member of the House Committee on Science, I cannot tell Members what an important day this was for those of us who believe in the opportunities for women, wherever their preparedness and their abilities may take them.

□ 1345

As a member of the House Committee on Science, I was greatly concerned at the recent national study that showed that our children, no matter who they were, were not competitive internationally with math and science. How wonderful it was to hear Colonel Eileen Collins salute her parents as her first teachers and her love for math and science. How wonderful it was for her to be able to say to me how she would enthusiastically join me in visiting some of my schools in order to share herself as a role model in explaining to young people the value of math and science.

Another special note that Colonel Collins started out in community college, which says to all Americans in support of the President's efforts to ensure that every American has a chance, an opportunity for higher education, and that they can be successful and can start in their community college systems where they can go for free under new legislation we just passed.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to support Eileen Collins and say we have important issues before us, and that is why, as I close, that I want to say that the Children's Congressional Caucus will be dealing with the question of mental illness that impacts our children. I think no child should be left out. And what we want to do is to focus our attention on ensuring that any child who has a diagnosed behavioral emotional problem is not cast aside and it is said, well, they cannot be anything. Our hearing will focus on enhancing the resources, accessibility to resources, and helping those parents who are trying to help their children.

This has been a combination of issues, but I think they match each other, one by starting out and saying let us get the facts regarding the leadership of this Nation; let us salute a woman who is already a leader, who will lead us into space; and let us not forget our children, those who may be thought of as castaways, and let us make sure we provide all the resources we can give to our children to make them the very best in this Nation. Let us not be spendthrifts or cut the dollars where we need them in order to help our children.

INTRODUCTION OF PARENTAL FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. TIAHRT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Speaker, recent news reports reflect that American children are not doing very well in math and science when compared to other countries. This is not good news, especially when we think of how well Americans will compete in the future. Our world is becoming more and more technological and we rely on math and science every day, and so when we see this lack of an ability to compete, we should all be concerned.

Now the solution to this problem is not simple; it is a multifaceted solution that is needed. But today I want to focus on one of the facets: getting parents involved in the education process.

Today there are barriers in place, obstacles that keep parents from becoming involved. Teachers and principals have told me that when parents are involved with their children's education, the kids do better and the schools are stronger. So, Mr. Speaker, I have submitted legislation to encourage parental involvement by ensuring that parents have access to their children's public school records. I believe an informed parent is an involved parent, an involved parent in their child's education.

The Parental Freedom of Information Act is based on the need to provide active involved parents with information that is vital for them to exercise their right to guide the upbringing of their children. The rationale for this legislation derives from an alarming number of recent cases in which the rights of parents have been ignored and they have had to go to court to secure the basic information which the parental Freedom of Information Act provides for.

The current hodgepodge of State and Federal laws and legal precedents simply does not provide parents of public school children with a clear-cut right to access information regarding the content of the education their children are receiving.

The Parental Freedom of Information Act will amend the 1974 Family Education Rights and Privacy Act, called FERPA, and strengthen the right of parents of elementary and secondary public school students by guaranteeing parents access to the curriculum their children are exposed to. This includes textbooks, audiovisual materials, manuals, journals, films and any supplementary materials. It will provide access to testing materials administered to their children. It will also require parental consent prior to any student being required to undergo medical, psychological or psychiatric examination, testing or treatment at school, except for emergency care.

Now, this provision does not apply to children who voluntarily wish to meet with a school counselor or visit the nurse's office for medical assistance and services.

The Parental Freedom of Information Act will withhold Federal funds from educational institutions which deny parents access to this information. In addition, the act will allow parents to seek judicial relief and recoup legal costs when their access to this information is denied.

This is an important new enforcement device placed directly in the hands of parents. The Parental Freedom of Information Act in no way seeks to influence the content of curriculum or tests. It simply guarantees that parents have access to the basic information which they must be aware of if they are going to become actively engaged in the education of their child.

The need for the enactment of the Parental Freedom of Information Act is seen when considering some of the following situations: Parents in California were forced to go to court to obtain copies of the curriculum in their sons' decision-making class. The parents believed that the class actually involved a number of family issues and were trying to decide whether they would attempt to remove their two sons from this class.

In the State of Texas, a mandatory test was administered by the Texas Education Agency and they refused to allow parents to view the test even after it was given. Officials claimed their test was secure or secret, and they would not even allow teachers and administrators or school board members to review the test.

In my own experience as a member of the State's Senate Education Committee in Kansas, I requested to review a State standard assessment test. After initially being denied access to the test, eventually I was allowed to see what other taxpaying parents were denied. I discovered in a junior high reading comprehension test a story of a junior high girl who developed a relationship with the statue of a crow. In this story the crow becomes the girl's spiritual guide.

This was offensive to most all parents in the State of Kansas. It did not reflect community standards, yet every junior high student in Kansas was going to be subjected to such a wrong philosophy. Fortunately, because of my position on the State's Senate Education Committee, the story was changed and there were other wonderful alternatives, stories about the history of Kansas or the history of America, yet they were overlooked to purport such a wrong philosophy.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I encourage all of my colleagues to support the Parental Freedom of Information Act.

ASIAN TRADE REFORM IMPLEMENTATION BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BERRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BERRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues' support for legislation I introduced to increase fairness in international trade.

As my record shows, I am a strong advocate of fair trade and expanding markets for American products. Our sound economy is due largely to our commitment to open trade. This open trade has led to global competition,