam Speaker, a recent caller to my office wanted to know who is the President of Puerto Rico. Of course, the answer was Bill Clinton, and there was a stunned silence as the caller digested this information. They still were not sure, so they asked the question a different way. Does Puerto Rico not have a President? Yes, we do, my staffer clarified. Puerto Rico is part of the United States.

Despite a 100-year relationship, many people do not realize that Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens. Despite many privileges and responsibilities that we as American citizens share with our counterparts in every State, Puerto Ricans do not share some fundamental political and citizenship rights. We can say that Puerto Ricans were granted a second-class citizenship.

The U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico serve and die in wars defending democracy and other people's right to vote in other nations, but they cannot vote to elect their Commander in Chief. Puerto Ricans do not have a voting representative in either the House of Representatives or the Senate, thus we have no input in the American political process. We are equal in death and war, but unequal in life and peace.

Congress has the opportunity to redress this situation by voting for Puerto Rico's self-determination bill, H.R. 856, the United States-Puerto Rico Political Status Act. Let us put an end to the disenfranchisement of the U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico and support H.R. 856.

SOCIAL SECURITY FIRST, BUT NO NEW SPENDING

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

Mr. KINGSTON. Madam Speaker, put Social Security first. This is the battle