

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5 of rule I and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the eight bills just debated, S. 588, S. 589, S. 591, S. 587, S. 531, H.R. 1856, H.R. 1604, and H.R. 948.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

HELPING EMPOWER LOW-INCOME PARENTS (HELP) SCHOLARSHIPS AMENDMENTS OF 1997

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 288, I call up the bill (H.R. 2746) to amend title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to give parents with low-income the opportunity to choose the appropriate school for their children, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of H.R. 2746 is as follows:

H.R. 2746

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Helping Empower Low-income Parents (HELP) Scholarships Amendments of 1997".

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

Section 6003 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 is amended—

(1) in the section heading by striking "definition" and inserting "definitions";

(2) by striking "(1)", "(2)", and "(3)";

(3) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by striking "title the term" and inserting the following:

"title—

"(1) the term";

(4) by striking the period at the end; and

(5) by adding at the end the following:

"(2) the term 'poverty line' means the poverty line (as defined by the Office of Management and Budget, and revised annually in accordance with section 673(2) of the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9902(2)) applicable to a family of the size involved; and

"(3) the term 'voluntary public and private parental choice program' means a program that meets the requirements of section 6301(b)(9), is authorized by State law, and includes 1 or more private schools to allow low-income parents to choose the appropriate school for their children."

SEC. 3. ALLOCATION TO LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES.

Section 6102(a) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 is amended to read as follows:

"(a) DISTRIBUTION RULE.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), from the sums made available each year to carry out this title, the State educational agency shall distribute not less than 90 percent to local educational agencies

within such State according to the relative enrollments in public and private, nonprofit schools within the school districts of such agencies, adjusted, in accordance with criteria approved by the Secretary, to provide higher per pupil allocations to local educational agencies which have the greatest numbers or percentages of children whose education imposes a higher than average cost per child, such as—

"(A) children living in areas with high concentrations of low-income families;

"(B) children from low-income families; and

"(C) children living in sparsely populated areas.

"(2) EXCEPTION.—A State that has enacted or will enact a law that establishes a voluntary public and private parental choice program and that complies with the provisions of section 6301(b)(9) may reserve an additional 15 percent from the sums made available each year to carry out this title if the additional amount reserved is used exclusively for voluntary public and private parental choice programs."

SEC. 4. USES OF FUNDS.

(a) STATE USES OF FUNDS.—Section 6201(a)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (C), by striking "and" after the semicolon;

(2) by inserting after subparagraph (C) the following:

"(D) establishing voluntary public and private parental choice programs in accordance with section 6301(b)(9); and"

(b) LOCAL USES OF FUNDS.—Section 6301(b) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 is amended—

(1) in paragraph (7), by striking "and" after the semicolon;

(2) in paragraph (8), by striking the period and inserting "; and"; and

(3) by inserting after paragraph (8) the following:

"(9) voluntary public and private parental choice programs that—

"(A) are located in an area that has the greatest numbers or percentages of children—

"(i) living in areas with a high concentration of low-income families;

"(ii) from low-income families; or

"(iii) living in sparsely populated areas;

"(B) ensure that participation in such a voluntary public and private parental choice program is limited to families whose family income does not exceed 185 percent of the poverty line;

"(C) ensure that—

"(i) the maximum amount of a voluntary public and private parental choice scholarship does not exceed the per pupil expenditure of the local educational agency in which an applicant for a voluntary public and private parental choice scholarship resides;

"(ii) the minimum amount of a voluntary public and private parental choice scholarship is not less than 60 percent of the per pupil expenditure of the local educational agency in which an applicant for a voluntary public and private parental choice scholarship resides or the cost of tuition at a private school, whichever is less;

"(D) ensure that for a private school that chooses to participate in a voluntary public and private parental choice program—

"(i) such a school is permitted to impose the same academic requirements for all students, including students selected for a scholarship as provided under this paragraph;

"(ii) receipt of funds under this title is not conditioned with requirements or regulations that preclude the use of such funds for sectarian educational purposes or require re-

moval of religious art, icons, scripture, or other symbols; and

"(iii) such a school is in compliance with all State requirements applicable to the operation of a private school that are in effect in the year preceding the date of the enactment of the Helping Empower Low-income Parents (HELP) Scholarships Amendments of 1997;

"(E) may allow State, local, and private funds to be used for voluntary public and private parental choice programs; and

"(F) ensure priority for students who were enrolled in a public school in the school year preceding the school year in which a voluntary public and private parental choice school begins operation."

SEC. 5. EVALUATION.

Part D of title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 is amended—

(1) by adding at the end of section 6402 the following new subsection:

"(j) APPLICATION.—This section shall not apply to funds that a State or local educational agency uses to establish a voluntary public and private parental choice program in accordance with section 6301(b)(9)."; and

(2) by adding at the end of such part the following new sections:

"SEC. 6404. EVALUATION.

"(a) ANNUAL EVALUATION.—

"(1) CONTRACT.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall enter into a contract, with an evaluating agency that has demonstrated experience in conducting evaluations, for the conduct of an ongoing rigorous evaluation of the programs established under section 6301(b)(9).

"(2) ANNUAL EVALUATION REQUIREMENT.—The contract described in paragraph (1) shall require the evaluating agency entering into such contract to evaluate annually each program established under section 6301(b)(9) in accordance with the evaluation criteria described in subsection (b).

"(3) TRANSMISSION.—The contract described in paragraph (1) shall require the evaluating agency entering into such contract to transmit to the Comptroller General of the United States the findings of each annual evaluation under paragraph (1).

"(b) EVALUATION CRITERIA.—The Comptroller General of the United States, in consultation with the Secretary, shall establish minimum criteria for evaluating each program established under section 6301(b)(9). Such criteria shall provide for—

"(1) a description of the implementation of each program established under section 6301(b)(9) and the program's effects on all participants, schools, and communities in the program area, with particular attention given to the effect of parent participation in the life of the school and the level of parental satisfaction with the program; and

"(2) a comparison of the educational achievement of all students in the program area, including a comparison between—

"(A) students receiving a voluntary public and private parental choice scholarships under section 6301(b)(9); and

"(B) students not receiving a voluntary public and private parental choice scholarships under such section.

"(c) EVALUATION FUNDS.—Pursuant to the authority provided under section 14701, the Secretary shall reserve not more than 0.50 percent of the amount of funds made available under section 6002 to carry out this section.

SEC. 6405. APPLICABILITY.

"(a) NOT SCHOOL AID.—Subject to subsection (b), funds used under this title to establish a voluntary public and private parental choice program shall be considered assistance to the student and shall not be considered as assistance to any school that chooses to participate in such program.

"(b) NO FEDERAL CONTROL.—The Secretary is not permitted to exercise any direction, supervision, or control over curricula, program of instruction, administration, or personnel of any school that chooses to participate in a voluntary public and private choice program established under 6309(b)(9)."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 288, the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS] and the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. CLAY], each will control 1 hour.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS].

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. GOODLING], chairman of the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

(Mr. GOODLING asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GOODLING. Mr. Speaker, I really did not plan to participate in this debate today, but as I thought about it over the weekend, I kept thinking that there probably will be more heat and more emotion than facts. And I thought perhaps I could start it by simply calling some of the facts to my colleagues' attention.

The first thing they probably will hear is that this is anti public education. I can assure my colleagues, never under my watch will anything occur on the floor of the House that is anti public education. I would imagine 80 or 85 percent of us have graduated from public schools. I spent my first 12 years there. I also spent 22 years as a public educator. So I want to make very sure that we do not start out with the business, well, this is anti public education.

Our problem is, as I have said many times, 75 percent of our schools do well, 75 percent of our children do well in public education. In that, 25 percent, with some schools within those school districts, they do well.

However, in the 21st century, we cannot have 75 percent of our children getting a quality education; we have to have 100 percent. Why? First of all, we are in a very competitive world. If they cannot play a leading role, then we cannot as a society, we cannot as a country, continue to be the powerful Nation that we are.

Secondly, we cannot allow 25 percent of our children not to have a quality education if they are ever going to get a piece of the American dream. We decided a year or two ago that we positively were going to move them to the position where they can get a piece of the American dream. Without a quality education, that cannot happen. Let me tell you about the last 30 years. I was not the chairman of the committee the last 30 years. We were not in the majority the last 30 years.

We did program after program after program, well-intended, with the idea that we were going to find some way to make sure that all children have a quality education. Thirty years later, billions of dollars later, we still have 25 percent without a quality education. Who are they? They are the poorest of the poor, with no one to speak for them, with no one to take the bull by the horns and say, everyone will receive a quality education. Of course, we know testing is not going to give them that quality education.

The second thing you are going to hear: "But we are taking Federal tax dollars for private and parochial schools." Again, I was not in charge the last 30 years, but I can read very quickly 17 programs where this happened during the last 30 years: Title I, Education for the Disadvantaged; title II, Teacher Training; title III, Education Technology; title IV, Safe and Drug-free Schools; title VI, which is what we are talking about today, used by private and parochial schools, Innovative Education Program; title VII, bilingual education; Part E of title XIV; Goals 2000; IDEA; transfer of excess and surplus Federal computer equipment; child nutrition programs; child care development block grants; national service; National Endowment of the Humanities; National Endowment for the Arts; National Science Foundation; nonimmigration students, just to mention a few. These are all private and parochial schools using Federal tax dollars. It is the law. It did not happen during my reign; it happened in the 30 years prior to that.

The third thing Members are going to hear is that we are taking money from public schools. That is not true either. The appropriators have seen fit to add \$40 million to title VI, not taking anything away from anyone. They are adding \$40 million.

The next thing I would like to make sure Members understand, this legislation has a very, very narrow scope. Why does it have a narrow scope? Well, I think it is called pleasing the chairman. Now, what is in that narrow scope? Why is it so narrow?

First of all, we have never told a State legislature before that they have to pass a law to participate in title VI. In this legislation, we say to the State legislature, for the first time, if anybody is going to use any of this title VI money, for public and private school choice; they must pass a law. We never did that before in title VI; we sent them a block and they did their thing. Now we say they must pass legislation. That will take a while.

Secondly, the State and the public schools must then determine whether they want to use any of the title VI money for that purpose. They do not have to use any of it.

Again, I hope that by introducing some of these things that are fact rather than an emotional discussion of the issue, that Members will understand exactly what we are doing. I want to

repeat what I said earlier. We positively have to find a way, if we are going to remain a viable entity in this world in the 21st century, to ensure every child has a possibility of a quality education.

We have tried, and we have tried, and we have tried, and it was all well meaning. We did not succeed. Now we want to try something a little bit different, nothing new; it is still part of title VI. But let us make sure that every child, no matter how poor the family may be, no matter how terrible the conditions may be in which the child lives, that they do have an opportunity for a quality education.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 5 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, in 1965, Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, chairman of the Committee on Economic and Educational Opportunities, gave a forceful speech advocating a greater role of the Federal Government through passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

□ 1715

In that great speech he said, "We are compelled to give our most sincere and dedicated attention to the masses of our American youth, youth who give America new vision and new goals. We must not wait any longer. It is later than you think."

Today, Mr. Speaker, we are witness to the Republicans' contempt for the masses, for the 50 million children who attend public schools. Today, they bring to this floor a bill that would steal almost \$2 billion from our public school systems. This proposal sends a clear and chilling signal that the Republicans have declared war on public education.

