

So I think that the government sponsoring it would make it clean, would make the drugs safer and it would make people who are occasional users, they wouldn't have to be criminals, they would be living much more normal lives.

Mr. BELANGER. Legalize drugs in the form where the government would be your supplier, so it is in a more controlled area, cleaner drugs.

Mr. DOUTHAT. And I think some drugs would have to be treated differently and I think cocaine and crack and heroine especially are the ones that are really addictive would have to be treated differently than the drugs like marijuana.

Mr. BELANGER. And maybe as a suggestion to you and the people you work with, treat like the U.K. and I think it is Denmark hashish bars, stuff like that and Holland has basically testers and like as examples like to see how things have gone over there, and if things have worked well.

#### EDUCATION STANDARDS

### HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 4, 1997*

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to insert my Washington Report for Wednesday, June 4, 1997, into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

#### NATIONAL EDUCATION STANDARDS

Contrary to the grim portrait often painted of American education, I believe we do a reasonably good job of educating our students and preparing them for work. But I also believe we can do better, and so I have had an interest in the debate now building in the country as to whether there should be national education standards for U.S. schoolchildren. Central to this debate is the desire to ensure that our children have the base of knowledge they need to lead productive lives in a competitive workplace.

#### NATURE OF STANDARDS

Education standards set out what students should be expected to know at certain grade levels. For example, standards for math might say that by the 4th grade students should know how to work with fractions and decimals and by the 8th grade they should know how to apply algebra and geometry to real-world situations.

Most industrialized nations have stringent national academic standards and tests for core academic subjects. The U.S. does not. The U.S. has created some voluntary national education standards, most notably in math. Some states have used them as guidance for setting their own standards. Some 46 states have developed or are in the process of developing challenging standards in the core academic areas. In Indiana, for example, Hoosier students in grades 3, 6, and 10 must take tests measuring their mastery of essential math and English skills. But the standards and testing vary considerably across the country.

#### CONTROVERSY

To be sure, national standards are a controversial topic. Supporters see them as a way of giving content to national education goals and holding students and teachers accountable. They believe national standards provide a benchmark against which state and local curricula may be judged. They stress that students in every state need to know the same math and English and develop strong reading and problem-solving

skills. They point out that U.S. students often score lower on achievement tests than students in other countries, and see standards as a way of encouraging equal opportunity and excellence in education.

Opponents think the national standards would do more harm than good. They think the likely result would not be better schools, but a shallow national curriculum and too large a federal presence in what has been an area of state and local control. They worry about what happens when students or schools fail to meet the standards, and think the states and localities can do a good job in determining what their students should know.

Most of the experts have endorsed the idea of national standards generally, pointing out that the new math standards have shown that standards can be done at the national level without federalizing the educational system. At the same time, the experts are cautious, saying that the standards should steer clear of too many specifics.

My view is that it would probably be useful to have more national standards of what students should be expected to know at given points along the educational path. Student advancement ought to be more or less the same thing in California or Indiana or Mississippi. It is difficult for me to see how we achieve both equity and excellence in education without high standards.

#### PROCESS

Yet I also realize that the prospect of national education standards makes a lot of people nervous, even if they are voluntary standards. That is why it is critically important that the standards be developed through a credible public process, one that relies heavily on consensus-building.

The standards should be national standards, not standards developed by the federal government. Developing credible national standards is going to take some time. The formulation of the standards should involve not just teachers and educators but members of the public. These standards should be reasonably precise and not too lengthy. They should cover both content and performance, and focus on what students should know so that they are well prepared for subsequent education and careers. They should be scrutinized in public forums and be widely distributed for comment. They will clearly have to be tested and revised as experience with them grows. The success or failure of national standards, quite simply, depends on how they are developed.

In addition, whatever is done, I think state and local officials should be free to adopt these standards as they please, as they set concrete, rigorous standards of what students must learn in basic areas such as math, science, and English. In addition, teachers and schools must remain free to use their own educational methods and their own judgment on how best to achieve the standards. That's the way it ought to be in a country as large and diverse as ours.

#### LINGERING QUESTIONS

Setting the standards does not by any means resolve all the tough questions, such as whether high standards alone will really increase achievement or whether high standards alone will really increase achievement or whether in the end states and communities will be committed to sanctions such as holding students back. One question that lingers in any discussion of national standards is how to measure whether the students are meeting the standards. Assessment is a very complex topic, posing questions of cost, equity, and political control. These questions have not all been worked out. But they should not deter us from proceeding with national standards, and I do think the debate

over what we expect from our schools is healthy.

#### CONCLUSION

It will certainly take some time before voluntary national standards are available in every subject area, and it will also take some time before the standards are broadly accepted by school officials, teachers, and parents. But we must push ahead. Such standards clearly have the potential to improve the quality and equity of American education. They can represent a vision of what can be accomplished and can challenge a community or state to create circumstances in every classroom to achieve those standards. They should not be a national curriculum, nor should they imply a standardized education. They should be a goal that permits local administrators and teachers to find ways to achieve the standards. Excellence in education and equal opportunity will not be achieved without high standards.

#### TRIBUTE TO ARTHUR SOHIKIAN

### HON. JULIAN C. DIXON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 4, 1997*

Mr. DIXON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to extend my congratulations and best wishes to Arthur Sohikian, assistant director for government relations for the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, as he prepares to leave his position to enter the private sector. Many of my colleagues in the House and Senate have had the opportunity to work with Arthur, and know of his intelligence, commitment, and effectiveness.

Arthur has contributed over 10 years of public service to the citizens of Los Angeles County. After working for California Assembly Speaker pro tempore Mike Roos from 1987 through 1991 in both Los Angeles and Sacramento, he began his career in transportation policy with the Southern California Rapid Transit District in Los Angeles. Since 1993, he has been the primary Los Angeles County MTA contact with the administration and Congress, developing legislative strategies and overseeing one of the most ambitious transportation policy and funding programs in the country.

It has been a pleasure to work with Arthur over the past 4 years as he has used his talent, energy, and persistence in advocating for the LACMTA and the residents of Los Angeles County. His knowledge of transportation policy, the political intricacies of transportation decisionmaking, and his commitment in pursuing short-term and long-range legislative objectives in Washington have served the MTA very well. Even in the most difficult circumstances, he has sought to keep Washington informed with an attention to detail and candor that is deeply appreciated. I have no doubt that the qualities that have served Arthur and the MTA so well, will lead to great success.

As he begins this next stage of his professional life, I want to extend my warmest wishes to Arthur, his wife Annee, and his daughter Audrey, as well as my congratulations on last week's birth of their son, Andrew Charles. In recognition of his service to Los Angeles County, I ask my colleagues to join me in commending him for his role in moving the region's transportation priorities forward and wishing him the best in his future endeavors.