

down the slippery slope. That means that when we have a war which surprises us, where the enemy comes at us with better preparation than we expected, which usually is the case, with higher technology than we expected, which is usually the case, and with surprise which, yes, is usually the case, as was the Tet offensive in Vietnam, as was Pearl Harbor, as was the invasion of Kuwait, we are going to be in trouble and we are probably going to have more young Americans come home in body bags because of our rush to cut government spending.

We are cutting the one area where you have to remain strong. That is national security.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, let me applaud my good friend, Chuck Krulak, and all the great service he has given this country. And to everybody who has spoken up similarly, even though they have taken some hits for it, let us try to make the case again to the American people in this new year and bring that defense budget up.

#### EDUCATION REFORMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. REDMOND). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. ETHERIDGE] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE], for joining me this evening. I have a few opening remarks and then I will ask him, if he would like, to join me. I want to thank him for being here this evening and for helping to organize this special opportunity to talk about a very important issue involved in the Democratic effort to reform, to improve and to strengthen public schools in this country.

We have held this series of after hours speeches to engage the American people in a dialogue about the policy choices that are being made that will have a profound impact on the way our children are educated in every community all across this great country. We simply must put the maximum effort we can into improving of our public schools for our children. By that, I mean all the children of this country, not just a select few that we can give vouchers or something else and give a lot of lip service, but I am talking about every child, no matter where they live in this country.

We have a lot of work to do. Some of these things certainly are local responsibilities, no question about that. But we at the Federal level cannot walk away from our responsibility to help every child in this country.

Mr. Speaker, before I became a Member of the people's House, I spent 8 years as the superintendent of public schools in the State of North Carolina. I am proud of the record that we have established in our State in improving

education. I had the privilege during those years to spend a good deal of my time in the classrooms, on the front line in the struggle of our schools in the battle against ignorance.

I am here this evening to talk about those North Carolina values that I think have made a difference in our State and certainly can make a difference across this country.

In all the time that I spent in those classrooms, and I still go in them now at least once a week since I have been elected to Congress, no student has ever asked me who paid for the textbooks, who built the building, who paid the power bill, who paid the electrical bill or who bought the school buses they rode to school on. The child does not care who provides them the opportunity to learn. A child only knows what that opportunity is, whether or not they have been provided one and, in many cases, unfortunately an opportunity denied. And once you deny an opportunity for an education, you deny a child an opportunity to have a level playing field to compete and develop their God-given ability.

I think sometimes those of us in public office get too carried away by whose responsibility it is and forget that it is all of our responsibility. It is not just the responsibility of the Federal Government or the State government or local government or parents and children. All of us share a responsibility. That is why public schools in this country are asking parents to be engaged, asking the business communities to be engaged, because all of us share a responsibility for our children.

One issue that we must make a top priority is the issue of school facilities and school construction and, yes, the repairing of those buildings in many cases. All across this country we have crumbling schools, some in our inner cities as well as in rural areas of this country. And we have major overcrowding in schools where areas are growing and growing very rapidly. And in some cases they are adjacent to urban centers where those areas are poor and do not have the resources to match it. I know because my district contains areas, directs spending and faces all of these problems.

My State just passed last November the largest bond issue in the history of our State, \$1.9 billion for school construction, by the largest majority of any bond issue in the history of our State. That tells me people care about children. They care about them having quality facilities, and people want action on this important issue. We have to get beyond the dialogue and the rhetoric of whose responsibility it is and just say it is our responsibility, it is our country, and these are our children. We have to deal with all of them.

There are some communities that cannot do it without help, without some leveraging. I think that is an issue that we have to grapple with, and we have to grapple with it at the Federal level. There was a time when it

was not our responsibility at the Federal level to determine whether or not people had electric power. But in the 1930's we decided we ought to do that and we put a policy in place that every citizen of this country would have electric power and we put in the REA. We also made the same decision as related to telephones and, shock of all things, we decided that water and sewer was important. It was not a national priority before that.

And I happen to believe if there is anything important to this country beyond the defense of our borders, it is education for the young children of this country, making sure that they have the minds to be able to compete in the 21st century. And, yes, education is all of our responsibilities so that children can develop their God-given ability.

The President made a very sound school construction proposal during the budget talks but, unfortunately, the Republican leadership refused to allow it to be included in the final budget package. That was very disappointing. It was a very disappointing decision by the Republican leadership because the American people need some help to repair their local schools, and this Congress should do more to provide that help. Sure, we have balanced the budget. I am proud of that. And now that we have balanced the budget, we should not shirk our responsibilities to help our children.

While Washington often bickers over what role the Federal Government should and should not take on these issues, our focus should really be on the needs of our local communities and making sure that our children have the best opportunity.

You can walk into a school in any community in America and immediately know where education ranks in that community. As a matter of fact, you do not have to walk into a school. You can drive into a community and find out where the nicest buildings are and you will know what the priority is in that community. We have to change attitudes and support public schools and public education.

Many poor communities do not have the resources to build the quality facilities that they need. We should help them. We must help them. Many growing communities cannot keep up with the pace of expansion that they have to meet the needs of all the children in the school system. We should help them.

I speak to many chambers of commerce, as I know other Members of this Congress do, to business leaders, community leaders and other groups. Sometimes someone will say to me that the quality of buildings really does not make a difference. I have a ready answer for those folks. I say, when you go out and recruit new business and bring jobs to your community, why do you not take them down to the side of town where you have the old run-down warehouses or old run-

down buildings and say the quality of the building really does not make any difference? Why do you not put your business in that old building? It is the quality of the people you put in it that makes the difference.

And yes, it is important, the quality of people you put in it, but the quality of that facility says a lot about what you care about. It also says to your employees that you care about their environment. It also says to children that you care about education when you improve the quality of the facility.