The most cynical and pernicious provision of this bill is the wholesale and deliberate denial of civil rights. The parents of low-income students who fall for this voucher scheme will be shocked to learn that their children will attend a private school that has no obligation to protect them from discrimination on the basis of race, sex, national origin, or age. The blatant disregard for civil rights fostered by proponents of this bill is an abomination.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I received a letter from the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights vehemently opposing this Trojan Horse. In that letter, it was pointed out that under this bill, and I quote, "Private schools could permit widespread and severe racial harassment of students in class, provide female students with inferior athletic facilities, and refuse to make any accommodations for disabled students."

The letter concludes, "In short, H.R. 2746 would allow private schools to ignore the civil rights laws that have long protected students in federally funded education."

Mr. Speaker, this bill is an outrageous abandonment of civil rights. I find it ironic that the Speaker of the

House stood on the floor of this House last week expressing compassion for little black children, while in fact this bill is stripping away 30 years of civil rights protections from the very children he professed to help.

Mr. Speaker, in all of my years in Congress, I have not heard so many in this Chamber, who for years have refused to look beyond race and poverty, to see the human needs, now plead so eloquently for those who are victimized by their race and economic condition. No one should be deceived by the false promise that this bill is about saving poor children from the debilitating fate of inner-city schools.

Last year, Republicans in this House fought with every fiber of their being against increasing the minimum wage. In the 104th Congress, 223 House Republicans voted to cut child nutrition programs by \$10 billion and to eliminate the Federal school lunch program entirely. Where was their compassion then?

If proponents of this bill are genuinely concerned about bad schools in black neighborhoods and want to give real choice to poverty stricken and educationally deprived students, let them mandate a program to give poor children the opportunity to attend any public school in the area, even in the most affluent neighboring school districts. That would be real public school choice. No reasonable, fair-minded person would deny that schools in more affluent areas have greater resources and their students receive a more complete and demanding education than children in poor neighborhoods.

This voucher bill has been condemned by a broad coalition of education groups because it does nothing to address crumbling and overcrowded schools or to improve teacher performance for the 50 million children now attending public schools.

I challenge the Republican leadership to stop playing politics with America's school children and to stop bashing public schools, parents, and teachers. I challenge them, Mr. Speaker, to embrace America's public schools instead of attacking them with this deceitful voucher scheme.

I reserve the balance of my time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, let me say that this subject of giving parents more choice to select the school and the educational environment that is appropriate and best for their child is too important to be demeaned by the distinguished ranking member of the full committee, who is perhaps trying to conjure up a ghost from the last Congress.

Apparently, he and members of his party are still denying that, slowly but surely, the Contract with America has become a reality. But the fact of the matter is we never proposed eliminating the school lunch program. We did propose block granting it to States and

local education agencies to make it more efficient in order to serve more children.

That said, let me say that I believe there are many Members on the other side of the aisle who want to show contempt for the fundamental right of parents to choose, who do not believe that we need improvement through competition and choice in our education system today, who are fundamentally opposed to parents having the freedom to select the education again that is best and most appropriate for their child.

So I say to them, let freedom reign in education. Let those who are less privileged, those who cannot afford to attend the better schools that might be financially beyond their limits, let them have the same right, let those families have the same right as more fortunate and more affluent families.

And understand this, we have too many school children in this country today who are missing out, who are not getting the kind of education they need to prepare them for the 21st century. And that, my colleagues, is the real disgrace and the real tragedy that we ought to be debating in this Chamber, not raising red herrings.

Now, how do they explain opinion poll after opinion poll showing that an overwhelming number of the American people, particularly adults of child-bearing age, now favor parental choice in education? How do they explain that away? And why do the numbers go through the roof when we talk about minority parents? Could it be because they are the ones that are right there that have the best knowledge of this issue, that have the greatest concern about the future well-being of their children? That would only be natural for them to have those sentiments. And every one of us who is a parent, who is faced with the ultimate responsibility of bringing into and raising another child in this world, ought to understand those sentiments, ought to sympathize with those parents, and ought to get behind the move to inject more competition and choice in our school system today.

Schools should be a magnet and not a trap. Let me tell my colleagues one thing I believe to the core of my being, and that is the education system we have in America today will reform itself, it will improve itself only when parents are free to choose the schools that they think are best able to educate their children.

And we are seeing, to their credit, many school districts around the country beginning to respond to the demand on the part of consumers, parents, and guardians for more choice, seeing them respond to that demand for competition by presenting more educational options for parents, whether it be home schooling, private school choice, public school choice, as we will be debating on the floor later tonight when we talk about more Federal taxpayer funding for public choice schools, independent

charter schools. But school districts are responding to their credit.

We have to address this problem. It is not going to go away. To the extent we have a growing gap, an inequity in American society between the haves and have nots or have less, it is an education gap. There is a growing gap between the rich and poor in this society. And it is no accident. It begins as a gap between the well-educated and the poorly educated. And for all of us concerned about the quality of education in America today, I submit to you that is a problem that we ought to address together in as nonpartisan a way as possible. But more importantly, for the students who will be the future have-nots, the students who are receiving a poor or inadequate education, for them and for their families, it is a tragedy and a national disgrace.

Let me tell my colleagues what this bill does very simply, because it is a very, very modest bill. It amends the title VI block grant, the old chapter 2 program, by permitting state educational agencies and local educational agencies to use their title VI education block grant funds, this is probably the most flexible source of Federal taxpayer funding for Federal education, to use those funds for public and private school choice.

But this has to be, unlike what we discussed in the last Congress, instead of a top-down nationally driven program from here in Washington, this has to be a bottom-up program. These funds could only be used in those States and local communities that have decided that they will at least experiment with school choice for those children, low-income children, because this funding is very targeted and it is means tested, only for those children attending unsafe or underperforming schools.

This is a bottom-up movement designed to tell community activists and community leaders across the country that if they believe they should have more choice, more parental control and freedom in education today, they can use this source of Federal funding to provide scholarships to low-income families in low-income communities. So that is what this legislation is about.

I am going to conclude my remarks. But I want to say simply again, I cited this poll on the House floor the other day, and I would love to hear my colleagues respond to it, from American Viewpoint. The public, when asked whether parents should be allowed more control to choose where their children are educated, answered overwhelmingly, two-thirds to one-third, 67-28, that parents should have the right to choose the education that is best and most appropriate for their child, the best learning environment. And that is what this is about. Schools exist to serve children, not bureaucracy.

And lastly, from the first presidential debate in the last election campaign in Connecticut between the

President and Bob Dole, the Republican nominee for President, these are the President's comments: "If you are going to have a private voucher program, that ought to be determined by States and localities where they are raising and spending most of the money."

That is exactly what this HELP scholarship legislation does. And I defy my colleagues to show me where it does not. If we are going to have a private voucher plan, that ought to be done, in other words, that ought to be determined at the local level or at the State level. Again, that is what this legislation does. It says to State and local communities, you have that option, you have that right. And in those communities, and we will talk hopefully more about them, like Cleveland and Milwaukee, in those 18 States that already have some form of school choice, we are saying you can use your Federal funding to expand those programs. And to the rest of America, we are saying, it is time now to give choice a chance.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 15 seconds to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DOGGETT].

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS] uses the term "demeans." We feel it is this very bill that demeans public education, just as his vote to cut \$137 million from Head Start demeans public education, just as his vote to eliminate the school lunch program demeans public education. You are going to give choice to those on school lunch, the choice to not have any lunch.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from California [Mr. MARTINEZ].

(Mr. MARTINEZ asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. CLAY], the ranking member, for yielding me the time.

Respectfully, I want to remind the chairman who spoke a little earlier about the last 30 years. He was a part of a committee that developed bipartisan legislation in that committee over 3 years and Even Start was his, and it was a good bill and we all supported it. But for him to say this bill will fix education befuddled me. He was an educator, and he knows better.

Mr. Speaker, giving people a chance or a choice is a smoke screen. People have the choice now. All of us can send our kids to private school if we want to, and low-income people are doing it every day. They are sacrificing to do it because they want either more discipline or they want a better education or a religious education for their children. But the taxpayers are not paying for it.

Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, this is the extreme right's modern version of white flight from our cities. Just like

we abandoned the poor parts of our cities when there were elements that we did not like and we left them to decay, this bill will leave our public schools in ruin in search of a panacea for just a few.

I would ask the chairman, where are the 90 percent that are going to be left behind that are not going to be served by this? This bill guts the very basic opportunity afforded to children, the opportunity to learn.

Mr. Speaker, the American people and my colleagues who have listened to Friday's debate on the rule heard the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS] condemn me for recognizing that Republicans are really doing the bidding of the conservative Christian Coalition in their advocacy for these ill-advised voucher proposals. Whether they know it or not, they are doing that.

The gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS] even went so far as to say that my comments were, quote, beneath me. I can assure the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS] that I am the best judge of what is and what is not beneath me, and I never regard the truth as being beneath me.

To prove my point, why do we not take a look at some of what the extreme right has said about public schools in America. And if my colleagues want to look at the chart to my right, they can see, and I will read it for them. Pat Robertson, the founder of the Christian Coalition, states, "The public education movement has also been an anti-Christian movement. We can change education in America if you put the Christian principles in and the Christian pedagogy in. In three years, you would totally revolutionize education in America."

□ 1730

And Jerry Falwell, our favorite Christian:

"I hope to live to see the day when we won't have any public schools. The churches will have taken them over again, and Christians will be running them. What a happy day that will be." America Can Be Saved.

Clearly, public policy is not driving Republicans to bring these voucher bills to the floor of the House. Rather, it is obvious to me it is a political debt that the majority feels it must repay. Shame on those who would use our children and their educational opportunity as an affirmation of an extreme right conservative view of the world. Let us consider the agenda on which these people brought this to the floor.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I stand by my earlier comments. I do not believe that Christian bashing ought to take place on this floor. I deplore the use of the race card and race baiting. I really think it is inappropriate.

Mr. Speaker, when African-Americans of childbearing age are polled, 86 percent support government-funded, taxpayer-funded vouchers to send chil-

dren to the public, private or parochial school of their choice. As the gentleman very well knows, we already have taxpayer-funded choice in both preschool, child care and in higher education, and I have never heard him voice any objections to that.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. PETERSON].

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this legislation today. Freedom is about making choices. This country was founded upon religious freedom, religious choices, because in other countries they were not given that right. We have tried a lot of monopolies in this country, controlled monopolies. Transportation, trucking, airlines, utilities and our package delivery system were run and controlled by monopolies. We found out that they were not very efficient, they did not provide very good cost-effective service, and we have been slowly decontrolling all of those and still are today.

A few years ago the auto industry and the Big 3 were a monopoly in this country. They were a monopoly until in the 1980s. They did not take the consumer into view. Then in came the Japanese and the Germans and the Swedes, and the Hondas and Toyotas and the Nissans entered the marketplace and caused real pain in America, because they took away that monopoly. But what happened? Did it destroy our auto industry? No, it made it stronger, it made it healthier, and more dominant in the world today than ever.

At least 80 percent of our schools are good. If we doubled the funding for education, problem schools would remain. We will spend \$300 billion for elementary and secondary education, and someone said here erroneously that we were going to take \$2 billion away from public schools.

This bill is about \$310 million in a title 6 block grant. If one-ninth of that goes to choice, that is .01 percent of the basic education budget. Why should our poorest who are failing schools have no choice? Our Congressmen have choice, our Senators have choice. The leaders of this country have choice because they can afford it. The poorest cannot.

