

investment has got to be part of the solution.

If you are a lucky enough individual to break even, and that is even if Congress does not face up to the problem, then I think it is very important that Congress wakes up to the fact that the longer we delay a solution for Social Security, the more drastic that solution is going to have to be.

So what my proposal says is let us start private investment, where part of that Social Security tax can go into a personal retirement investment fund that is the property of the worker, and if they are lucky enough to meet the average of the last 80 years it will increase at the rate of 8.5 percent per year, and through the magic of compound interest it will result in greater benefits and save Social Security.

SUPPORT PUBLIC EDUCATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentlewoman from Michigan [Ms. STABENOW] is recognized during morning hour debates for 4 minutes.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about one of the most critical issues facing our country, and that is support for public education and developing and expanding a skilled work force that is able to compete in the world in the 21st Century.

We are going to be discussing this week on this floor issues related to public education. We are going to be talking about the D.C. schools and the fact that there are leaky roofs, roofs falling in, and what the solution should be.

We are going to hear from the majority that the solution to leaky roofs is vouchers. We on the minority side are going to say that the solution to leaky roofs is to fix the roof, it is to then go on and make sure we have quality teachers teaching basic skills with technology in their classrooms, safe classrooms, children coming into kindergarten prepared to learn, and that we make a national commitment to our public education system all across this country.

Our democracy is founded on the belief that we have to provide a quality public education to every child in every neighborhood if we are to remain strong and independent as a country.

There are wonderful examples of supporting public schools in my district in Michigan. I attended on Sunday a celebration of a restoration of the Mason public schools, where in their elementary schools and their high school they have been investing in increasing their science labs and putting more technology into the buildings, a new field house, renovating their auditorium for the arts.

That community has made a strong public commitment and said to the young people of that community, "We believe in you, we will invest in you, and we want your public schools to be the best they can be."

All across my district now we are involved in a private sector effort called Net Day, where the business community has come together investing dollars, the labor community, through the leadership of IBEW and our electricians, are donating their personal time on Saturdays to come into the schools, working with our educators, working with every part of the community to wire our schools for the textbook of the future called the Internet, whether it is the Lansing public schools where we are wiring, in fact have wired 29 schools and are now moving on to bring volunteers to work with young people on basic reading skills, whether it is Pinckney elementary school that was wired, Lake Fenton a week ago, or the Fenton public schools on November 1.

We have a strong commitment in Michigan to bringing together all parts of the community to make the public school system the best that it can be. Do we need variety? Yes. Do we need choices? Of course. But if we pull dollars away from our public school system to put into private schools and thereby undermine the ability of every child to get a quality education, we do not do well for the future of this country.

There is a fundamental debate going on in this Chamber, a fundamental debate that each of us will be participating in through our votes. I strongly encourage my colleagues to step up and support a continuing strong public school system for the future.

Our children are moving into a world that is very different, that involves competing with people all over the world. They need skills that will allow them to be prepared to be successful in that world. It starts with a strong public school system.

LOW-INCOME CHILDREN DESERVE BEST SHOT AT GOOD EDUCATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Texas, [Mr. SAM JOHNSON], is recognized during morning hour debates for 4 minutes.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I agree, we got to keep the public schools going, but why does the President continue to deny low income students a chance to excel academically? Why does he insist that children attend unsafe and often drug-infested schools?

Well, to be honest, I am still trying to find the answer to these questions. I find it ironic that both the President and Vice President send their children not to the District's struggling public schools, but to safe and challenging private schools. They understand and they want their children to get the best education, get it in a safe and friendly environment. They do not want their children to walk through metal detectors and have police roaming the walks and the halls or witness

a drug buy or a shooting, and I do not blame them.

But I believe that every child, black, white, rich or poor, should have the same choice. They should be able to get a first rate education, one that fosters growth and learning, not hopelessness and despair.

For all the President's talk of equality and opportunity for all, he is now the obstacle to those parents who want only the same privileges he has, to give their kids the best education possible.

He seems to be more interested in bureaucrats, unions and Federal control than in the well-being of our children. Our President does not believe that you parents are smart enough to do what is best by your kids, by denying you the freedom of choice that he and the First Lady exercise, he is denying your children their best shot at the American dream.

What is wrong with letting parents make their own decision, use their own money, that their children would be better served in a private school or a public school on the other side of town? What is wrong with this? What is the President trying to save? Clearly it is not our children's future.

Mr. Speaker, the answer is simple; it is school choice. The answer is simple; it is parental control. The answer is freedom to choose how and where your child gets an education. The President must not prevent our children from succeeding. The future of America depends on it.

EDUCATION, A TOP PRIORITY WITH DEMOCRATS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, Democrats have made education a top priority this Congress and our emphasis has been on improving public schools, including raising educational standards and addressing infrastructure needs. I listened to the previous speaker, and my concern is that the Republican leadership, after trying to make the deepest education cuts in history last year, is now emphasizing vouchers to pay for private schools as the way to reform our education system.

I listened to the previous speaker, and he talked about how the President and Mrs. Clinton send their kids to private school. But what he neglected to say is that they are paying for that out of their own pocket. The problem with the voucher system that the Republican leadership is talking about is that this is public dollars, tax dollars, that they want to take that to be used to improve the public schools and take those tax dollars and give it to private schools.