The town fathers always wanted to show off the shiny new facilities that attracted those new buildings. That is why today we are seeing communities all across America and parents and others raise the issue of school facilities and the quality of education, because that is what business interests are asking about. It is their pride and joy. And the quality of the opportunities for our children will be the thing that will make a difference in the 21st century.

I say our schools should be our pride and joy also, because it is important that children see the quality and that we do care about their schools and that we do have the quality of facility they need, because it does have a significant impact. I know. I have seen it. I have been there, as the gentleman has.

It makes all the difference in the world. It has an impact on their attitudes, and it certainly translates into a better learning environment and we see the difference. It also has an impact on discipline, and we see a drop in the number of problems that children have. If you have a nice facility, it is amazing what happens to your attendance rate. It goes up. Children want to be in a nice environment. That should be our top priority. There are a lot of other things we can be doing.

I am working on legislation that will be drafted to help rebuild our schools in our run-down areas and build new schools in areas that are growing. This bill will help direct resources to areas where they are needed most, where school populations are projected to explode in the next several years, and we know what is happening.

We have the largest enrollment in our public schools today that we have ever had in our history. It is projected to increase dramatically over the next 10 years. We have areas of the country that are growing by 10, 15, 20 and some as much as 35 and 40 percent. Those areas can absolutely not meet the needs that they have.

I am very pleased to have my colleague from New Jersey join me this evening, and other colleagues will be joining us later. I know, to the gentleman from New Jersey, this is an issue of interest to him. I see we have another colleague joining us to talk about this issue of not only facility that is important but the quality of the academic offering and how important it is to have accountability.

□ 2145

And, hopefully, before we finish, we will have time to talk about the proposal the President has made for us to deal with this issue, of how to have accountability in our schools and assure the American public that the schools in North Carolina, in every corner of our State, and in New Jersey and in Texas, as people are mobile and move about, that their children have a quality education.

I yield to my colleague from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE].

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from North Carolina for initiating this special order tonight. I know he is probably the most knowledgeable person in the House of Representatives on education issues, primarily because he has lived through it and he knows what he is talking about. He is dealing with these situations firsthand, which is what we really need when we are dealing with education and other issues here in the House of Representatives.

A couple of things the gentleman mentioned here this evening I want to sort of reiterate or go into a little more. First of all, I did listen to some of our Republican colleagues a little earlier when they were talking about the budget and taking credit for achieving or at least trying to achieve a balanced budget.

It is certainly good we did pass the balanced budget proposal, and I do believe that it will achieve a balanced budget, but I would mention that the Democrats fought very hard not only to achieve a balanced budget but also to make sure that there was funding in that budget bill for education priorities. And we made a point, as did the President, that we were not going to go along with the bill unless the Republicans changed their policies and provided a significant amount of funding for education priorities.

A lot of the money that was targeted by the Democrats in that bill went to higher education, because, as the gentleman knows, the cost of higher education has skyrocketed in recent years, in the last decade, or even the last 20 years. And what we were trying to do was to provide programs, tax credits, ways to provide additional funding to students through their parents or through their own families so that they would have access to quality higher education.

I think we succeeded. I am not saying we totally succeeded, because costs are still going up, but we have at least provided some tax credits and some deductions and some scholarship and some expansion that makes more money available for those who do not have it; primarily middle-class students. But what we need to turn our attention to now, and what the gentleman from North Carolina described, is primarily before a person goes to college, secondary schools, grammar school, kindergarten, even preschool. That is where the Democrats now are prioritizing what we think this Congress should do.

I know the gentleman in particular has cochaired the Democratic Task Force on Education, which has come up with a number of basic principles that I think really set the standard for what kind of legislation and what priorities we should have in this Congress on education issues. The gentleman mentioned a couple of those, but I wanted to zero in on two.

One is, of course, the main purpose of our debate this evening, and that is the need to basically provide for the education infrastructure. We know that schools are overcrowded. We know that a lot of them need repair. We know a lot of local school districts need to build new schools because there is so much of an increase in enrollment.

The gentleman also mentioned the fact that the Federal role here should be primarily to support public education and not take dollars away from public education through a voucher system that primarily supports private education.

One of the things that I think needs to be stressed, and I know the gentleman mentioned it but I am going to stress it again, is that throughout this debate that will be occurring in the next few weeks, actually beginning this week with the D.C. appropriations bill, what needs to be stressed is not so much that many of us, including myself, are opposed to vouchers, but that we feel that vouchers take money away from public schools.

In other words, if we had all the money in the world, we had money growing on trees, so to speak, around here, and we were able to say, OK, let us try a little experiment where we send a few thousand kids in the District of Columbia or in the State of New Jersey or North Carolina to try on an experimental basis a voucher system, I might say, OK, why not. That is a small experiment. A few thousand kids here or there. We will try it and see what the result is. But the problem here is that our public schools are strapped for funds. We know when we talk about the infrastructure problems how strapped for funds they are.

So for us to talk in the context of that and say we are going to take resources away from these public schools, where it could be spent on good programs in these public schools, whether it is infrastructure or it is academic excellence or it is training teachers, whatever it happens to be, and we are going to take those dollars and we are going to spend them on voucher systems for private or parochial schools, I do not think that is fair. I think that is counter to the interests of the public school education that the overwhelming majority, I think it is better than 90 percent of the students are educated in public schools.

So we need to stress to our constituents, and I explain this all the time, that the voucher system is not without cost and impact on the public schools, and that is the problem that I have with it.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. I thank the gentleman, because he is absolutely right. We are not talking about putting additional dollars into the system. If we go down that road, then all those who are currently out there who are not in the public schools, who are either in private schools or parochial schools or wherever they may be, they are going to be standing in line for their dollars once we cross that threshold.

What we would be talking about doing is in every public school in America, in the inner city, in the suburbs, and in rural America, we will be taking dollars out of those schools and reducing that opportunity for every single child. And the child that gets hurt the most is the child who is most vulnerable, in most cases, but all of them suffer.

