

One could never know when a student who was hurting inside might be comforted or helped, even if in a small way, by some prayer or some Bible verse.

I know that some people say that prayer and Bible reading are the responsibilities of the family and the home, and I agree with that. But I also think it is a responsibility of the schools and society to teach and encourage good morals and values and ethics. As a popular phrase today says, character counts, and this should be taught in the schools.

George Washington once said, "You cannot have good government without morality. You cannot have morality without religion; and you cannot have religion without God."

We open up every session of this House and the Senate with prayer, and this has never been a problem. We have Catholic Priests, Protestant Ministers, Jewish Rabbis, and others lead us in prayer, and I do not think there has ever been a complaint. But we do not allow our schools to have the same privilege.

Some people say or think we cannot have prayer in public schools because one cannot mix church and State. Well, these words and even this idea are not mentioned in the Constitution. Our Founding Fathers came here to get freedom of religion, not freedom from religion; and there is a big, big difference.

In 1952, our U.S. Supreme Court said there is "no constitutional requirement which makes it necessary for government to be hostile to religion and throw its weight against efforts to widen the effective scope of religious influence." Let me repeat that. The U.S. Supreme Court, in 1952, in *Zorach v. Clauson* said there is "no constitutional requirement which makes it necessary for government to be hostile to religion and throw its weight against efforts to widen the effective scope of religious influence." Yet, this is exactly what government has done over the last 35 or 40 years.

William Raspberry, the great columnist of the *Washington Post*, wrote a few years ago, "Is it not just possible that anti-religious bias, masquerading as religious neutrality, has cost us far more than we have been willing to acknowledge?"

That is such a good question. Let me repeat it. William Raspberry said, "Is it not just possible that anti-religious bias, masquerading as religious neutrality, has cost us far more than we have been willing to acknowledge?"

He then told of something that Dennis Prager, a Jewish talk show host, once said on one of his shows. He said, "if you were walking down the street of one of our Nation's largest cities late one night, in a high crime area, and you heard footsteps approaching rapidly from behind, and you turned and saw four well-built young men coming toward you, would you not feel relieved to learn that these young men were coming home from a Bible study."

Today, most public high schools believe they cannot even allow non-denominational prayers at high school graduations.

We have come too far down the wrong road, and we need to do better, much better for the sake of our children. Prayer and Bible reading helped many children and never hurt anyone. It sent a message, even to young people who may not have been helped at the time, that there was a higher power to turn to when times got tough, as they do for all of us.

To those who say we should not try to impose morality on others, listen to the words of Judge Robert Bork in his book "Slouching Towards Gomorrah": "Modern liberals try to frighten Americans by saying that religious conservatives 'want to impose their morality on others.' That is palpable foolishness. All participants in politics want to 'impose' on others as much of their morality as possible, and no group is more insistent than liberals."

If we do not instill good morals and values and ethics of the Bible, then we will, by default, be teaching the bad morals found in our modern day obscene and violent movies, video games, the Internet, and in Godless classrooms.

We need to restore prayer and Bible reading to the schools of this Nation. It certainly would not solve all of our problems, but it would help.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MALONEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### EDUCATION

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

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Madam Speaker, I rise today to talk about the subject that is I think most on the minds of my constituents and most of the constituents throughout our country, and that is the subject of education. It is definitely the building block for the future; and as we head towards a more and more complicated future with more and more rapid change, that education basically life-long education is going to be critical to the prosperity of our country and certainly of our people.

We seem to have an unfortunate choice that is laid out before us if we are watching public policy makers on education; and that choice is, either bash public education or blindly support it. I am here to say that I do not think that is the choice that is put before us, and I would urge public policy makers to find a middle ground.

Basically, support for public education makes a great deal of sense. It

has educated somewhere around 90 percent of the population. I personally benefited from it, as have millions of others. It has done a wonderful job of educating our children. It is one of the better things we did in the 20th century. But just because we support it does not mean that we should do so blindly or that we should never ask for reforms or never ask for it to be held accountable or to improve or for standards to be set.

I worry that, given that false choice between supporting and bashing public education, that we will miss out on that opportunity to reform it and set the standards that we should set. That is why I as a member of the New Democratic Coalition, a group of moderate Democrats. We are searching for that middle ground to try to find an area where, yes, we can support public education, but we can also set the standards and make the changes we need to improve it.

It makes a great deal of sense to say that we should spend money on school construction and to reduce class sizes, and I think we should. I think it is wrong to run away from a Federal obligation to help public education.

But it is equally wrong to continue the current Federal role in public education in the manner that we have set it up. That manner is totally bureaucratic and process oriented and not results oriented and not oriented towards encouraging local control, which could make an incredible difference in our education system.

So, yes, the Federal Government should support public education, but we should stop driving dollars out the way we are driving them out now, which is basically in a blizzard of programs, some 300 or 400. I have actually tried to count them over the course of the last 6 months and still have not quite tracked them all down.

They are designed totally along the lines of process. If one meets certain standards, one gets a certain amount of money. Basically, we have turned our school district personnel in this country into people who are more interested and spend more of their time, I am sorry, they are not more interested, they are forced to spend more of their time justifying their existence to the federal bureaucracy than they are spending time educating our children.

Why do they do that? Because they have to get the money. They have to fill out a variety of grants and a variety of programs to prove that they deserve the money in the first place, and then prove that they are spending it exactly how we told them to in the second place.