What are we afraid of? A very small pilot project that only helps States who have voted on the public record to have some choice pilots. If students leave a school in meaningful numbers, what will happen is this: The school will fix the problem. The study done by Harvard already shows that. If you have weak math or weak science, or a drug-infested school or an unsafe school and students start to leave, the school will fix the problem.

We will improve public education. Competition brings excellence to everything. Higher education works. It worked in autos, transportation, and

the package delivery system. Is the education of our children not more important than all the ones above? Is it not giving Americans a choice, and we are starting with the poorest who are trapped in schools that are not delivering, that are not giving them an appropriate ability to get a good education.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing to be afraid of. I urge Members to support this legislation and give them the same choices that congressional leaders have.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from California [Mr. MARTINEZ].

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. Speaker, in the first place, I did not bash any Christians. I bashed two particular people for what they said.

Number two, we have had choice from the beginning of the time this country started. There have always been private schools out there. In fact, there were private schools before there were public schools. That competition has never improved the public schools to this day. People do have choice, and poor people have choice. This is not choice for poor people. This is choice for rich people.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California [Ms. WOOLSEY].

(Ms. WOOLSEY asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, a sound public school system is the way to prepare 100 percent of our children for the high-skill, high-wage jobs that will ensure America's leadership in our world marketplace in our future. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, a good, sound public education system prevents dependency on welfare at home.

Public education is the backbone of our country. It is why we are a great Nation. Public education is available to all. It does not discriminate and must be strengthened, not weakened.

There is no question that the bill before us today will profoundly harm our public schools. This bill gives precious education dollars that public schools need to private and religious schools. Supporters of this bill say that it ensures parental choice in education, but we all know that private schools self-select their student body, and no voucher plan is going to change that. Parental choice is meaningless when it comes to private schools and self-selection.

What this bill does is make it easier, by adding \$40 million to the budget, for a chosen few to go to private schools while leaving the majority of American school children in public schools. This is not acceptable.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to speak up for public education in America. It is not perfect, but the solution to the problems with our public schools is not to give vouchers to a few kids. The solution is to fix our schools. Put that \$40 million toward improving public education so that all children want to be in a good public school.

The supporters of this bill act as if vouchers are a magic bullet for American education, but H.R. 2746 does not help teachers or give them more opportunities for professional development. It creates yet another gap.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DOGGETT].

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that Speaker GINGRICH and his supporters have finally realized that the American people really do want the Federal Government to play a role, a vital role, in improving our schools. It was just a few months ago that the Republicans had a different approach. They had a big ax out here. They were ready to cut school lunch. They were ready to cut Head Start. They wanted to cut down the Department of Education and essentially terminate any Federal commitment to education. It was really only just a few weeks ago that they were right here on the floor of this House derisively referring to our public schools as government-owned schools.

Today they come forward with their big solution. They want to offer choice. We are all for choice, and the choice that they want to offer public education when we read the fine print of this bill is the choice to do without, the choice to do without the moneys to get the job done to educate our children.

It is a clever approach. They call it a help bill, but everyone who is familiar with the demands that are placed on our public schools recognize it is nothing but a hurt bill. It puts a big hurt on public education.

The whole bill reminds me a little bit of the fellow who was trying to come to my hometown, Austin, TX. He got lost over in the piney woods. He walked up to a fellow at a service station over there and asked how to get down to the state capital. The old man scratched his head and said, "I don't rightly know, but I sure wouldn't start from here."

Mr. Speaker, we sure do not want to start from here siphoning off money from public education. Unlike some earlier attempts, this bill is mighty clear. It will take money away from public education and give it to private parochial schools. I guarantee Members that folks like Jerry Falwell who says, "I hope to live to see the day when we won't have any public schools, what a happy day that will be," they have a stake in this because they are going to be the beneficiaries of robbing public education to help the few in private education.

I am all for private education, even though I am a graduate, as are my children, of the great public school system in central Texas. But let the parents pay for that private education, and use public resources not to fund Mr. Falwell, but to help our children.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. SCOTT].

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. Speaker, considering this as legislation that will give parents the right to select a private school of their choice is an absolute distortion. It will give a select, privileged few an opportunity to select the school of their choice if they can afford the difference between what the voucher is and the cost of the education.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, we talk about the polls that show support. What we ought to do is look at the referendums that have been taken across the country where people have had an opportunity to reflect for an entire campaign and get educated about the idea, not just a knee-jerk reaction to a poll. When we look at the referenda when people go to the polls and vote, these ideas are rejected by margins of approximately 3 to 1. And so we ought to look not just at knee-jerk reaction to the polls, we ought to look at what these bills actually do. I associate myself with the comments of many of the others.

I just wanted to point out one little trickery in this bill. There is a provision that declares that receipt of the voucher shall not be considered as assistance to any school. That kind of language looks innocuous on its face, but it will provide that the Federal Government cannot enforce anti-discrimination procedures against those schools. For example, religious and national origin discrimination cannot be enforced. Racial discrimination cannot be enforced by the Federal Government. There would have to be individual suits, one after another. The Department of Justice cannot invoke the situation where they can withdraw funds. David Duke academies could be funded without the enforcement of civil rights.

What is this language doing in the bill? It only gives exemption from Federal civil rights enforcement, and that is why we need to defeat the bill. It is under a closed rule. We cannot use an amendment to take that language out. We need to defeat the bill. This \$50 million education gimmick will only take money from our public schools. We need to defeat the bill.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 10 seconds.

The money under this legislation would flow to parents, and this bill targets low-income communities and low-income families in States that have enacted into law school choice legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. GRAHAM].

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the gentleman from California [Mr. Riggs] and the committee for doing something that is probably long overdue in this country, and that is giving people choices that they have yet to have. If you are a parent sending your kid to a public school system and you are pleased with it, good for you. If you are a parent sending your kids to a public school system

and you are worried about them, that you are afraid they are going to get beat up or they are going to meet a drug dealer when they go in the door, or that the plaster is falling down on them, or somebody at school really does not have their best interests, well, there is a new crowd in town giving you some options you never had. There are some friends on this side of the aisle who agree with this idea, and there are some that do not, but this is a debate long overdue to be had in this country.

□ 1745

Public schools in this country by a large extent, I think, do a great job. I am a public school graduate, but there are places in our country where nobody in this building would send their child, and we need to do something, and all we hear is, spend more money, spend more money, spend more money.

Do my colleagues know what makes someone better? Competition makes them better. It will make us a better Congressman when somebody will run and want to take your job away. It will make the public school system better, where they failed, if there is somebody else in town that can take that child and do a quality job and give the parents the choice that they are lacking today.

This is a pilot project, but this is really a debate about the status quo versus reform. We spent money in the name of spending money. Forty years later, we have got a situation that is never going to change by just spending money. If my colleagues want to improve anybody's state in life, provide some good healthy competition.

And this finally addresses the basic problem of public education. It is a monopoly that does not respond to anything in some situations, and now there is a new act in town where parents, nobody else but mom and dad, get a choice that people in this room can afford but they cannot.

And if someone is doing a good job as a public educator, they have no fear from this. If they are failing the parents in our communities, we better get better, and it is probably not good English, but we better get our act together, because people can go somewhere else if we have our way. It is long overdue.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 15 seconds to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DOGGETT].

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, let me just say to the gentleman from South Carolina that we say this is declaring war on public education, that the first shot was fired when he voted to eliminate the school lunch program, that the second shot was fired when he voted to cut Head Start by 137 million, and now, when we take 10 cents on the dollar out of public education and give it to private education, that is another shot in the war against public education.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 10 seconds to the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. SCOTT].

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from California responded to some of the things I said but did not respond to when I said, shall not be considered assistance to any school, and I was wondering if somebody over there could respond to the effect of that language on special education students and the ability of private schools to discriminate on national origin and the effect of that language on the Department of Justice enforcing civil rights laws of the country.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 10 seconds to say and point out, and I would appreciate if the gentleman would not interrupt me then, let me just say, if I understand Mr. SCOTT correctly, I think he is arguing that they might support this proposal if only they could regulate the private schools in America.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 15 seconds to the gentleman from South Carolina [Mr. GRAHAM].

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond; my name was mentioned.

We are declaring war on people who just want to write checks as politicians and go home and feel good about it and still leave the crummy school system behind. We are declaring war on the status quo. We are fighting for parents. That is the war we are engaged in, and we choose the parents over the entrenched bureaucracy, and we are going to win that war.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. SAWYER].

(Mr. SAWYER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SAWYER. Mr. Speaker, there are many good reasons to be skeptical about the bill before us, but the most important is often left out, and I want to say before I go any further that the gentleman from California and I have worked together in an attempt to do exactly what I am talking about.

It is because school choice has been so widely talked about but has not been scientifically evaluated on a sufficient scale to draw concrete conclusions that I believe that the gentleman has come up with an improved accountability section of this bill. Evaluation is critical if we are to succeed or if we are to avoid monumental failure in this experiment of some size. Parental satisfaction is important, but it is wholly insufficient to measure the efficacy of choice on such a broad scale.

A bill that is serious about a voucher experiment would include statutory requirements for a whole range of considerations, some of which I believe may well be included in the gentleman's bill but which go beyond many of those which are enumerated. And they talk about data on transportation problems and solutions, the effect on siblings within a family, the changing patterns of school enrollment by type and demographic characteristics. The list goes on and on.

In short, this bill has a better evaluation component than most of the voucher demonstration programs that have been proposed in the last few years. And this is the critical point: This is not a demonstration program. We are finally getting closer to the kind of evaluation we would need if, in fact, we were doing a demonstration program, but we have it on the wrong vehicle.

This is a huge and costly experiment with the lives of millions of children, and its emphasis on parental satisfaction matches the serious focus needed on cost benefits and measurable change in student performance. Whether or not politicians agree about the value of choice, the consequences fall on the lives of real children. We simply cannot afford to proceed without a mechanism for knowing whether we are right or wrong.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Oklahoma [Mr. WATTS], a cosponsor and one of the most prominent, passionate, and articulate proponents of parental choice in education on this legislation.

Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California for leading the effort in fighting for what I believe is very important legislation.

Mr. Speaker, my father, who spent 2 days in the seventh grade, that is the extent of his education, he said to me once when I was about 45 days from graduating from the University of Oklahoma, he said to me when I would go home sometimes on the weekend and we would sit up in his front room and we would solve all of America's problems according to the book of Watts, and this particular evening about 2 o'clock in the morning it was time to retire, and daddy said something to me that I will never forget. He said to me, as you know, Junior, he said, I think I want to go to college. And I said, Daddy, why go to college at 57 years old, a double bypass heart patient, mama is diabetic, got this church with a pastor, got these cows, these rental properties being taken care of? Why did he want to go to college? He said, I would like to see what makes those guys fools after getting out. He said, those guys refuse to use common sense.

Now, common sense would say to us, or should say to us, that we have got kids in America today in the inner cities that go to schools where they have to walk through metal detectors, that they carry guns, people carry guns, people carry knives, that those kids cannot learn in that environment.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have heard the debate today and we have heard both sides of the argument, and I think we need to separate fact from fiction. Now consider this. Common sense would say, or should say, to us if we are fighting and we are saying we are debating and we are saying that if we give poor parents the right to choose where they want to send their kids to school, that

they are going to choose a private school or private faith-based school.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what does that do? What does that say to us? That is saying to us that if we give that parent a choice, they are going to choose the private school or the private faith-based school. That, in itself, is an indictment on poor schools. We are not indicting public schools. Those who say that we are hurting public schools, they are the ones that are indicting public schools.