The last time I checked, as our three children went through the public schools, and we still have one in it, the PTA, in almost every school that I am aware of, certainly in our State and I assume it is true in the gentleman's, they do not have enough money. Otherwise, why would they be having candy sales and hot dog sales and book sales and all these other things they do to raise money? They are raising money to supplement the resources in the schools that are not now available.

So if we are to go in and take additional dollars out, we will do one of two things, should it happen: We will increase the sales by the PTA in other areas or we will deprive them of more opportunities than they are now being deprived. And I think that would be a shame and a disgrace at a time when education in America, in my opinion, is at a premium.

I agree with the gentleman. I think he is absolutely right, and I would yield back.

Mr. PALLONE. I will not go on too long, because I know my colleague from Texas would like to speak as well, but what I see the Republican leadership trying to do is to sort of give the impression that the public school system has failed and we need to look for alternatives now.

And that is not what I am getting from my constituents. They believe that the public school system is generally doing OK. It needs improvement, but they do not want to sacrifice it at the expense of or in order to fund a voucher program that primarily sends resources to private schools. They have a sense of community. They like their public school. They want to see it improved. So let us not just throw it to the wind and say, look, it cannot be repaired.

The bottom line is that if we spend some money and spend some Federal dollars the way the Democrats and the way the gentleman's task force has proposed on emphasizing academic excellence, better training of teachers, and there are a whole slew of things, we have not even talked tonight about the safe and well-equipped schools as well, if we spend money on those things

and we improve the public schools, then I think that is money well spent. And that is where our constituents are saying they would like to see the dollars spent.

I wanted to briefly say, and I know we have talked about this, but again when we talk about the magnitude of the problem in terms of school overcrowding and the needs because of dilapidated schools, it is really overwhelming. Just some general statistics here. The General Accounting Office has said that approximately one-third of all schools serving 14,000,000 students are in need of substantial repair or outright replacement. School enrollment, 1996-97 school year. Elementary and secondary school enrollment was a record 51.7 million. That has been broken by this year's high enrollment of 52.2 million.

So the number of kids entering the system is increasing rapidly and the demand for more schools is there. And it is not even repairing the infrastructure, but it is also the high-technology needs. As we move into the high-technology era, the computers, the ability to access the Internet. Very few schools have the ability, have the needed infrastructure to access the Internet. They do not have the money to buy the computers.

All we are really saying, I think, is that if the Federal Government was able to spend a small amount of money and leverage, most of the time, in terms of infrastructure need, the gentleman mentioned it before, local school districts bond for infrastructure needs. But what the President has talked about and, unfortunately, as the gentleman mentioned, was not included in this budget, was the fact that we should use Federal dollars to leverage and pay the interest costs on a lot bonding, it allows more school construction and repairs to take place, and it allows the local school districts to make those kinds of investments at less of a cost over the long term.

So that is what we are talking about. We are not talking about anything that is going to violate the basic concept that funding and control is still local with regard to our education system. Because that is what America has always been about: Local education. But there is no reason, just like we do with sewage infrastructure or roads or everything else, why not have some Federal dollars to help the local municipality pay some of these costs.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. It is easy. If we do not want to do something, we can find a thousand reasons. If we want to do it, it is not hard to find a reason.

Last time I checked, I have not heard anyone get up on this floor and say we should not send water and sewer money to our municipalities to clean them up because we might take control of it. They will find another way if they do not want to spend the dollars. But the truth is, if we want to do it, we can find a way to do it.

The gentleman talked about the schools. And the truth is what we real-

ly are about in the whole litany of things is reforming, repairing, and renewing. The three R's. We have to reform and certainly go on about doing things.

I really get frustrated, and I was out there 2 years ago when this Congress talked about doing away with the Department of Education and education was under assault, and both of the gentleman here were fighting to make sure we saved it, and we did. But my colleagues cannot imagine what that did for the morale of teachers and principals and people on the frontlines educating children.

They just sort of tuned it out and kept working. They work hard every day. They are some of the hardest working people in our society today. And I think what we need to do is raise up the tremendous job they do and give them an uplift rather than beating them down.

I know my good friend, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. GREEN], his wife is a teacher, and she is an outstanding one, and I yield to the gentleman because I know he has something he would like to contribute to this dialog.

Mr. GREEN. I want to thank my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, for allowing for this special order tonight, particularly on education.

While I was in my office returning some phone calls and listening to my colleagues from the Republican side for the first hour, the fear they have is Federal control of our schools. Well, I think the three of us would agree we do not want Federal control of our schools. We have fought against that. In fact, in 1994 we reauthorized elementary, secondary education funding, and it was a Democratic Congress and a Democratic President who signed that.

We actually freed a lot of the schools from the paperwork and the requirements that we built up, both Republican and Democratic Presidential administrations. Goals 2000 was a great program, and is still a great program for schools to benefit and States to adopt without Federal controls. Just Federal assistance without the Federal Government saying this is what they have to do. They can do it for literacy, they can pay for lots of different programs with it, but this is our effort to help local schools and States to provide for educational opportunities.

I know the gentleman talked about vouchers, and again this week we will talk about experimenting with the District of Columbia. And Lord knows the District of Columbia needs help for their public school system, but I really do not know if we need to use them as an experiment, because those children need an education. We do not need to lose a generation of children by experimenting with some program that may work in the District of Columbia so then we can export it to the States.

I know the gentleman also talked about national standards. And, again, as long as they are voluntary, I think most folks agree with that.

Like the gentleman, I have two children that went through public schools and are now a junior and senior in college, by the way in public institutions in Texas, because we also have some low-tuition rates in our public colleges in Texas. And, sure, they could have gotten a better education, but they also got an adequate education. It is an urban school district, literally a microcosm of our country, probably 70 percent minority students today. And when they were in school it was probably 65 percent minority students.