All of this takes away time from the classroom. I believe that it would make a good deal more sense to drive those dollars out far more narrowly and to drive them out based on standards and based on actual accountability and accomplishments. Instead of just driving money out based on whether or not they filled out a grant form properly,

we should take a look at it and say, let us set a measurable standard for the school district. Let them set the standard. It does not have to be driven down from the national government. Then measure them against their own standard in the future and reward improvement. Reward people who are accountable and are moving forward in education instead of just those who fill out the proper grant form.

I think this would help in two regards. One, it would give the right incentives to school district to work towards improving achievement for their students as opposed to work toward meeting some requirement that has been set by the Federal Government.

I will give one example of that. In my home State, for a while, we drove the money out for special ed based on how many special ed students there were, period. There was no ceiling on it. So slowly but surely we saw the creeping increase in the number of special ed students in school districts, not because there were more coming in, but because the school districts knew, if they could qualify more as special ed, they would get more money.

Did this do anything to improve the quality of education? No, but that was the incentive that we gave the school district.

Let us give the right incentive. Let us tell them that we will drive more dollars out to the degree to which they are improving the academic achievement of their students.

Another good idea that I have seen is one that was introduced by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DAVIS) and the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. ROEMER) on alternative certification of teachers. In addition to encouraging local control and higher standards and accountability, we also need to make sure that we have the level-best teachers out there and as many of them as we need.

The idea of setting up alternative certification procedures so that professionals who may have worked in a variety of different fields who now want to get into teaching can without necessarily having to go through the normal certification process.

If we have somebody who has been a professional physicist for a number of years, it does not make sense to say to them they somehow cannot teach physics. Let us take advantage of that brain power we have out there to help our students.

But the biggest point I want to make today is one does not have to simply blindly support education. Support it, but expect results.

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#### EDUCATION

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

Mr. FOSSELLA. Madam Speaker, I think the previous speaker, I think millions of Americans agree that,

among the most important priorities for any family, particularly young family, is their child's education. Along those lines, I believe that the essence of this country is about freedom. However, it seems that too often when it comes to education, there is no such thing as freedom.

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There are many, many families across America who have no choice when it comes to selecting a school for their child. In fact, the controls dictate that they send the child to the school that has been zoned for them.

Now, frankly, I think ultimately what we need to do is to ensure that every parent across this country, regardless of income, because regrettably it is the low- and middle-income families that suffer the most, that regardless of income those parents have the ability, the opportunity, and the freedom to choose the best school possible for their child. I do not think there is a more important decision that a parent can make, yet in making that decision too many are deprived.

Along those lines we can also take steps to get to that point. Recently, the Republican Party has introduced legislation that will take us down the path to true freedom when it comes to education. The notion that we can take billions of dollars out of Washington and send it back home, whether Staten Island or Brooklyn, where I am from, or anywhere else across America, I think is common sense to the ordinary American. Because the average, ordinary American says, I think that my community, with the teachers and the principals and the administrators and the local PTAs, if given that money, would be in a better position to determine what is best for their children. Perhaps it would be smaller classrooms, perhaps more money dedicated to math and science. It could be a range of issues. It could be more money dedicated to arts.

But, sadly, the model that has been created over the last number of years is let us send billions to Washington with strings attached, with endless reams of red tape and bureaucracies that make it almost unreasonable to deliver quality education to the folks back home.

So that is why I think when we provide flexibility and reduce the amount of red tape and send that money back home to the communities that need the money and to the classrooms where that money belongs we are doing the right thing for America and for the families and the children across America. And at the same time we should demand appropriate accountability from school districts that too often are unaccountable to anybody.

So I think we have to move down this path of getting funds away from Washington. Because this money does not just fall out of the trees. The reality is that people get up every morning and go to work and at the end of the week,

or every 2 weeks, out of that paycheck goes money to Washington. And that money stays here. But we want to send that money back home to where Americans really are.

I hope everyone will listen to the debate in the next few months. It could even go on for a year, because there are a lot of defenders of the status quo here. There are a lot of defenders of the status quo who believe in their heart that taxpayer money is better spent here in Washington by people who will never set foot in the communities of those taxpayers. They believe they know what is best for all America's children and all America's families.

And I just throw that out there; that if we believe that wherever we are in America, that our local school districts and our local communities and schools are in the best position and the best able to determine what is best for their children, then we should support common sense legislation like Straight A's: demands accountability and sends the money back home. However, if we do not believe the status quo is serving our children correctly, if we believe that there should be as many strings attached to the decision-making at the local level, if we believe that folks in Washington know best what is going on in Staten Island or Kansas or Texas or Alaska, if we believe that, then we probably do not support this legislation and we do not support initiatives to move to the path of freedom when it comes to education.

Madam Speaker, the next several months will underscore, I believe, this Congress' desire to improve education and raise academic standards. I would only hope all Members would support this legislation.

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#### COMMUNICATION FROM THE HONORABLE RICHARD A. GEPHARDT, DEMOCRATIC LEADER

The Speaker pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Honorable RICHARD A. GEPHARDT, Democratic Leader:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
Washington, DC, June 18, 1999.

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,  
*Speaker of the House of Representatives,*  
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to Section 591(a)(2) of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1999 (112 STAT. 2681-210), I hereby appoint to the National Commission on Terrorism: Honorable Jane Harman of Torrance, California and Mr. Salam Al-Marayati of Shadow Hills, California.

Yours Very Truly,  
RICHARD A. GEPHARDT.

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#### PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. EMERSON). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.