And then we hear, we hear this. We say we cannot use this legislation for kids to go to other public schools. With these HELP scholarships, kids can go to other public schools, they can leave the school that is not working and go to a public school that is working. Or those parents can go to a private school or private faith-based school.

Frederick Douglas said this: He said some people know the importance of education because they have it. He said, I knew the importance of education because I did not have it. And, Mr. Speaker, we are sending our kids to schools every day of their lives, we are putting them in schools that are failing them every day of their lives, and when they get out into the job market to compete for good jobs, to compete in this global marketplace, they will not have the reading, writing, arithmetic skills, computer skills to compete in a global marketplace.

And then we say we hear, well, they are taking money away from public education. Let me tell my colleagues who is taking money from public education: The prison system. In every State in the Nation, we have an average of about—in the State of Oklahoma, I think we spend about \$25,000 per year per inmate. And look at the inmates. We do not give them the proper reading skills, the proper writing skills, the proper arithmetic skills, the proper computer skills. Do my colleagues know where they end up? They end up in jail, they end up in prison, and then we spend 20 to 30 thousand a year to keep them in prison to house them. That is where our public education dollars are going.

Mr. Speaker, I say let us give this legislation a chance, let us pass this legislation, give those poor parents who are trapped that the Government has mandated that they must send their kids to schools every day that fail them. With this legislation, those poor parents will have a chance to get their kids out of those schools that failed, into schools that worked, public schools, private schools, or private faith-based schools. Give these parents a chance.

Let us support this legislation.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 15 seconds to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DOGGETT].

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, I respectfully say to the gentleman that he is passionate all right, but I believe he is passionately wrong, and when he comes to the floor and votes to cut the

school lunch program, votes to cut Head Start by \$137 million, and then comes back to the floor and says, today I am here to help, there is a little bit of a credibility problem.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentlewoman from Indiana [Ms. CARSON].

(Ms. CARSON asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. CARSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 2746.

Mr. Speaker, education reform can succeed only if it benefits all of the students and not just a select few. To stand here on the floor of this august body and suggest that public schools manufactured the social problems that have been extolled here today such as guns, such as drugs, such as crime, such as teenage pregnancy, is a cruel hoax. Let us not try to fool the American people, and let us not be fooled ourselves.

The vouchers in this bill are also a cruel hoax. They do not give all parents a choice in education. This proposal would not provide nearly enough money to pay for private school tuition for all children. With record enrollments, crumbling buildings, and the growing threats of crime and drugs that our public schools did not create, public schools are facing greater challenges than ever before.

Children in public schools across the land do not have the basic materials that they need to get an education. Diverting resources to private schools is not the answer. Surely we can put the money to better use.

Public schoolchildren need text books, library books, and other fundamental tools for learning. The globalization of the economy poses greater challenges to our children than those ever faced by previous generations, including myself. Today our children need math, science, and training in computers to be able to get on the first rung of competition for the jobs of the 21st century. Public schools need the resources to meet these challenges.

I urge in the strongest possible terms that H.R. 2746 be defeated.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 10 seconds to the gentleman from Oklahoma [Mr. WATTS].

Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the gentleman from Texas talked about what happened. It is interesting that in the school lunch program we put \$200 million more in our program than the President offered in his. So that is amazing to me how that is a cut. And, secondly, this is one of the same people that said we were gutting Medicare to give tax breaks to the wealthy, one of the same people that said we could not cut taxes and balance the budget at the same time when we have done all those things. So, you know, let us separate the facts from the fiction and let us talk about the facts today.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield a minute and a half to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. PAUL].

(Mr. PAUL asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation. I have been on the education committee now for 10 months, and I have not yet heard any Member stand up and brag about the public school system. Everybody seems to be critical of the system, and everybody has suggestions on what we can do.

I think the problem with the school system has definitely gotten worse since we have gained control of the public school system at the national level. There is pretty good evidence to this, and I think a new program and new expenditures up here will not do the trick. This program, however, does not fall into that category.

I believe that the States ought to have the right to set up one of these programs where scholarships can be offered. This is quite a bit different than mandating and dictating a brand new program and new appropriations. So I think this is a step in the right direction.

We should not be fearful of choice; we should not be fearful of competition. If we are serious about education, I think we should get beyond equating good education with the school lunch program. I cannot quite see the analogy of saying a good lunch is equivalent to good education.

□ 1800

But, more Federal programs will not solve the problem, and I believe very sincerely that if we allow some choice and if we allow some competition, we might see some improvement.

I do not believe this program is going to solve the problem of our educational system. We have serious structural problems. Some day we will have to look at the history of the public school system and look to the time when the public schools worked much better with local control and local financing.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to express my support for H.R. 2746, the Helping Empower Low-Income Parents [HELP] Scholarships Amendments of 1997. The HELP Act allows States to use title VI funds for school voucher programs if the State has a voucher law. Nothing in this bill forces states to adapt a voucher program, states without voucher programs will not lose a penny of federal funds. HELP does not create a new federal program, nor does it provide a justification for an increase in federal education funds. Furthermore, this bill addresses the legitimate concerns that federally funded voucher programs will lead to state regulations of private schools by explicitly stating that receipt of these funds cannot be used as a reason for force religious schools to alter their curriculum, or force private schools to change their admission requirements. Additionally, participating private schools must only be in compliance with state regulations in effect one year prior to passage of the HELP Act.

Under 10th amendment to the Constitution, the question of whether or not to fund private-school voucher programs is a left solely to the

state and localities. However, congressional activism has undermined state and local control of education as the federal education bureaucracy has grown increasingly powerful. Thus, many states now feel compelled to obey federal dictates and only engage in those education policies for which they can receive federal funds.

Individual states, localities and, in many cases, even private citizens cannot afford to support education programs without financial help from the federal government because of the oppressive tax burden imposed on the American people by this Congress! Congress then "returns" the money (minus a hefty federal "administrative" fee) to state governments and the American people to spend on federally approved purposes.

While the very existence of federal education programs and funding is an insult to the Constitution, and while the most effective education reform to entirely defund the federal education bureaucracy and return education funding to America's parents through deep tax credits and tax cuts, the more options the federal government provides states, localities, and individuals in the use of federal education dollars the better. Mr. Speaker, authority for funding education belongs to the people and the states. We in Congress have no legal or moral justification for denying the people the right to pursue any education reform they believe will help America's children—whether it is vouchers, charter schools, or statewide testing.

Mr. Speaker, my long-term goal remains the restoration of limited, constitutional government in all areas, including education. Until that goal is achieved, I will support measures, such as the one now before us, to give the states and the people as much control as possible over education dollars. After all, in the words of the pledge to abolish the IRS many of us signed last week, it is their money, not ours. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 2746, the Helping Empower Low-Income Parents [HELP] Scholarships Amendments of 1997.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from New Jersey [Mrs. ROUKEMA].

(Mrs. ROUKEMA asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. ROUKEMA. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this legislation.

These are not scholarships. These are vouchers, and vouchers are not the way to improve the public school system.

In the first place, I question the constitutionality of using Federal dollars for private and parochial schools. But putting that question aside, this proposal will not be for all low-income students, and if it were for all low-income students, we would be creating a new entitlement, and I do not quite know what my friends on this side of the aisle are doing in creating this new program. But, it also opens the question of possible discrimination, and that this discrimination would be providing vouchers to some students, but not all.

Now, one does not have to be a lawyer with a law degree or a rocket scientist to predict that if this is passed, there will be with certainty a lawsuit

that will be filed claiming discrimination, and that will be a giant step towards an entitlement.

However, put that aside too. The most important issue is what it is going to do to the public school system. Now, as a former school board member, I have some experience in these matters, and I want to tell my colleagues that it will greatly reduce support of the public schools, both urban and suburban, and ultimately, these vouchers will result in gutting the public school system, because it will be sending more and more of scarce financial resources out of the public system and into the private school system. It will be reducing financial support for the majority of students, the vast majority, and support a select few.

Gutting the public school system will not help those students who remain behind. What we need to do is to improve the system and improve the quality of standards for all students, not this select few.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the HELP Scholarship Act. This is just another way of saying these are not scholarships, these are vouchers, and vouchers are not the way to improve our education system.

In the first place, I question the constitutionality of whether Federal dollars can be used for private and parochial schools. The Constitution provides for a division between church and State, and this proposal will interfere with that division. Such proposals have been found unconstitutional when they have not been provided to all low-income students, or when the tuition grant program has been used primarily to assist children in attending schools which are religiously affiliated.

This proposal will not be for all low-income students, and if it were to be provided for all low-income students then it would be an entitlement. And we do not need any more entitlements.

Why would we, as a Republican Party, be moving toward an entitlement. This is a problem of possible claims of discrimination—that is discrimination in providing some students with vouchers. This also moves us toward creating an entitlement.

How will it be decided which students will be provided with the vouchers? Doesn't this discriminate against the other students who are not given vouchers? It does not take a law degree or a rocket scientist to predict with certainty that a lawsuit will be filed claiming discrimination and that will be a giant step toward the entitlement.

Most important and as a former school board member with some experience in these matters, it will force regionalization of the public school system, greatly reduce support of the public schools, both urban and suburban, and ultimately these vouchers will result in gutting the public school system—because it will be sending more and more of our scarce financial resources out of the public system and into the private system. It will be reducing financial support for the vast majority to support a select few.

As a former teacher and school board member in my home community, I have always supported our public school system. I believe that our schools are best prepared to meet the

educational needs of our youth when decisions about our school are made by that local community.

Gutting the public school system will not help those students who remain behind in the public school system. What we need to do is improve the system, and improve the quality and standards for all the students, not a select few.

It is also disturbing that these funds will be taken from title VI dollars. These funds are to be used for instructional materials, library materials, magnet schools, literacy programs, gifted and talented programs, dropout assistance, and other school reform activities. If school choice becomes an allowable use of funds, then these activities will not receive the funding and attention that they deserve.

This is not the way to improve our schools. Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 10 seconds to the gentleman from Oklahoma [Mr. WATTS].

Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I say to the gentlewoman from New Jersey [Mrs. ROUKEMA], and all of those who would say "discrimination," the ultimate discrimination, the ultimate economic and racial discrimination, is to keep these poor kids, these poor black kids, these poor white kids, these poor kids in schools that do not work, and the government mandates to those parents they must send their kids to those schools. It is the ultimate discrimination to do this to these poor kids.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. WELDON], another longtime champion of parental choice in education.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for yielding me this time. I just want to respond a little bit further to the gentlewoman from New Jersey [Mrs. ROUKEMA]. There has been a lot of talk about hurting public schools and that our agenda should be helping public schools.

I think our agenda really should be helping kids get a good education, and saving and protecting public schools sometimes is involved in that, but sometimes these public schools are so bad that they should be closed down, and I am really pleased to see this bill come to the floor. I worked with the gentleman from California last session on trying to get a school choice bill to the floor.

One of the reasons why I am so interested in this issue is one of the things I noticed when I got out of the Army and I went into private practice is that people with money send their kids to the schools of their choice, but poor people and people who are disadvantaged cannot do that. They are locked in a system, frequently a system that is failing. Some of our public schools are great, but some of them are failing miserably, and every time we try to talk about school choice, the same group of people get up and say, no, no, no, we cannot have school choice.