But they went to public schools and they got an education. Of course, my wife teaches in those schools so she also made sure they had that motivation, not just in school but at home.

One of the concerns I have, and in serving a lot of years in the legislature, was the facilities situation we have. We talked about that in special orders a number of times, our deteriorating schools facilities around the country, whether it be in New York, or Washington, DC, or Houston, TX, or a lot of our districts. Providing opportunity for quality education is one of the most important things we do in Congress.

□ 2200

I always believed that the key to the future of our country was a quality education. Now, we all know we want to make sure we have a strong military. We want to have a strong economic base. But it does not take too far to go. We can go just across the river in Virginia and talk to the folks in the Pentagon, and they will tell us that to have a strong military, we have to have an educated force there, people who can think, people who can respond to different circumstances.

And that is what public education is supposed to do. Granted, does it do it 100 percent of the time? No. That is why we are here. That is why we have teachers every day and legislators across the country and school board members and superintendents trying to make it work.

As the gentleman mentioned, my wife is an algebra teacher. I have to admit, I took algebra and barely struggled through, even college calculus. And if somebody gave me the quadratic formula tonight, I could not solve it without the best tutor I ever had in college, who is my wife.

But that also taught me a way of thinking. So whether it was managing a business or practicing law or serving here in an elected office, we have a way that we can make decisions. And that is what we are trying to teach children.

Sure, we want them to add, subtract, multiply, and divide. We want them to know the history of our great country. We want them to know English. We want them to know lots of things. We want them to know science, although some of us, I have to admit, are not science oriented. That is why I am not on the Committee on Appropriations.

But we also want them to have a way to think and be able to change with the

times. So that is why I think public education, the investment we put into it, lots of things, is helping those local districts and the States where most of the funding is raised.

Just as we help our children to read, we must also give them schools that are safe places to learn. Today, our Nation's schools are increasingly run down, overcrowded, and technologically ill-equipped. Too many of our school buildings and classrooms are deteriorating, again, not just in Washington, D.C., that we hear about, as a Nation we hear about all the time, but all across our country, whether it be in an urban area like I represent or rural area.

According to a GAO report, one-third of our schools need major repair or outright replacement. Sixty percent need work on major building features, such as a sagging roof or cracked foundation. Forty-six percent lack even the basic electrical wiring to support computers and modems and modern communications technology that we want our children to be able to respond to not only this decade but the next century, and we cannot do it with the facilities we have today.

These are problems, again, not just in my own district in Houston but also across our country. A number of studies have shown that many school systems, particularly those in urban and high-poverty areas, are plagued by decaying buildings that threaten the health and safety and the learning opportunities of our children. Good school facilities are an important precondition for school learning.

Now, we know that if you have a great teacher, a great teacher can teach you under a tree. But that teacher cannot teach you under that tree if it is snowing or raining outside. So we have to have a facility that is adequate not only for those good days that that teacher may be there, but also for the whole school year.

Numerous studies have linked student achievement and behavior to good physical building conditions. Not only are our schools in a state of disrepair, but we also need to see the accommodating growths in enrollment. And I heard my colleagues talking about that earlier.

In Houston, our school enrollment is skyrocketing. The Texas school population increased by 7.9 percent in 1 year. In the Houston Independent School District, we experienced an increase of 3,700 students just from last year.

We have a solution to that, or at least a down payment, or a start. The Senate Labor-HHS-Education appropriations includes \$100 million for provision for school facility infrastructure, and it is a good starting point.

In fact, I think it is ironic when my colleague, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE], asked me today about doing a special order on education, I am always willing to do it, one of my school superintendents from

Aldine School District, Sonny Donaldson, whom I work with on a number of occasions, just happened to send me a letter talking about how important that \$100 million provision is for school facility infrastructure in the Senate appropriations bill. Our House bill did not include that \$100 million.

I have to admit, \$100 million, we can spend that in the State of Texas alone. But it is a help from the Federal Government to leverage, as the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] talked about, to show that we will provide a dollar for maybe what a local district may provide \$10 or \$100, but to provide that assistance, that we recognize that that child is also our responsibility on the floor of the House. We cannot just put it off on school board members, we cannot put it off on State legislators or school superintendents; we have to take the responsibility on ourselves.

As we help our communities build and maintain their schools, we must ensure that every school and classroom is connected to the information superhighway. And the President has proposed a 5-year, \$2 billion fund that will support grass-roots efforts and again put the fingertips of every child by the year 2000 on modern computers, high-quality educational software, trained teachers in connection with the superhighway.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to join my colleagues tonight.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE], because I think he has something he wants to add to that.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I was listening to what the gentleman from Texas [Mr. GREEN] said, in particular with regard to the effects of overcrowded classrooms or decaying schools. There is no question that it affects the quality of education provided to students.

It is much more difficult, and I know my colleague from North Carolina [Mr. ETHERIDGE] mentioned, as well, it is much more difficult to learn in an environment where the building is crumbling around you or the situation where there are too many students in the classroom.

Of course it is true, as my colleague said, that some teachers can teach in the worst situation in the world and some students can learn in the worst situation. But, unfortunately, those are often exceptions, and the reality is, we have to see how the average student is impacted.

The one thing that the gentleman from Texas [Mr. GREEN] mentioned, though, that I particularly want to draw attention to is, it is really ironic that this week, I think it is either Wednesday or Thursday of this week on this floor, we are going to be considering this Republican amendment that would adopt a voucher system in the District of Columbia.

I do not know if it was the last time, but certainly in early September, when the gentleman from North Carolina

[Mr. ETHERIDGE] and I, and I think the gentleman from Texas [Mr. GREEN], we were all here and we were talking about how the schools in the District of Columbia were closed, I believe, for at least 3 weeks, in some cases maybe even more, because the Federal judge in the District of Columbia had ruled that the conditions in the schools were so bad, that the infrastructure conditions were so bad that she, I think it was a woman judge, insisted that the schools be closed until the money was spent to repair the schools.

