

Finally, the bill provides mechanisms for giving IRS employees the educational and technical training they so desperately seek. The IRS work force is a dedicated and talented group of Federal employees, and they too want to see the IRS improved. They are willing to do their part, but they need the tools—the tools of modern technology, education, and training—which the bill provides.

There is much about which everyone can agree, in our mutual efforts to improve the IRS. We all recognize that the current IRS needs to be improved. Our challenge must be to fix the IRS—and this must be done in a truly bipartisan manner. It is important that no one play politics and this effort by bashing the IRS. We have given the IRS one of the most difficult and important—and thankless—jobs in Government. The IRS deserves our support, constructive criticism, and attention to reform—not our wrath, since we too are to blame.

I look forward to working with all the Members of Congress in enactment of the IRS Improvement Act. I ask for your support.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mrs. CLAYTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Missouri [Ms. MCCARTHY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Ms. MCCARTHY of Missouri addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon [Mr. BLUMENAUER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. BLUMENAUER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION AGENDA: SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, tonight I want to continue discussing the Democrats' education agenda. Last week, I was joined by a few of my Democratic colleagues on the floor to discuss the success the Democrats had in getting education tax breaks for middle and lower income families in the budget deal. We also discussed goals we were likely to pursue in the coming weeks as the budget deal has been signed into law.

This evening, Mr. Speaker, I want to address specifically the issue of school construction. There clearly is a dire need to invest in the physical structure

of our schools. That is a matter that every Member of this body has become very familiar with in the last several days.

At this point I would like to yield such time as she might consume to the gentlewoman from New York [Mrs. LOWEY], who has been a leader on this issue and has introduced legislation that I believe would go very far toward solving this very pressing need.

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey, and I appreciate the gentleman's help as a cosponsor of this bill. I do hope that working together, and I would hope that more of my Republican colleagues can join us, we can truly get this bill passed.

Mr. Speaker, when we introduced this bill, frankly to provide for a partnership between the Federal, State, and local governments on school construction, I really thought it would be a win-win for everybody. I was so pleased when the President and the Vice President of the United States began talking about the importance of rehabilitating our schools, and I was delighted to know that it had a good chance of being a part of the budget agreement.

Frankly, I could not believe what I heard. I could not believe that TRENT LOTT and NEWT GINGRICH made a point of saying school construction support cannot be in this budget. In fact, in the letter that the leader of the Senate and the leader of the House sent to the President, they were absolutely explicit in saying school construction could not be part of the budget agreement.

Well, frankly, it did not make any sense to me at all. I have visited many schools in my district in New York. We have worked with Senator CAROL MOSELEY-BRAUN in the Senate, and all throughout this country. Whether it is the city or whether it is rural districts, there is a tremendous need for partnerships between the Federal and local governments in helping to rebuild our schools. We are talking about computers. We are talking about repairing infrastructure in our schools. How can we install computers in schools that are really 19th century schools?

Mr. Speaker, I have seen youngsters in classrooms that were originally meant for cafeterias, for restrooms. They are so overcrowded that the youngsters who are supposed to be studying computers are going to schools that go back to the 19th century.

So, on the one hand we are talking about the 21st century, moving us forward, understanding the value of computers, making sure every schoolroom has computers. And, yet, there are some schools that are still being heated by coal, where there is plastic on the walls. I have visited schools where there are tremendous leaks and the walls are crumbling and there are big sheets of plastic holding the walls up and our kids are supposed to learn in those kinds of schools.

Now, we understand that this is primarily State and local responsibility. We understand that. But there are many things that the Federal Government gets involved in to help be a partner. And in our billions of dollars that we spend for a wide range of programs, what can be more important than making sure that every youngster has a classroom in which they can learn, a classroom in which they are safe?

Our parents are worried, whether it is in New York or Connecticut, which is represented by the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO], and New Jersey, parents are worried when they send the youngsters to school because they are not safe. They should feel good about it. They should feel the children are going there to get the best education they can.

What our bill provides for is \$5 billion for 5 years to encourage local school districts to encourage States to invest in rebuilding our schools.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank the gentleman from New Jersey very much. I really appreciate the gentleman's work and I appreciate this special order tonight. And I know that my colleague from New Jersey, and my colleague from Connecticut, will continue to explain to the American people how important it is for the Federal Government to be a partner so we can work together to make sure that every youngster has the best education they can, every youngster can leave in the morning, go to a school that is in good shape, have the best computers, the best books so we can continue to be competitive and that the United States of America can be proud that our youngsters are getting the very best education they can.

What is more important? Education is the future. Education is the key to the future. Our school buildings have to be safe and secure so our teachers and our youngsters can work together to make sure that education is the priority that it should be.

So, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to gathering more support in this Congress and this country for school construction.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, really, again, I do not think anything is more important right now in terms of our education agenda than the need to address the state of our schools, the infrastructure, the overcrowding, the issues that this bill would address.

What we have stated before, and we will state again tonight, is that in this case a relatively small amount of money in terms of the overall Federal budget can really go a long way toward helping the States and the municipalities in dealing with this issue of overcrowding and crumbling schools effectively.

I also think it is particularly important that the gentlewoman talked about the need to upgrade the infrastructure in terms of the electrical wiring. A lot of people do not realize that many of these schools are not equipped