All we have here is a modest bill to try it. Let me tell my colleagues something. The American people support

this, they want to see this. Look at this chart here. All Americans, 82 percent; black Americans, 84 percent; whites, 83 percent; Democrats, 81 percent; Republicans, 86 percent; Independents, 81 percent. But every time we try to do this much school choice in this body, the same naysayers get up and say it is going to destroy public education.

My desire is not to protect public education, but to provide kids in America better education, particularly those kids who are locked into failing schools, schools that are frequently riddled with drugs, where they are not getting an education, where they are coming out with a diploma and they cannot read. We are just trying to give some of those parents the ability to send their kids to a decent school, the ability that rich people have had for years.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. DAVIS].

(Mr. DAVIS of Illinois asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to this bill, which is cleverly disguised and masquerades to help empower low-income families to send their children to the best public or private schools.

This is nothing more than a third in a series of voucher bills. However, the HELP Scholarship Act is different. This is not a back-door, covert attempt to dismantle public education. This is an all-out, overt, frontal assault to help undermine and destroy public schools.

This bill reminds one of Dracula in that it seeks to suck the blood out of public education. Currently, 90 percent of America's children benefit from public schools. This bill provides no funds to improve public schools, which are in dire need of repair, teacher training, and curriculum development. This bill is anti-public education.

I urge that we reject it and say no. Halloween was last week, Halloween was last week. This bill is trick or treat, with more tricks than treats.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I would inquire of the Chair as to how much time is remaining. I believe that the other side controls substantially more time than we do at this point.

The SPEAKER pro tempore [Mr. MCCOLLUM]. The gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS] has 31 and three-quarter minutes remaining.

The gentleman from Missouri [Mr. CLAY] has 38 and one-quarter minutes remaining.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Michigan [Ms. STABENOW].

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. Speaker, I rise very simply to indicate that this is not about choice, this is a bill about private school vouchers. This is an extension of a debate that we had in the Washington, D.C. budget earlier this year when the roofs are falling down in

the D.C. schools and rather than fix the roof, the proposal was put forward to allow 2000 children out of 78,000 children to be able to leave the schools with private vouchers.

We are committed to a strong public school system investing in technology for our children, making sure they can read and write, and that they are qualifying for the jobs of the future, every child, every neighborhood. This proposal allows a few children to take a disproportionate amount of dollars out of the public schools to allow for private school vouchers. It is the wrong way to go.

I would very much like it if we took all of our energies together and focused them in the right direction, which is making sure every single child in America gets a quality education.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California [Ms. SANCHEZ].

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I guess I hold a distinction in this Congress. I say to my colleagues, I am a Head Start child, a public school kid, a Pell Grant recipient.

I would say to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. PAUL], I think some Federal programs do work for our children, and I would say to the gentleman from Oklahoma [Mr. WATTS], I guess when I started out, I would be one of those poor minority students the gentleman professes to be so concerned about.

But, Mr. Speaker, today I rise against the so-called HELP Scholarship Act. Let us face it. This bill is not talking about scholarships, it is talking about vouchers, and that is why this bill bypassed our committee, the Committee on Education and the Workforce, for any consideration, and it is now on the floor under a gag rule.

It saddens me that during a time when our public schools are facing their most challenging times, we are encouraging American people to turn to private schools to teach their children. Ninety percent of all of the children in America go to public schools, and the numbers increase every day.

Let that be the focus of our education agenda: How to improve America's public education system.

For example, in Orange County, all the kindergarten through 12 schools in my district are overcrowded. They have resorted to year-round classes, portable classrooms, just to deal with things in the classroom, and they still maintain high academic standards. Voucher programs, at most, would help only a few students, and those who do use these vouchers will not even be given civil rights protection under the school admissions process. What kind of school choice is that?

School construction is an issue that deserves the attention of this Congress, not vouchers. That is why I have introduced legislation that will offer interest-free bonds to school districts to help them finance these new school needs, the school construction needs that they have. Let us do what is right

for America's children. Let us make sure that quality exists for everybody in our schools. Please vote against H.R. 2746.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas, [Mr. GREEN].

(Mr. GREEN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GREEN. Mr. Speaker, I am amazed to see H.R. 2746 here again today. These are from the same folks who a few weeks ago characterized government-owned schools as a communist legacy. So now we have H.R. 2746 here to talk about how we are really going to educate children.

Our Nation has the ability to provide the highest quality of public education in the world, but the question remains, who will receive this education? My Republican colleagues' answer is with the HELP Scholarship Act, again, a voucher program.

The HELP Scholarship Act is a school voucher program that is intended to do nothing but harm public education because it is taking money out of what should be going to public education. This bill does nothing for the Nation's 50 million students who attend public schools.

We are not defending public education here on the floor today by opposing this bill. We are defending those 50 million children who are in public education and need more resources, but they are taking away even current resources, money that should be used to improve the public schools and instead will go to a small number of students to pay for private and parochial schools. Private and parochial schools are great, but they should not have public funds to do it.

This bill is not only unfair to those 50 million children who will not be able to participate, but I consider public education is an American legacy, not a communist legacy. The real challenge lies in not creating small privileges for a small number of students, but instead building a strong public education system that will provide for those 50 million students instead of taking it away. I believe the HELP Scholarship Act does not improve public education in America, but it threatens the public education of those 50 million children we are defending.

There is no evidence to suggest that vouchers will lead to improved public education performance for all children. In fact, the voucher programs drain funds earmarked for improving public schools and directs them to private schools. The Republican voucher program fails to address the needs of public education and should be defeated tonight. The future of our children is too important to gamble on an untried and unrealistic proposal.

Again, this is a bill in response to the same problem that we had a few weeks ago when they were calling public education a communist legacy by one of our colleagues from Colorado. This is

their answer to solutions in the public schools. Let us work to make public schools better, not take funds away.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 10 seconds to the gentleman from Oklahoma [Mr. WATTS].

Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I would say to the gentlewoman from California [Ms. SANCHEZ] that she proves my point exactly. Good schools should not be threatened by what we are doing. Bad schools. She went to a good public school. So did I. It is the bad public schools that we are saying, let us give those poor parents a chance to take those kids out of those bad public schools.

□ 1815

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 15 seconds.

Mr. Speaker, I would note that I believe what the education establishment and those here who are beholden to them really fear is that competition threatens their monopoly of financial control.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Texas [Ms. GRANGER].

Ms. GRANGER. Mr. Speaker, as a former public school teacher, I rise in strong support of the HELP Scholarship Act. I have always believed that when you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Today this Congress will pass yet another part of a winning strategy for the future.

Today all children are not well-served by our schools. Sixty percent of all graduating seniors in high school cannot read on a 12th-grade level. As a whole, today's students score 60 points lower on the SATs than their parents did. Clearly there is much work to be done as we look for ways to improve our schools.

While the work of making our schools great again is in many ways difficult, it is in no way impossible. Piece by piece, one school and one child at a time, we can give our Nation the kind of education system it deserves, and we can give our children the kind of education their parents have a right to expect.

Today we have a chance to support the HELP Scholarship Act. This legislation will provide scholarships to low-income families to send their children to the school of their choice. It has often been said that the greatness of a Nation is measured by how it treats the most vulnerable and the less fortunate. The HELP Scholarship Act will help those who need our help the most, families who earn less than 185 percent of the poverty level.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. LEWIS].

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this so-called HELP Scholarship plan. This plan is not about helping the majority of students in America. This is just the latest attack on public schools by the opponents of public education.

Speaker GINGRICH and the radical Republican right have a plan to dismantle public education, abolish the Department of Education, cut the school lunch program, cut funding for safe- and drug-free schools, for teacher training, for Head Start.

Just 2 weeks ago the Republican opponents of public education supported a voucher scheme that would drain millions of public education dollars in our Nation's capital and give it to just 3 percent of students to attend private and religious schools. But taking money out of public schools in the District of Columbia was just the beginning.

Today we consider a plan that would drain resources from every public school in every neighborhood and every city and town in America. This so-called HELP Scholarship scheme does nothing to help public schools. It is about draining resources from public schools to help private and religious schools; help the few, deprive the many. This is the Republican plan.

Mr. Speaker, 50 million students in America attend public schools. Nine out of 10 students attend public schools. We as a society know that educational opportunity is good for all. It was Thomas Jefferson who said, education is the cornerstone of our democracy. That is why Democrats support investing in our public schools, rebuilding our crumbling school buildings, and giving every child in America a solid foundation through public education.

We should be building our public schools, building them up, not tearing them down. We should be working together to improve our public schools, not giving up on them and selling them down the river.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support public education in America, support education for all of our children. Oppose the Republican HELP Scholarship scheme. The scholarship is no help at all. These are really hurt scholarships. They hurt our public schools, and they hurt the overwhelming majority of our children. I urge my colleagues to defeat this bill. It does not help anyone. It does not help our children. It hurts our children, and it hurts our public schools.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would just respond to the last speaker and point out that we are not saying on this side that competition and choice is a panacea. I wish people would not view this or try to portray this as some sort of attack on the public schools. I say that as the parent of a child who is in public school, because I always remember my most important title is not Congressman, it is dad.

But we had Alveda King testify. She is a highly respected civil rights advocate, the niece of the late Dr. Martin Luther King. She testified, I would say to the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. LEWIS] and others, before our subcommittee. She said, "If you have a

boat going down, and there are 10 children on it, and you can only save 4, isn't it better to save the 4 than to let all 10 drown?"

What we are saying is our public school boat is in danger of sinking, that we are failing to serve too many children, and as a country we cannot afford to lose another generation of urban schoolchildren.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New York [Mr. FORBES].

(Mr. FORBES asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, if ever there was a moment under this majestic dome that marks the world's greatest democracy and the hope that is this Nation, it is now. Look at every urban center in America, and we will see repeated the scenario where we have relegated the most vulnerable children among us to a lifetime of poverty and bad education.

I am a product of the public schools and a public college, and proudly so, and I celebrate those good teachers and good parents that made it possible for me to get the education that I did. But what is wrong with stepping forward for the children, the most vulnerable children, who are being denied a quality education because we are refusing to address the problems of our urban schools?

This is a solution long in the making. I commend the authors of this legislation, and I urge my colleagues to support this matter of choice for our children. The parents of these children in every urban center of America are crying out for this kind of a solution. This is the right way to go. I would ask my friends who oppose this to reconsider their position. I ask them, what is the alternative?

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 15 seconds to the gentlewoman from Texas [Ms. JACKSON LEE].

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, we all have a great concern for our children, but it concerns me that the gentleman that just spoke to the American people to express his concern for the plight of poor children, it seems hard to believe, since in his last vote he voted against Head Start. I think that should seriously raise doubt of the concern that has been expressed.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 10 seconds to the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. LEWIS].

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I would say to the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS], he invoked the name of Martin Luther King, Junior, and his niece, Alveda King Bill. I knew Martin Luther King, Junior. He was my mentor, my friend, and my leader. If he were alive today, he would be ashamed of what his niece did and said.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Texas [Ms. JACKSON-LEE].

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I think the real question has

to be, how do we go forward in helping the children of America? The real driving force behind this Republican proposal on vouchers is not parents who want a better education for their children, but the likes of Jerry Falwell, who says, "I hope to live to see the day when we won't have any public schools. The churches will have taken them over again, and Christians will be running them. What a happy day that will be."