Now, we have been talking about infrastructure and we have been talking about vouchers all night. But here we have a situation where probably the infrastructure problem in the District of Columbia is one of the worst in the Nation, to the point where they could not even open the schools.

I am sure the judge was motivated by the fact that it was going to be a bad learning experience for these kids and it was going to be hard for them to learn, given these buildings and the shape they were in. And here, where there is such a great need for money to repair schools, we are proposing a voucher system, which I do not know how many, I think there are a few thousand kids that are going to be impacted by it. Why not spend that money on the infrastructure needs when the court has actually had to step in and close the schools for that reason?

Again, it points at directly how the need is there and yet we are wasting the resources. In fact, in some cases, I understand these kids might not even be in the District, they might actually be going to Virginia or Maryland or some other places for their education.

I am not here to defend the District of Columbia and its school system. I am sure there are bad conditions and there are problems, and they have been documented. But it does not make any sense to me to say, okay, forget about that; Let it continue to deteriorate, and we will just set up this voucher system.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, if we take that another step and we look at industry, and one of the first things I remember in the D.C. situation that my colleague mentioned was, they went in to put the roofs on the buildings because the buildings were leaking.

It is one thing to have poor lighting. It is another thing to have trash cans in the building catching the water when it rains. And that leads to a multitude of problems of safety and additional deterioration and on and on. There is no question that the quality of the environment makes a difference. There are enough studies.

The gentleman from Texas [Mr. GREEN] mentioned growth. Let me just share a few of the States, if I may, that are growing so rapidly. Over the next 10 years, it is projected, this is just high school enrollment, because it goes back to the point he made about those

youngsters showing up at elementary school. I have often said, some people want to know why communities are growing so and schools are growing. I said, well, you know, people move into communities, and when they move there, they tend to want to bring the children with them if they have children. That is normally what happens. And when they bring them there, normally they want to go to school.

And in growing communities, we understand that. And for some communities, they can pretty well determine how large their first-grade class will be by the number of live births that happened 5 or 6 years earlier. The problem most schools have are in those fast-growing communities where you have in-migration; people move in and bring the children.

As an example, in California, over the next 10 years, it is projected that there will be a 35-percent increase in the high school enrollment in the State of California, a State right now that is a large State, a State that most of us think of as being a State that is fairly affluent.

But when we have that kind of growth continue in a State that is right now already struggling to meet the needs, we wind up with major overcrowding. And overcrowding leads to all those problems that we talk about of discipline, lack of academic achievement.

There is no question of the studies, and there will be more studies that will continue to come out, beyond having quality teachers in the classroom and a good curriculum, the next best thing we can do for children to provide for them learning opportunities where they excel is smaller class sizes.

We can talk to any teacher in this country, in urban or rural systems, in elementary grades or high school, and what they will say is, "Let me have a small class." It gets back to the point the gentleman from Texas [Mr. GREEN] made earlier about the teacher teaching under the tree. If we have got a small enough class, you can teach most anywhere. The problem we have is, as those classes grow, we really do need space in the larger classes so that children have places to move around, or students, for that matter, who happen to be in high school.

But let me give my colleagues a couple of other States. For the gentleman from Texas [Mr. GREEN], your State is one that is proposed to grow very rapidly over the next 10 years. High school enrollment will increase by 19 percent. They can take their high school enrollment right now and figure out how many more schools they are going to need across the State and classrooms.

My home State, which happens to be the ninth or tenth largest State in terms of public schools, depending how you measure it, but I think we are about ninth, is going to grow 27 percent at the high school level in the next 10 years. We are building buildings as fast as we can. We will not keep up.

And the list goes. Nevada, 24; Georgia, the tenth or eleventh largest State, depending on how you look at it in terms of numbers, they are always right close to North Carolina, they will grow by 20 percent in population at the high school level. So we are seeing a tremendous need. Virginia, 20 percent.

All across this country, we are going to see the most rapid, the largest growth at the high school level over the next 10 years we have seen at any period since the end of World War II. It is what some are calling the baby boom echo. We had the baby boomers. Now the baby boomers are echoing, and we are having children, and it is growing very, very rapidly.

These numbers in no way reflect the tremendous need that my colleagues have talked about that is out there for repairs, for renovations, for making sure that buildings are wired to take care of the access to the Internet and computers to deal with all the information that is now bombarding society and certainly children and teachers and students have to deal with.

It does not say anything about all the other needs outside those school buildings just in the learning environment, because if we are going to have a large number of students together, we have got all those auxiliary needs at the high school level, for the athletic program, for the extracurricular activities that are absolutely needed. When we get that many young people together, we had better have something for them to do beyond academics. We all know that that is awfully important.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. GREEN].

Mr. GREEN of Texas. When we talk about, again, buildings, thank goodness we are going to have those kids in high school, because the other problem we talk about a lot of times is the dropout.

We do not want to see those children start in the elementary grades and go on to middle school and then drop out before they get to high school. We want to see them complete high school, because that is just another step on the road to their success, but also on the road to our country's success, because our country, as great as it is, is not any good at all if we have an uneducated work force or uneducated people that are defending our Nation.

And we can defend our country not just by carrying a gun or manning a missile; we defend our country every day by being as aggressive in our business. That is what our school system is all about.

□ 2215

That is why the United States is the greatest country in the world for lots of reasons. One, the free enterprise system; but also, because we educate everyone. We are a diverse country and we want everyone to be educated. We want to give them the opportunity, and granted, some people are harder to educate.

