

million seems like a lot of money to help renovate and repair schools.

Brooklyn received 44 percent of the allocation, according to the Flatbush Courier Life; \$121 million, again, looks like big money but it will only pay for 78 projects in 48 schools. Forty-eight elementary, intermediate and high schools in Brooklyn will get some of the money to pay for 78 projects within their schools.

Now, remember, I have 70 elementary, intermediate and high schools in my district. I have 70. The Borough of Brooklyn has 2.5 million people. So we can see we would have many, many more. Only 48 of our schools will be able to get the assistance for 78 projects.

In Brooklyn we still have more than 100 schools that have coal burning boilers. That should be a first priority, because coal burning boilers produce pollutants. We all know about that. We have the highest asthma rate of any large city in the country in New York City, and we wonder why we have a large asthma rate among children if they are sitting in schools which are burning coal.

New York City is broken down into 32 different school districts. There is a chancellor and then 32 superintendents and one of the superintendents, John Comer, community superintendent of District 22, said, "We were delighted to receive the preliminary plan which will only enhance our buildings for the children and professional staff. It was long overdue. Hopefully, we can get money every year to restore the buildings in this great city to what they once were. Money like this hasn't come in a long, long time."

It is just a tiny amount for Brooklyn, \$12.1 million. Everyone is singing the praises, but with this piecemeal approach we will fall further and further behind because these are buildings that are 100 years old. In many cases they need new roofs, new boilers, and on and on it goes.

Mitch Wesson, another superintendent for district 21, a school in my Congressional District, "stressed the importance of boiler replacement. He said about a third of the district's schools were still heated by coal." In his part of the district there is a concentration of these coal burning furnaces or boilers. "We are looking forward to having our coal-fired buildings converted," he said. "Obviously, we're pleased the work is being done. Our superintendent and school board pushed the issue. We hope these repairs are accelerated not just for three of our buildings, but for all of our buildings."

Desperately everybody is hanging on to hope that the mayor's small beginning will become a reality. It will not be a reality unless we get some help from the Federal Government. It will not be a reality if the President continues to go along with the negotiation that has been reached.

The school construction initiative is no longer on the table, and we are told

it cannot be restored. The Congressional Black Caucus pledged that this will be our No. 1 priority. We will fight to get it back into the budget. The school construction initiative must go forward. And if people in certain parts of the country feel it is not needed, let us have an emergency school construction initiative in the inner city schools where these atrocities against children are being committed.

Phyllis Gonon, superintendent of District 18, District 18 has a large number of schools in my Congressional District, he said "Most of our schools need capital improvements. Most of our schools are falling apart. This building as well." The one she is in. "The roof has leaked for 18 years." I repeat, the roof has leaked for 18 years.

District 18 offices are located in the P.S. 279 Annex building, prospective repairs to which she is referring, that is the building where the roof has been leaking for 18 years. She added, "We haven't been satisfied with the work that has been done on District 18's buildings in the past. Even where they're doing expansions, she continued, at P.S. 233, for instance, which isn't listed, the work has to be done over and over again."

The buildings are so old. It would be better in some cases to tear them down and start all over again because the repairs do not hold.

Eric Ward, community superintendent of District 17, District 17 has about 26,000 students, it is the largest one of the local districts in my Congressional District, it is wholly within my Congressional District, District 17's superintendent says, "We are grateful for any capital improvement that occurs in the District. But for every one that has been approved, I have about five others that need to be done. New York City, Mr. Ward adds, has many historic buildings that are beautiful. The city needs to have in place a system for updating, renovating and repairing them. Until the city devises a systematic plan, they will be behind the eight ball."

Now, Chancellor Cortinez had a systematic plan prepared. Mayor Giuliani has only discovered education is important in this election year. We are going to elect a new mayor in the fall of 1997 and suddenly education is on the agenda of the mayor. But even with city hall making it a priority, the amount of money we can see in comparison with the magnitude of the problem is far too small.

David Gulob, who is a spokesman for the board of education, when he was questioned as to how did they select 48 schools out of a thousand—48 are in Brooklyn, I am sorry, but for the whole city the number will not be more than a 100. A hundred schools in the city at this rate would receive some kind of emergency help.

How did they select them? It appears that there were two pieces to this selection process. Schools that had needs and had submitted those needs were

considered because they were on record. And then the board of education sent the list over to city hall and to the city council and they made political decisions about which of the victims would be salvaged first.

We are into a situation where it is so horrendous. The school construction problem, the problem of providing a safe and decent place for children to go to school is such that it has become a political football.

The scarcity of the resources are such that they have to run it past the political process. There is no system where they have an objective list which says that the emergencies are greater here and they have some kind of prioritization of the emergency so that we get the worst situations first. No, it is run by the city council and the mayor, so that political decisions can be made in this great economy of scarcity.

I want to close on a note of optimism. We welcome the revolutionary decision of the FCC to provide telecommunication services to all the schools and libraries in the country at a great discount rate, the discount rate being weighted so that the poorest areas will get the biggest discount. That can do a great deal for the children with the greatest needs.

If they do not have, however, the complementary program of the school construction initiatives proposed by the President, many of the schools who have the greatest needs will not have the buildings in position to take advantage of this great revolutionary achievement of the government and the private sector.

We hope that all Members will hear the common sense of the people out there and understand children need safe places to sit. The school construction initiative of the President must be supported by both parties as we go forward in a bipartisan quest to improve education in America.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. HEFNER (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT), for today, on account of illness.

Mr. COSTELLO (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT), for today, after 12 noon, on account of the death of his mother.

Mr. SKELTON (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT), for May 13, 14, 15, and 16, on account of a personal family matter.

Ms. MCKINNEY (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT), for today, on account of official business.

Mr. PICKERING (at the request of Mr. ARMEY), for today after 12 noon, on account of a previously scheduled constituent meeting.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART (at the request of Mr. ARMEY), for today after 12:15 p.m., on account of official business in the district.