Mr. Speaker, I believe in the first amendment, I believe in Christianity, the freedom of religion and I believe in all Americans. However, I also believe in public school education. This is what we should be doing: early childhood development; basics by 6; well-trained teachers; well-equipped classrooms; relief from crumbling and overcrowded schools; support for local plans to review neighborhood public schools; efficient and coordinated use of resources; parental choice, like charter schools.

That should be the message for public schools and those who support our children, not a denial of civil rights, as these vouchers will do, to parents and children; not where the parents will be denied admission by private schools when they come with their vouchers. We need a real plan for our public schools, not a system that destroys them. I support public schools. I ask my colleagues to do so as well by voting against the voucher bill which destroys public schools.

The primary point of concern, for myself, and many other members of this body in regards to H.R. 2746, is the school scholarship or vouchers provision included in this revision of title VI of the Education and Secondary Reform Act.

This provision would authorize the distribution of scholarships to low to moderate income families to attend public or private schools in nearby suburbs or to pay the costs of supplementary academic programs outside regular school hours for students attending public schools. However, only certain students will receive these tuition scholarships.

This legislative initiative could obviously set a dangerous precedent from this body as to the course of public education in America for decades to come. If the U.S. Congress abandons public education, and sends that message to localities nationwide, a fatal blow could be struck to public schooling. The impetus behind this legislative agenda is clearly suspect. Instead of using these funds to improve the quality of public education, this policy initiative enriches fiscally successful, local private and public institutions. Furthermore, if this policy initiative is so desirable, why are certain D.C. students left behind? Can this plan be a solution, I would assert that it can not. Unless all of our children are helped, what value does this grand political experiment have?

I see this initiative as a small step in trying to position the Government behind private elementary and secondary schools. The ultimate question is why do those in this body who continue to support public education with their lipservice, persist in trying to slowly erode the acknowledged sources of funding for our pub-

lic schools? Public education, and its future, is an issue of the first magnitude. One that affects the constituency of every member of this House, and thus deserves full and open consideration.

School vouchers, have not been requested by the public mandate from the Congress, actually, they have failed every time they have been offered on a State ballot by 65 percent or greater. If a piece of legislation proposes to send our taxpayer dollars to private or religious schools, the highest levels of scrutiny are in order, and an amendment that may correct such a provision is unquestionably germane. Nine out of ten American children attend public schools, we must not abandon them, their reform is our hope.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would go back to what the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. LEWIS] said. We will let Ms. King's words speak for themselves. She is not only a highly respected civil rights advocate, but she is also a former public and private schoolteacher.

Here is what she said in testimony before our committee: "It has been demonstrated that when you implement a choice program, including vouchers, that you empower the parents, the system improves, the schools begin to compete, and hope arises."

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. MCINTOSH], a member of the committee.

Mr. MCINTOSH. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Flake-Watts bill, and want the American people and my colleagues to know that this bill attacks one of the root causes of discrimination and poverty in America and empowers families who are living in troubled communities.

Let me tell Members what it meant in the State of Indiana. The other day I met a remarkable lady named Barbara Lewis. Barbara is an African-American and lives in the inner city of Indianapolis. She struggles to raise her three boys, and Barbara has decided to become a leader in our community. She is president of a new grass-roots organization called FORCE, Families Organized for Real Choice in Education.

A few years ago her son Alphonso had the opportunity to escape one of these terrible inner-city schools that was failing to educate him, and through a private scholarship Alphonso was able to attend Holy Cross Catholic school. This opportunity enabled Alphonso to get into a better school, but it was his own intellectual abilities and hard work that put him on the honor roll, it was his own athletic abilities that made him stand out on the football team, and his own leadership that led his classmates to elect him to the student council. Now Barbara is energized, and she wants to give every inner-city kid the same chance that her son Alphonso had.

I could tell Members about studies that show how minority students do much better in these private schools, or how 43 of our Nation's Governors are

supporting school choice. But Alphonso's success story speaks for itself, and his real-life experiences tell us of the merits of this.

I appeal to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to look at the facts and cut through the rhetoric. I know there is strong pressure from the interest groups and the establishment who want to keep the status quo.

I know my colleagues are great believers in the public school system, as am I. I am a product of that system. But it is not a choice between public schools and private schools. The choice here is between preserving the failed status quo or moving forward and giving poor inner-city kids a hope for a better education. Vote for the Watts-Flake bill.

Mr. Speaker, the author Victor Hugo once wrote, "There is one thing stronger than all the armies in the world, and that is an idea whose time has come."

The time has come to allow parents the choice of selecting schools for their children. Parents across the country—especially in inner cities—demand this choice to give their kids the chance to grow and succeed.

I want Hoosier parents to have this choice. At the K-12 level, Indiana spends an average of \$5,666 per student per year. Yet performance declines as the student progresses through the public school system.

For instance, in 1996, Indiana's 4th graders took the National Assessment of Education Progress math exam. They placed fourth out of 43 states that participated in the exam. Very good.

However, Indiana's 8th graders ranked only 17th out of 43 states.

On Advanced Placement exams, Indiana ranked last in comparison to other states and the District of Columbia in terms of the percentage of students who are in the top half.

Clearly, more money is not the answer. We need to rethink our whole approach to elementary and secondary education.

I ask my colleagues, is the status quo, which is discriminating against poor, and which is letting our children down, so important that we are willing to sacrifice the hopes and aspirations of thousands of children, for the sake of the special interest unions, not for the sake of our children.

Look at what President Clinton said—"People need to know they can walk away from bad schools. Choice changes . . ."

Democrat Senator JOSEPH LIEBERMAN made the following statement on the floor during the D.C. appropriations bill, "Voting against choice is about the equivalent of voting against Pell grants or the GI bill or child care programs." I couldn't agree more.

I appeal to everyone in this House to break the chains of the special interests! Break free and let the poor inner city children like Alphonso have the same opportunity as the wealthiest citizens in this country, the same opportunity for us that the President and his family have had.

Please give poor, underprivileged parents a real choice. For the sake of the children vote for the Watts-Flake HELP scholarship bill.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 15 seconds to the gentlewoman from Texas [Ms. JACKSON-LEE].

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I believe the only pressure

from the American people, I would say to the gentleman who just spoke, is the American people's surprise about his new concern for the poor, since he voted against Head Start, and he voted to eliminate school lunch programs that would help our children learn and help our children be better off as they seek to be educated in this country.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. HEFNER].

(Mr. HEFNER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HEFNER. Mr. Speaker, this is a very interesting debate. I can remember many, many, many years ago in public school, and if we had the thinking of my colleagues over there at that particular period of time, we would not have been inoculated for measles, smallpox, we would not have gotten examined from the health nurse every year.

I have yet to find out how these vouchers are going to be administered. I am told that they are going to come in a block grant to the States. What makes us think that States are not a bureaucracy, just the same as the Federal Government? We are going to say to a poor parent, as they have to come and say, hey, I want one of them vouchers, they will say, okay, we are going to get you a voucher, but here is how much it is. Well, I cannot take my kid to a private school because it is way across town. I do not have a car. I am a single parent. Well, we will mark you off, and we will go to the next one, somebody that has.

This is an attack on the public school system, Mr. Speaker. I say to the Members on the other side, your record is not good. Folks that count catsup as a vegetable, vote against Head Start and all of these things, your record is just not good.

□ 1830

You have no credibility in education. It has always been that way. You were not for education when we wanted to have student loans for people years ago before some of you were born. When my dad wanted to go to college, you wanted to send kids to school, you did not have a program. You did not support any program. You did not support education. It is inherent with you. You do not have a good record on education. I am not being vicious. It is just the truth.

As Harry Truman said, to give them hell, you just tell the truth and it sounds like you are giving them hell.

But this is an attack on the public school system. Make no mistake about it. It is going to take millions of dollars out of the public school system and deny a lot of those people you are talking about from getting any chance for a public education. It is a fallacy, it is a rip-off, and it is a fraud.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 10 seconds to observe the gentleman from North Carolina is abso-

lutely right. After 40 years of single-party control in the House of Representatives, our inner city schools in America are in great shape.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. BOEHNER], chairman of the House Republican Conference.

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I have enjoyed listening to the debate this evening. I find it ironic that the debate is centering around whether this is for public schools, against public schools, whether it is for private schools. This has nothing to do with support for one school system or another.

What this HELP scholarship will do is to empower parents, parents and local communities, to take greater control over the education of their children. We spend far too much time in this body worrying about systems and worrying about a process instead of worrying about how we can help parents ensure that their child gets a better education. This bill tonight will do that for some people in America who do not have choice.

If you have got money, you have all the school choice you would want, but if you are poor and you are locked into an inner city school, you have no choice.

How long is it going to be before those of us in this body begin to take seriously the problems that we have in inner city schools in this country? How can we look one day longer at the system we have created that is denying those children a shot at the American dream? This helps them out of it.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 15 seconds to the gentlewoman from Texas [Ms. JACKSON-LEE].

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I still maintain that it is the children that we should be concerned about. I would say to the gentleman who just spoke that the American people would find his concern for the plight of poor children in public education hard to believe since he voted against Head Start and against free lunches for our children so that they could learn.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes and 30 seconds to the gentleman from Rhode Island [Mr. KENNEDY].

(Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Missouri for yielding me the time.

This proposal just violates the common sense test. It would be one thing for the majority party to offer scholarships, once the public education system was fully funded, once we fully funded Head Start, once we reduced the teacher/pupil ratio, once we went about getting the \$100 billion that the GAO says is needed to fix our public school education system. But in the absence, in the absence of investing those needed dollars in our public education system, vouchers represent a Band-Aid approach.

Just think of it. Let us sprinkle a few vouchers out there, capture this kind of choice thing, make it sound all attractive, but what we are really doing is leaving a very unattractive system still in place. We know it needs work, but we are not doing anything to invest the dollars that are needed to make it work. We are saying, we will make it work for those who can get a voucher.

All I would ask is, what does that leave the people who cannot get a voucher? Where is the guarantee for every child?

I mean, I have heard this voucher argument a million times by you people. You talked about it with public housing. Guess what? People are going to want to take vouchers when you people cut operation and maintenance of our housing system.

There is no question our housing system is going to crumble and people are going to want a way out when you do not invest in it. That was your answer to the public housing problem, give people vouchers, do not fix the problem, just give them vouchers. Mr. Speaker, that represents a cut-and-run approach. It does not represent a meeting-the-problem-head-on approach.

The Democratic agenda for first class public schools is about meeting the agenda head on, addressing the problem that is out there head on, not giving this kind of voucher to whoever can be lucky enough to get a voucher and leaving all the rest of the kids in the dust.

Just think about it. What happens to the kids? We are not worried about the kids who can get into the private system or who can get a car to get to a better school, move to a better neighborhood. We are worried about the kids who are stuck. That is who we need to improve, their opportunities. Vouchers do nothing of the sort. They do not guarantee the child that is in the poor neighborhood, that cannot get out of the neighborhood, that is stuck with the crumbling school, an opportunity to leave that environment and get a better school system because you have failed to invest in the school system. You are just cutting and running.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute to say to the gentleman who just spoke, that was a very, very partisan, cynical comment.