In fact, I had some high school teachers who said I was probably one of those harder to educate students. But I am glad that they persevered because they were preparing me to serve in Congress. And that is why we need to encourage and do better today for those teachers that are out there today doing that, just like the gentleman said. They are hard-working. They not only work their 7 hours a day, but they spend hours and hours in the evening grading those tests, grading those papers that they cannot do during the day.

Also, conferences. I cannot remember, when I was in school, a teacher calling my parents. One, I did not want them to. But today, because most of the schools have it built into the responsibilities, teachers have to contact those parents, not just sending a note home but calling those parents to make sure they bring them in as part of the education system, because we just cannot educate children with teachers and students; it is all of us involved in it, parents, the community, and that is where we see the success in the school districts.

Let me say that the problem in some facilities, some districts have success with their local taxpayers who approve the bond elections. We had some great successes in the districts I am honored to represent. We have a school, Cheneby High School, a small school district on the outskirts of Houston that has a new high school, Cheneby High School that has state-of-the-art computers. There is a hookup in every classroom. We do not have that in most of our districts, because some districts, the voters voted against bonds, so they are having to do creative financing to do it. Galena Park High School in a neighboring district is building a new high school, doing the same thing, because their voters approved it. But we need to help on a national basis because it is a national concern, because we need to make sure that those young people are prepared to take our places here on the floor.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, as the gentleman says, it is part of our national security, and I think it is just as important or certainly measures in importance with defending our borders, because if our young people cannot compete in the economic environment we find ourselves in in the world economy, we are going to be in trouble in the 21st century.

I yield to my friend from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE].

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to follow up on some of the things that my colleague from Texas said about the way that we are talking about proceeding with this school construction Federal funding. I know the gentleman from North Carolina mentioned basically the legislative proposal.

There have been various proposals, but essentially what we are talking about is to provide these intra sub-

sidies, if you will, for new construction and renovation. When we were talking about the President's budget, the program that was actually negated, if you will, by the Republicans, that was a \$5 billion Federal jump start that had a goal of increasing school construction by 25 percent over the next 4 years. But what the gentleman from Texas mentioned, and I think is so important, is that generally, my understanding, it is certainly true in New Jersey, I think in almost every State, is that in order to finance school construction through bonding, one usually has to go to a local referendum to do that.

Part of the reason why local school districts have turned down the bond proposals is because of the exorbitant costs. They cannot necessarily get a good package or get financing at a low interest rate because of maybe the nature of the district, or I do not know how much State funding they get, or whatever.

So we are not forcing anybody to do anything here. What we are saying is if there is a district that needs some help in terms of their putting together a package and doing the financing, the Federal Government is out there to help to provide an intra subsidy, and the idea would be then that the local school district and the voters would still have to approve the bond issue, but it would be more attractive to them because it would be at a lower interest rate and they would have some subsidy, if you will, coming from the Federal Government.

So it is more likely that this is going to help those districts that are having problems getting the financing, because it will make it more attractive to the voters and make it easier to pass these bond issues, is my understanding. But again, it is strictly voluntary. Nobody is stepping in from the Federal Government telling them what to do. If one is willing to spend the money, and the school districts are still going to have to spend the majority of the money on this, it just makes it a lot easier for them to do that.

To me, that is exactly what the role of the Federal Government should be doing, trying to help the school districts that want to help themselves. They have the need, they are having difficulty obtaining the financing, and we step in and we make it a lot easier to do so. But that can go very far in my understanding, just from my own experience in New Jersey, that kind of subsidy can go very far towards achieving the goal of having a lot more renovation, a lot of new schools constructed, just that little bit of Federal help, so to speak.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I think the gentleman is absolutely correct. What the gentleman was talking about is, the gentleman said we are setting a national priority and he is saying that is important.

I know in my home State in North Carolina we passed a bond issue this year, \$1.9 billion, and it may seem like

a lot of money, and it is a large sum of money in our State, but we were looking at school facility needs 2 years ago in excess of \$5 billion. So the State was going to assist the locals; they had to pass their own referendums on a match, on a sliding scale, for assistance.

Well, now we are growing so fast that a lot of those communities are going to still see themselves with tremendous needs over the next several years. But that is really what the gentleman is talking about, those that show the initiative locally, that draw from a pool, and this money would be used to draw down, to make the interest rates lower. So in effect one is able to have a larger bond issue for less money, is really what the bottom line is.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield again, this proposal, the one that the Republicans knocked down, was very flexible in how the money could be used. I know the gentleman from Texas talked about computers or technology infrastructure, whatever. I just have a list here. It can be used just for basic building purposes, but it also can be used for health and safety problems, with plumbing, heating and lighting; it can be used to improve energy efficiency; it can be used for all kinds of educational technologies, such as communications, closets, electrical systems, power outlets, all of that goes to the computers; and also for after school learning centers, community projects that are linked to the schools.

I know the gentleman from North Carolina has mentioned in the past in different special orders how increasingly schools are learning centers for all kinds of activities, not only during the school day but after school, for extracurricular programs, sports, adult education. So this is a very flexible proposal that can be used for all of those different things.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman is absolutely correct. We have schools across this country, and I know in my State, before-school programs for children, before school opens they actually open the school and provide a morning day care, provide breakfast for them, and it is on a sliding scale and the schools actually make money on it. For those who cannot afford to pay and those that can, they put together different programs to work.

I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. GREEN. Mr. Speaker, let me talk about some innovative things that schools have done. For example, in some of the districts I am familiar with, we have always heard of night school students, but they are using their buildings, because why build new buildings if they are not utilizing them? So they are using them for night students. Those students who may be more motivated by going out and working during the day and coming in and getting their high school diploma during the night in an abbreviated program, schools are doing that. So even

in those opportunities, we are seeing overcrowding on the high school level.

So there are other activities, and the gentleman mentioned other activities. We have great ROTC programs, great band programs; obviously athletics, if one is coming from Texas or North Carolina, I guess. But every way we can reach that child to keep them in school, to encourage them to be in school, again, no matter what we do, any of the extracurricular programs and use it as a motivator.

