

our efforts to help those kids do better as they get older and to help to win the war against poverty in this country.

In my community of Tucson, AZ, 70 percent of the children served by Head Start are bilingual, and through this program, these children learn English better so that they can go to kindergarten with a better knowledge to start out of their schooling on the right footing, an that helps them stay in school. That helps everyone, the kids, their parents, and the community.

Mr. Speaker, for years Head Start has enjoyed strong bipartisan support, and in these austere budgetary times, that support has continued. I urge my colleagues to continue to provide adequate funding.

WAGES IN AMERICA

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

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Speaker, everybody in America is worried about their wages. Here in Congress, the GOP leadership opposes the President's initiative to raise the minimum wage from \$4.25 to \$5.15 to begin starting next year.

The GOP leadership argues that this will have unintended consequences, therefore, let us not do it. However, what they failed to note is that paying workers more money for work performed will increase workers' purchasing power, and that will purchase more goods, more jobs will be created. This helps restore purchasing power, reduces turnover in the job place, and promotes domestic tranquility.

I think that is what this country is all about, is about paying people for work performed. Paying more to the lowest wage earner in the country, the lowest, the lowest, not the middle, not the highest. Are there not the same workers we are trying to help with struggling to keep their heads above water? Why is it the GOP wants to end welfare but does not want to pay those who work for being hard workers?

TRIBUTE TO HEAD START

(Mrs. SEASTRAND asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. SEASTAND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a program which I believe has had a significant, positive impact on children and their families. Head Start empowers the entire family, not just the young child. Head Start assists parents in carrying out their roles as the primary nurturers of their children. Parents assist in Head Start classrooms and sit on parent councils that have a say in how the program is run. Research shows positive impacts including improved parental awareness, and enhanced parental involvement and educational status.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the 750,000 children currently involved in Head Start programs, and the many more children who would benefit from them, I call upon my colleagues in this chamber to fully fund Head Start for the next fiscal year. Though government cannot provide solutions to all of our Nation's problems, it can, when employed judiciously and efficiently, help poor children and their families overcome some of the hardships of life.

Let us make an investment in this Nation's future. Every dollar allocated for Head Start will save us many more dollars and much heartache in the future.

A HEAD START FOR OUR NATION'S CHILDREN

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

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to call our attention to one of our Nation's most cost-effective and productive programs: Head Start.

Head Start is a comprehensive program aimed at preschool age children of low-income families. In addition to providing education, it also includes nutritional services, health screening and treatment, and social services. One of Head Start's strengths is its emphasis on involving parents in their children's education.

The idea of Head Start is simple. If you help children prepare for school, and if you work with their parents, they will enter kindergarten better able to learn, develop, and compete. Head Start invests in child development as the core of an antipoverty strategy.

In a time of declining resources, our country should protect its most cost-effective programs, especially those that invest in our youngest children, empower families, and support work. Head Start is just such a program. Comprehensive early childhood education programs have been shown to save at least \$3 for every \$1 invested—by reducing future costs of special education, public assistance, and law enforcement.

Rosemary Flores is one of many Head Start success stories. She is a grandmother in San Diego who was recently appointed as custodian of her grandchildren. She says, "Head Start is like a life raft. It teaches the value of education and the concept of family unity. If I had my way, it would be available to everyone."

Unfortunately, Head Start is not yet available to everyone who qualifies. Currently only 40 percent of the eligible 3-to-5-year-olds or 20 percent of the eligible children from birth to 5 years are served by Head Start.

Mr. Speaker, the President's budget request asks for \$3.981 billion for Head Start in fiscal year 1997. This is a good start on Head Start. We should appropriate the full amount requested.

MEDICARE HOSPITAL TRUST FUND

(Mr. RIGGS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office has released new data showing Medicare's hospital insurance trust fund is going bankrupt a lot faster than the President's trustees estimated.

But the President and congressional Democrats have not put forth any new or serious ideas in light of this alarming new information. In fact, the Washington Post said yesterday,

The new numbers appear to lend support to Republican charges that the medicare hospital trust fund is deteriorating faster than had been realized and that steps must be taken quickly to arrest the decline. Last year the medicare trust fund lost \$35.7 million and this year in the first 6 months of this year alone, it has lost \$4 billion.

Mr. Speaker, Medicare's problems are much more serious than the President and congressional Democrats are willing to admit. They want to play politics with this issue. It is time to turn off the medicare radio and TV ads, stop the medigoguary and join with us a plan that preserves Medicare from bankruptcy while increasing spending and increasing health care choices for every single Medicare beneficiary.

□ 1430

JOIN THE TRIBUTE TO HONOR OUR FIRE AND EMS PERSONNEL

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

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, today we honor America's domestic defenders, the 1.5 million men and women across the country who serve every one of our communities in responding to every type of disaster known to mankind. This evening, 2,000 of their leaders are assembled here for the eighth annual national dinner to honor the fire and EMS personnel.

When I started this effort 8 years ago, Mr. Speaker, it was to give proper recognition to these unsung heroes, and tonight we continue that tradition.

We will be joined by the Honorable Senator BOB DOLE, who will give a keynote address, along with the Vice President of the United States, AL GORE, both of whom have strongly supported, in a bipartisan way, the efforts of these brave men and women.

We will also honor the brave firefighters of the Long Island fire departments who provided such valuable service last year in responding to an unbelievably large incident in Long Island.

Mr. Speaker, today is the day when our colleagues can join together and pay appropriate tribute to these brave men and women by showing up at the dinner this evening and by meeting with them in their offices as the 2,000 leaders of the fire service address Capitol Hill and plead their case for more support and more recognition.