Do not take my word for it. Here are 150 letters from parents whose children have participated in the Cleveland voucher program. They are all African American. They are all low income. And if the gentleman would take the time to familiarize himself with that program or the Milwaukee program, if he would listen to parents, he might change his view.

I am just going to cite a couple comments.

I appreciate the scholarship program my grandson is participating in. I feel he is getting a better education. Esther Carter.

The voucher program is a wonderful program for our children and the future of our children. Yvette Jackson.

I hope to see this and many more programs like this succeed in the very near future. My daughter and my family are truly blessed. Yolanda Pearcy.

It is a crying shame that when we had a field hearing in Cleveland there was not a Democratic Member of the House of Representatives who could take the time to join us in that field hearing and to participate and to listen to parents.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes and 30 seconds to the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. HOEKSTRA], chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time.

Let us take a look at exactly what this bill does. What this bill does is, it amends title VI of the education block grant program to allow States and localities, if they choose, if they choose, they are not required to do anything, but if they believe it is the most appropriate thing and the most appropriate effort for their local community to improve schools, they may use these block grants for voluntary public, private, and parental choice programs.

Other things that they can use title VI for are professional development, curriculum development, technology and computers, magnet schools. All this says is, if you and your community and your State believe this is what you want to do to help kids in your community, we are going to let you do it.

Why do we think that this is the right approach? Over the last 12 months, we have gone to Milwaukee; New York; Chicago; California; Phoenix; Wilmington, Delaware; Milledgeville, Georgia; Cincinnati, Ohio; Louisville; Little Rock, Arkansas; Cleveland; Muskegon, Michigan; Des Moines. We have gone to these 13 different States, 14, 15 different field hearings, and in every field hearing we have heard exciting innovations at the local level about what people are trying to do to solve the education problems in their communities.

In Milwaukee, in Cleveland, they have said, we really think a scholarship program and a scholarship effort is what is needed in our community. And wonderful things are happening. Is it a silver bullet? Is it going to work everywhere? No. But in these communities, it is these people have decided and they are having some wonderful success, and they want to be able to build off of that. We should let other States and other communities have the same opportunity. We need to give these other people and other States the opportunity to experiment to see whether this is one of those tools that will move this country forward.

The focus is not on the system, but the people in these local communities are focused on the children because it is local people making decisions for their children. And my colleagues should listen to the parents. It is not

only the letters that we get but the testimony that we get from parents coming in saying, help us and empower us to save our kids, and give us the control and the flexibility to do what we want to do in this community and not do what Washington is forcing us to do.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 15 seconds to the gentlewoman from Texas [Ms. JACKSON-LEE].

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I wish the gentleman who had just spoken, with all the passion that he has expressed, had the same kind of passion when he voted against Head Start and school lunches. I hope the American people realize, in his now pretended concern for the plight of the poor, that he voted against Head Start and voted against school lunches which help our children be better prepared to learn.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 10 seconds.

The previous speaker stated it right. He said if the States choose, but they are not required to do anything. That is absolutely right in terms of civil rights. If they choose to enforce the civil rights provision, they may, but they probably will not.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from New York [Mr. OWENS].

(Mr. OWENS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, the Republican majority that came into power 3 years ago insisting that the Department of Education be abolished, eliminated, has no validity, no credibility in this discussion. This is another cynical ploy, cynical partisan ploy to destroy public education, public school education.

These same advocates and sponsors of vouchers, I would like for them to tell me: In your district, have you gone to your own local school boards and proposed vouchers? What is their reaction? Do you have poor children in your districts? Most of you do. You get title I funds. They are spread all across the whole country so there are some poor children in your district. There are certainly middle-class families, who also send their children to private schools and would like to have the relief provided by funds vouchers.

Have you discussed it with your school boards? And what is their reaction? Is it popular? Is this something you want to jam down only the throats of the African Americans in the inner cities and use them as guinea pigs in an experiment which has no validity in your own district?

Do you know that all the States, in 1997, where legislation was introduced for vouchers, it did not pass, it failed. Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia; there were 24 States that introduced legislation for vouchers, and it did not pass in a single State. So is it the American people who want vouchers or

is it something you want to impose from Washington?

You have used your power to try to impose it in Washington, DC. The people of Washington, DC., had a referendum. They said they did not want vouchers, they want charter schools. But you want to force it down their throats. You are cynically refusing to support programs that would benefit poor people.

Your majority in two sessions voted against Goals 2000. When you failed to eliminate Goals 2000 in a regular format, you went through the back door of the Committee on Appropriations and you eliminated opportunity-to-learn standards. Nothing is more significant for poor children in America than the opportunity-to-learn standards, which deal with just what I am saying, opportunity-to-learn.

If you are going to be able to learn, you need a decent building, so school construction is what we should be discussing here. You need trained teachers. We should be discussing training teachers. We should be discussing how to introduce the best educational technology into the poorest schools.

We are not discussing the things that are significant because you have the time preoccupied with a diversionary discussion of vouchers. You refused to pass all of the President's Technology Challenge Fund; you cut funds for that. And you denied low-income students the opportunity to continue their education by voting to cut student loans by \$10.1 billion in fiscal year 1996. Whenever low-income programs are introduced, whenever they are introduced on this floor, the same Members who are advocating vouchers for a handful of poor children are the Members who vote those programs down.

Follow Mayor Giuliani. What he did in New York is, he went to the private sector. You want vouchers, you want to experiment with vouchers; go to the private sector, they can help a handful of children, instead of threatening to destroy the entire system.

□ 1845

Mr. OWENS. What happens is that the Giuliani program is significant in that it says exactly what vouchers can do. There were 91,000 youngsters who had no place to sit when school opened in 1996. They took 1,000 of the 91,000 and they found a voucher program for them, they found scholarships for them. They are going to take care of 1,000 children.

In the meantime, what are they saying to the other 90,000? You cannot deal with poor people and the problems of poor people in our inner cities unless you move systematically to change the larger system. Charter schools could have an impact on that system. It could accomplish some of the things they want to accomplish.

Vouchers are a diversion. They are running away from the responsibility, the need to appropriate more money for construction, more money for

teacher training, more money for books and supplies. They are running away from the responsibility and they are diverting the attention of the American people with vouchers.

In their own communities, voucher advocates refuse to go and ask for a referendum and ask for focus groups and campaign on it. It will be very unpopular, I assure you, if they dare to push voucher programs in their own communities.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume just to say to the gentleman from New York [Mr. OWENS] that, speaking of unpopular, how would he respond to Wisconsin State Senator Polly Williams, who spearheaded the choice program in Milwaukee City schools and who just happens to be an African-American? How would he respond to Fannie Lewis, the 80-year-old Cleveland City Councilwoman, who helped spearhead the school choice program there and who happens to be an African-American? Those are local people.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman from California yield?

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I will not yield. I attempted to respond to his question, but it proved to be purely rhetorical and not meritorious.

I say to the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. CLAY] and the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. SCOTT], whom I very much respect, please put in the mix here, in the overall equation, the civil rights of parents, the civil rights of parents to select the education that is appropriate for their child, to be able to give their child the kind of future opportunity that every parent wants for their child.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. TALENT], the primary author of this legislation, my cosponsor.

Mr. TALENT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS] for yielding me the time.

I am reminded that, in the midst of all this heat and the very little light, and the chairman of the committee predicted it and I think he was right in doing that, we are dealing with an issue that really matters to real people, to the millions of kids and their parents in low-income neighborhoods who are trapped in schools, trapped in schools, where they do not learn and where they are not safe.

The issue here, Mr. Speaker, is are we going to help these kids or are we going to sacrifice them on the altar of a system that is failing them and failing the country? Now, I say that with deep reluctance. But we cannot help these children unless we are honest about the situation. And we all know that this system is failing them.

In New York, Mr. Speaker, 25 percent of New York's public school students will receive their high school diploma. The record in the parochial school system is 95 percent in New York. In Baltimore, fewer than half of the city's ninth-graders could pass a basic rudi-

mentary math test. In Philadelphia, less than 6 percent of the city high school students tested competent in reading.

Do you know what happens to you if you are in high school and you cannot read? You know what your life is going to be like? The system is so bad, Mr. Speaker, that none of us, whatever our feelings about this bill, would or do send our kids to these schools.

So what does the bill propose to do? It increases the block grant money that we are giving to all the public schools and it allows them the discretion, if they wish to use it, to institute a school choice program of the kind that has succeeded in Milwaukee and Cleveland and in New York and places around the country.

Why do we do that? Because this program works. The statistics show that. The waiting lists show that there are 20,000 parents waiting for 1300 privately funded scholarships in New York. And the reaction of the establishment shows it.

Mr. Speaker, the reason for the hostility of this bill is not because people are afraid the bill is going to fail but because they know it is going to succeed and the better education these kids will receive will embarrass an establishment that is failing them. The arguments against the bill, I have been sitting here listening to them, one of them is that we are not helping enough kids with it. We would like to help more. I would say we are helping them all. We are giving them all some hope. We are taking money away from the public schools. No, we are not. No, we are not. We are giving them more money. And then we are letting them, if they wish, use the money for these programs.

And then the argument that we are hurting public schools. Mr. Speaker, a member of the Milwaukee school board said that the school choice program there has encouraged and really forced his school system to adopt reforms that they should have adopted a long time ago. Apart from that, I have to say, with the greatest respect, it is time to stop worrying about the bureaucracy and to start worrying about these kids. The bureaucracies are doing fine. The number of employees in the Baltimore school system has doubled in the last 40 years, at the same time that math and reading skills are going down.

Mr. Speaker, let us put a human face to this. One of the things that motivates me, and I have talked to a lot of these kids and their parents around the country, is an article in the New York papers about the privately funded school changes program they have there; and they refer to a little boy named Carlos Rosario, age 9, of Washington Heights. And he explains why he would like a scholarship if he can get one. He says, "I don't like my school. The kids are too rough. They hit me and push me around."

Mr. Speaker, I have a 7-year-old boy and two other kids. And if it was my

boy who came home and said that, I would do anything I could to protect him. We have an opportunity in this modest way to take a step ahead for people like Carlos Rosario and his mom. I would ask the House to drop this partisanship and these extraneous issues and support this bill.

APPLICANTS' PARENTS ARE SICK OF FEAR,
VIOLENCE AND BAD TEACHERS

(By Tracy Connor and Maggie Haberman)

Parents applying for private-school scholarships say they want a smaller, safer, more educational environment than the public schools provide.

Single mom Shelmadine Usher of The Bronx is keeping her fingers crossed that her 6-year-old son, Timothy Moses, will get one of the coveted 1,300 spots.

He attends a private school, but the financial aid that pays for it dries up when Usher graduates from community college in June.

"I went to public school in The Bronx and it was bad, and I always said that when I had a child, I would make sacrifices to send him to private school, she said.

"I'm ready to work two jobs if this scholarship doesn't come through."

Timothy is a quick learner and avid reader, and Usher believes that private school—with higher standards and more parental involvement—will keep him on the fast track.

The greater amount of individual attention is also a plus.

Luiyina Abreu, a third-grader in northern Manhattan, is floundering in math class.

"I think they teach differently at private school, maybe better than at my school now," she said. "It would give me a chance to do better."

Classroom safety is another big concern.

"I don't like my school. The kids are too rough. They hit me and push me around," said Carlos Rosario, 9, who attends PS 153 in Washington Heights.

His mother, Maria Jimenez, is seeking scholarships for Carlos and his sister, Karla, 8, who emigrated from the Dominican Republic in 1993.