I just happened to like to play football when I was in high school and that was a motivator. In fact, those coaches could motivate me much better than any English teacher could. But that worked. The same way with ROTC now is so successful, and it is a growing program in our districts, at least in Texas and I think nationwide.

So that is why the infrastructure funding is so important. What my colleague from New Jersey mentioned, we have title I funding that is available for computers. We can go buy the computers now. But to wire the school, we cannot use title I funding. That is why an infrastructure, to bring that school up to grade level for wiring for the public schools for the computers, but also for the health and safety of those children, so not only does the roof not fall in, but the fire safety is there, and I know that is the D.C. problem. The judge said those schools are just not safe for those children. Frankly, if I had a child in the D.C. schools, I would be glad that the judge said that and said, OK, we need to fix them before we put those children in those schools.

Mr. Speaker, I include the following letter from the Aldine Independent School District, Houston, TX, for the RECORD:

ALDINE INDEPENDENT  
SCHOOL DISTRICT,  
Houston, TX, September 30, 1997.

Hon. GENE GREEN,  
Rayburn Bldg.,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN GREEN: Enrollment is rising in the nation's public schools and federal incentives are needed to fund critical construction to meet growth. The \$100 million provision for school facility infrastructure in the Senate's appropriations bill is a starting point. The House bill, however, does not include school infrastructure funding.

I urge you to contact House conferees who will meet to resolve differences between the House and Senate bills and ask them to accept the \$100 million for school infrastructure included in the Senate version. For your convenience, I have included a list of the House conferees from the subcommittee.

For urban school districts such as Aldine, which has experienced 2-3 percent annual growth over the last three years, federal funding is vital. Your assistance in retaining the \$100 million appropriations for the Rebuild America's Schools initiative is greatly appreciated by our children, taxpayers, and educators.

Sincerely,

M.B. DONALDSON,  
Superintendent of Schools.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Let me thank the gentleman. He is absolutely correct.

We have talked about after hours, and I just wanted to make a point of

that, because I have been in a number of schools where they actually have an after hours program for a number of students who have difficulty at home. They drop out of school. They decide they want to come back to the public schools, they do not want to go to the community college and get a GED. They want to get their high school diploma.

And I know it is happening in North Carolina, where they actually can come to school at night, have a full-time job during the day because they have to earn a living. They may have already gotten married early, but they want to get their degree, and this happens.

The public schools are changing. We can put together another special order very shortly, hopefully before this week is out, and actually talk about some of these things, but more importantly talk about the strengths of our public schools, the academic things that are happening. Our schools certainly have a lot of challenges today, but they are meeting those challenges in a way they have never met them, because as both of my friends have said this evening, they are working harder, our teachers are working hard, they are committed, and we have some of the best qualified people in those classrooms we have ever had and the leadership, the principalship.

I think we need to talk about it. I know we are seeing student achievement go up, as we talk about the National Assessment of Education Progress, which I happen to believe is a better measure than the SAT that we use on an intermittent basis, because NAEP tends to do it by sampling, and that is where we can absolutely sample and they come back with a statistical number and it is accurate. We have seen some dramatic growth in our State and really across the country since 1990 in math and reading, and those are two of the core areas, and we have to see that continue and escalate across this country for all children.

That is one of the things I hope we will be able to talk about and have some data on over the next several days, and that gets back to the issue the President proposed and that others are saying we ought not to do.

Well, that is silly. That is absolutely silly. It is voluntary. We are now giving it to 43 States in this country. Forty-three States are taking the NAEP right now, and they are doing it on a voluntary basis. When I was a superintendent and we met all 50 chiefs, we absolutely said there will not be a national curriculum; we will not support it, we will not have any part of it, but we will participate and want to participate in a voluntary testing program.

Why? Because the people who live in North Carolina today very well may live in Texas next week or New Jersey the year after that, and they have a right to know that their children, as they move from place to place, that it

is measured and they are getting the kind of education they want.

I think that is why we are seeing the American public on almost everything we read say they are willing to make sure that their children have a good education, and they want that assessment and they want it on a voluntary basis.

I hope we can talk about that and erase that myth that our schools are not doing better than we are doing, because they really are, because we are doing it with children, as my friend from Texas said, that are coming to school with a lot of baggage these days. They are coming to school when they have not had a chance to sleep the night before; many come when the first meal they have had since they left lunch the day before is the breakfast they get when they show up in the morning.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, I think we are running out of time, but I just wanted to, if I could, follow up on what the gentleman from North Carolina said.

The gentleman from Texas mentioned earlier about Goals 2000, and we know that the Republicans have many times opposed Goals 2000 and asked that it not be funded. But in my home State of New Jersey we have received funding from Goals 2000. And one of the things that we have done with that funding, and it has been very successful, is not only do testing statewide, but also use the results of that testing to develop core curriculum.

One of the goals of the Democratic education task force that the gentleman cochairs is to emphasize academic excellence in the basics. I think that across the country people understand that we need to have excellence in the basics.

□ 2230

Obviously, curricula will vary from one school district to the next, or one State to the next. That is the way it should be. That is the American way. But the basics, students need to learn how to read and write. They need basic science courses. These are the kinds of things they need if they are going to be successful.

There is absolutely no reason why the Federal Government cannot provide money to the States to help develop core curriculum, in some cases do testing, to do what the States think needs to be done on a voluntary basis to improve basic skills. I do not think anybody is against that. If they are, I do not care, because I think they are wrong. We need basic skills.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. The gentleman is absolutely correct. I was there when we got the Goals 2000 money. Of all the money the Federal Government sent to our State, that was the most flexible money; very few strings attached, other than fill out about a 2-page form and send to it to the Department of Education on what you were going to do with the money, how you were going

to use it, what results you were going to get. That is the money that has been used in North Carolina, and I would assume in the other 49 States and territories, to allow for the reform, the change that is now taking place all across this country.

I thank the gentleman, and I hope we can get back and spend a whole evening on this whole issue of academic reform and accountability in these areas, and talk about assessment, because I feel very strongly about it and I think the American people do. I thank the gentleman for joining me.

#### WHY NOT HAVE NATIONAL TESTS FOR MATH AND SCIENCE?

The SPEAKER pro tempore [Mr. REDMOND]. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Arizona [Mr. SHADEGG] is recognized for half of the remaining time until midnight, approximately 45 minutes.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to discuss a topic that has also been discussed earlier tonight, and that is the question of education.

I cannot help but comment on my colleagues who were just here on the floor before me. In just a few moments of listening to them I heard one of them, a gentleman who was previously in the educational establishment, either a principal or a superintendent of a school district, say that he supports good education and therefore, supports a voluntary national testing program.

It is, indeed, that subject that I want to talk about tonight, because it is a topic that is very close to me. I have back home in Arizona right now a 13-year-old daughter who is a freshman at Thunderbird High School in the Phoenix area, excuse me, a sophomore, and struggling to get through her education this year, and to try to get into the best school in terms of college that she can possibly get into. I have an 11-year-old son who is in grade school.

Their education is vitally important to me, because I understand that in this global economy we are in, precisely how well they do in pursuing their education goals will determine in many ways to a great extent how well they do throughout the rest of their lives. There simply is no issue which is, at core, more important to me, and more important in a Nation where we are founded on the notion of universal public schools.

I listened to my colleagues from the other side of the aisle talk about public schools and the importance of public schools, yet I have to tell the Members, there are a couple of things that I resent. I want to talk about those tonight. I resent it when my colleagues on the other side of the aisle allege that they are the only ones who care about education and the only ones who care about public education. I think it is wrong to cast those kinds of aspersions and make those kinds of value

judgments, because some of us view this issue differently than they do.

I was educated in public schools all the way through, never attended a day of private school in my entire life. Not from kindergarten through law school did I attend anything but public schools. My children are in public schools now. I believe very much in a quality public education.

But just because I believe in that does not mean I have to accept their view of the world, or even the professional educators' view of the world or, as I like to call them, the educators' view of the world or the Federal Department of Education's view of the world. Instead, I bring to this debate my own rational thought, my own experience about education, my own views about the importance of public education, but mostly about quality education; about challenging my daughter Courtney to do her best every day in school; and about challenging my son Stephen to do his best every day in school.

I listened to the other side and they touched upon this issue of testing, national testing. That is a major topic that I want to talk about tonight. I want to talk about how some of us can believe and believe very strongly that as good and as apple pie and as motherhood and as all-American as national testing sounds, that we can look at our children and see how they are doing in Minnesota versus Arizona, as good as those things sound, in point of fact I believe and I believe deeply that national testing, if we mean by that federally dictated testing, tests written at the Federal Department of Education in Washington, D.C., thousands of miles from my home in Moon Valley, Arizona, if we mean by that a national testing written by a committee set up by this President, or for that matter any other President, if we mean one single uniform Federal test applied to every student in America, and we will judge every student in America by how they do on that test, I submit, it is not only bad, and a bad idea, it could be disastrous.

That does not mean that I do not support education. What it means is that when I look at the idea of one Federal test, I recognize that we are placing all of our eggs in one basket. If that test is written badly, if that test is written, as I fear the test might be written, to test the current fads in education, the newest whole math or new math or the newest whole language or whole English, or some other popular fad within the education establishment, not only will the test not measure real performance by my children, by my daughter Courtney or my son Stephen, but instead, it will do massive damage, and damage to every boy and every girl in public and private school in America, at a time when in this global economy we cannot tolerate that.

Why do I say that? How could just doing a national test, how could just

having a national test, how could a national test which was voluntary, and my colleague pointed out that he could not understand, how could a national test that was voluntary be dangerous? How could it be a problem?

I listened to him, and I think many people who view this issue from that standpoint are honest and genuine and sincere, and I can even understand their point. Instead, I get many of my colleagues back home, many of my friends back home, who say, well, explain to me what your concern is about national testing. Why is that such a bad idea? Why should we not have a single test to test the skills of our children across America, so we can look at how they do?

Let me make a point here. I just had a friend move from Arizona to New Jersey this last year. His two boys, a little bit older than my children, are now in high school in New Jersey. He thinks they are being challenged more rigorously in New Jersey than they were in Arizona. So why should we not be able to test that?

A few years ago I had a good friend who moved from Tucson, Arizona, to Maryland, not far from here, Potomac, Maryland. He felt his children were being challenged better at their new school than at their old school. So what can be wrong with national testing, particularly if it is voluntary?

Let me explain that, for people who are listening and watching, and for my colleagues who care about this debate. The problem with national testing begins with the issue of what do tests do. Tests set a benchmark. They set, in and of themselves, an educational standard. They say, we are going to test these subjects and these matters, and if you want your students to do well, they had better know these subjects and these answers. They had better know what is going to be tested and how to answer those questions.

What I am saying here is that my children's teachers, and indeed, I think my teachers and all teachers across America, to a certain degree in a very positive sense, teach to the test; that is, they understand what the students whose lives and whose education they have been entrusted with are going to be tested on, and so they want to be sure that they have that knowledge. If math is going to be tested, they will stress math.

But then the question comes, what about math? What within math does the test test, because I need to make sure as a teacher that my students know those skills that will be tested?

So I believe that one fact we have to begin to entertain a discussion of this topic of a national test is if we agree as a Nation to have a single Federal test, written in Washington, D.C. by the Federal Department of Education or by some consultant hired by the Department of Education, we need to understand that every conscientious teacher in America in public schools, in private schools, wherever, my children's teachers in the Washington Elementary