"Public school is dangerous," Jimenez said.

"If you're a good parent, you teach your children how to behave at home. But then they go to school and it's a bad environment."

Jasmine Abdul-Quddus, 8, who lives in the East Village and attends PS 19, agrees. "They fight and call people names."

Her mother, Kalima Abdul-Quddus, who moved here from Atlanta three years ago, is just as concerned about academic standards for Jasmine and her sister Aleah, 7.

"In private school, the teachers are more devoted to education," she said. "In public school, they just push them through."

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 20 seconds to the gentleman from New York [Mr. OWENS].

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, does the local school board of the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. TALENT] endorse vouchers? Has he asked them to endorse vouchers?

Mr. TALENT. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. CLAY. I yield to the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. TALENT. That is one of the reasons why we are giving them the discretion to decide whether they want to under the program.

Mr. OWENS. As an elected official, have you gone to them and asked them to endorse vouchers?

Mr. TALENT. I have talked to the superintendents in my area.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, we keep hearing examples of youngsters who live somewhere else. I would like to hear some examples of the children who live in my colleague's district.

Mr. TALENT. If the gentleman would yield, that is a different thing. Do the children who live in these neighborhoods want these scholarships? Overwhelmingly.

If the gentleman will yield me about 30 seconds, I would be happy to tell him about that.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 15 seconds.

I would like to ask the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. TALENT], whose district is adjacent to mine and one of the richest districts in the country, if the children in my district, who live in one of the poorest districts, if these scholarships will entitle them to go from public schools in my district to those rich public schools in his district? That is a "yes" or "no" question.

Mr. TALENT. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. CLAY. I yield to the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. TALENT. I would say to the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. CLAY] that the kids from low-income neighborhoods around this country in my area and in his area want this program.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 10 additional seconds. The question is a "yes" or "no." Will this bill permit poor kids in my schools to go to the rich schools in his district?

Mr. TALENT. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. CLAY. I yield to the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. TALENT. It will permit them to go to good schools in their neighborhoods.

Mr. CLAY. Reclaiming my time, public schools in your neighborhood, "yes" or "no"?

Mr. TALENT. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Missouri is asking me a question and I am trying to answer him.

Mr. CLAY. It is a "yes" or "no" answer.

Mr. TALENT. It is not a "yes" or "no" question.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 15 seconds to the gentlewoman from Texas [Ms. JACKSON-LEE].

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Will the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. TALENT] answer the question?

Again, I think this voucher program is a terminal wound to public schools. My only concern is, why would he vote against Head Start and school lunch programs if he is concerned about poor children in public schools?

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. TALENT].

Mr. TALENT. Mr. Speaker, in the first place, I have the greatest respect for all of my colleagues, and I know that they are doing what they are

doing out of passion. They are, however, dragging in a number of issues that are extraneous to this bill and making comments about those issues that are simply not correct. We never cut the school lunch program. It always grew. The numbers are here. The Head Start program is always growing, and my colleagues all know that.

If my colleagues can defend the existing system, defend it. If they cannot defend it, then do something to help these kids. Concentrate on them instead of on the bureaucracy.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 10 seconds to answer the question of the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. CLAY] with a resounding "yes" and to tell the gentleman from New York [Mr. OWENS], if this legislation becomes law, that anyone, elected official or other civic leader, who believes in school choice can petition their local school board to use at least part of their Federal funding to provide scholarships for low-income parents in low-income communities.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Colorado [Mr. BOB SCHAFFER], a member of the committee.

Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS] yielding me the time.

I would like to direct the body's attention, if I could, over here to my left. This graph shows and explains the choices that are expressed by Members of Congress. These bars express, according to committee, the first bar here is the Committee on Senate Finance, for example. Seventy percent of the Members on the Committee on Senate Finance send their children to private schools. And these show other committees that show a high number of Members of Congress who, when given the choice, send their children to private schools.

Now, the debate is all about this. What the American people want and what they expressed to us is the same kind of treatment and same kind of choices that politicians are able to afford for themselves. This is what the debate really is about.

With the thousands and thousands of parents who we have heard from, here is just a sample of the letters that I received from parents. What they tell us is that they do not want the Democrat model of restricted choices, of suppressed opportunity, of poor performing schools and no choice beyond that. What they do want, however, is to be treated like real customers. Allowing parents to be treated like real customers is what the bill before us is all about.

I have to tell my colleagues, I am a strong supporter of public education. I have 3 children who are in public schools today, and they are there because in my district the public school system provides excellent opportunity and excellent results and it has earned my confidence. But what the American

people are asking us for today and what we are hoping to deliver is a Republican model that treats the American people like the politicians in Washington treat themselves, just like you treat yourselves.

I would ask the following: When they retire tonight to their cocktail parties and their highbrow fund-raising receptions, please think about the parents from inner-city school districts throughout the country who have written to us and asked us to be treated like real customers, to choose the education settings that are in the best interest of their children, to think about the teachers who would like to be treated like real professionals, to have you choose them, to stand in line if you would like and choose the educational services that professional teachers offer.

I suggest we stand in strong support of public education today, and this bill is a good first step.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from California [Mr. MARTINEZ].

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. Speaker, in 30 seconds, I would like to know if the gentleman from Colorado [Mr. BOB SCHAFFER], that just spoke would like to respond to the statement he made on the House floor on September 10, 1997: "Government-owned schools have a complete monopoly. Plain and simple. And all monopolies fear competition. I can 100 percent guarantee an inferior product of any human endeavor that producers are shielded from competition that produces and are not forced to innovate and improve. Just look at the communist legacy in every single case, especially education."

Would he like to elaborate on that?

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 15 seconds for the gentleman from Colorado [Mr. BOB SCHAFFER] to respond.

Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I sure would. Those of my colleagues who wish to come up and defend this kind of a legacy, which has been a worldwide failure, I say be my guest.

What America should not do is move in the direction that they would propose, that we have seen in Eastern Europe, for example, where they create centralized government monopolies. We should do just the opposite. We should preserve what is great about public schools in America.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman is saying that local school boards elected by the people in that district are communist legacies? Excuse me? To me that sounds like a democracy.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 15 seconds to the gentleman from Colorado [Mr. BOB SCHAFFER] to finish his statement.

Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado. The legacy which the gentleman defends over here to my left is one that I would submit we should not allow to occur here in the United States.

Our public school system has become the strongest in the world, particularly

because it is forced to innovate, because it is forced to be challenged, and that is what we ought to preserve about our system. We should not allow my colleague's side to consolidate authority in Washington, D.C., which has been a failure throughout the rest of the world.

□ 1900

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 seconds to the gentleman from California [Mr. MARTINEZ].

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. Speaker, that is not what the gentleman said. He said, just look at the Communist legacy in every single case, especially in education. We are talking about here in the United States, not in Russia.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. ROEMER].

Mr. ROEMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to the bill before us, the voucher bill. I am a proud product of parochial and Catholic schools, and I am a very strong advocate of public education in America. It has been said as education goes, so goes America.

The analogy here is that if our lifeboat is sinking, and vouchers can save four people, let us save four people. Many of us here on the Democratic side feel that to defend the current education system is indefensible, but you should save 10 children out of those 10 with a lifeboat, and not only four.

Mr. Speaker, I think that what we have here are two very different approaches to saving the public education system. One is the silver bullet that says vouchers will basically be a panacea, and the other is the golden rule; the silver bullet on that side versus the golden rule, which says let us help everybody. Let us not give up on one public child, one public school, whether it is in a rural or urban area. Let us fix them all.

Our plan, then, is this: It is public choice. It is fix all the public schools with the bill that the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS] and I have worked on, charter schools, where parents should be able to fix and work on and send their child to any public school they choose. It is discipline and safety in the schools. It is better student-teacher ratios. It is firing bad teachers that are not doing their jobs. It is putting schools on probation and shutting down poorly performing schools. That is the Chicago public reform model.

None of us, I hope on this side, are saying, "We're hopeful, we're helpful, we want the status quo." Let us fix all the schools and do it for every American child. Defeat the vouchers and let us move on to public choice in charter schools with the next vote.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. SCOTT].

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD a letter from the U.S. Catholic Conference which states that it is unable to support this proposed

legislation as currently drafted. That is because of many reasons, one of which is the "Not School Aid" provision in the new section 6405. They say that that section can readily be construed to negate the application of longstanding civil rights statutes which would normally apply to a scholarship program. Lacking independent antidiscrimination provisions elsewhere, that section effectively means that out of the myriad uses of title VI funds authorized, only the scholarship program authorized in this bill will be exempt from the civil rights statutes. Without clear confirmation that that section cannot be construed in this manner, it remains a serious concern.

Mr. Speaker, we are very interested in civil rights application, and as presently drafted this bill exempts the scholarships from application of Federal civil rights enforcement. For that reason alone, the bill ought to be defeated.

Mr. Speaker, the text of the letter referred to is as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,
Washington, DC, October 29, 1997.

Hon. FRANK RIGGS,

U.S. House of Representatives, Longworth House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN RIGGS: On behalf of the United States Catholic Conference, I would like to share some concerns we have with H.R. 2746 which place the USCC in the regrettable position of being unable to support this proposed legislation as it is currently drafted.

Allow me to state explicitly that the USCC has historically supported the right of all children to receive a quality education, be that in a public, private, or religious school. We recognize that the intent of your proposed legislation is to enable low income parents in areas of high poverty to send their children to the school they feel best serves their educational needs. We support the intention of H.R. 2746 in principle. However, we cannot support the proposition to fund this program through Title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act or a program that contains the possibility of negating the application of current civil rights statutes.

Of all federal programs requiring the participation of private and religious school students, Title VI is the most utilized by, and impacts most positively, private and religious school students. Title VI enables all schools, public, private and religious, to improve curricula, technology, literary programs, as well as obtain library and instructional materials. For over thirty years this program has had the highest participation level and the most equitable distribution of benefits for private and religious school students and teachers.

Noting that the Clinton Administration has repeatedly zero funded Title VI in its annual budget proposals, as well as the Administration's strong opposition to any form of parental choice legislation, the USCC believes any move to amend Title VI in this manner would jeopardize the entire Title VI program by subjecting it to a potential use of the line item veto. It is the USCC's position that Title VI funding is so fundamentally important to public, private, and religious schools and their students that it should in no way be placed in such a compromised position.

The definition of a "voluntary public and private parental choice program" in new sec-

tion 6003(3) of H.R. 2746 raises an additional concern. Participation of a single private school in a choice program would meet the requirements of the new scholarship program. Thus, it would be permissible for an LEA or an SEA to divert significant Title VI funds to public schools by designing an overwhelming public school choice program that includes only one token private school. Under the current statute, public and private school children share equitably in the benefits and services provided with Title VI funds. LEAs and SEAs should not be allowed to upset this longstanding balance under the pretext of a public and private parental choice program that in reality would essentially be a public school choice program. While the USCC is confident that this is not the Sponsors' intent, H.R. 2746 needs to be clarified to insure that the choice programs authorized include representative numbers of both public and private schools.

An additional reason why the USCC is unable to support H.R. 2746 is the "Not School Aid" provision in the new section 6405(a). Whatever its ramifications for defense against an Establishment Clause challenge, section 6405(a) can readily be construed to negate the application of longstanding civil rights statutes, in particular Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title X of the Education Amendments of 1972 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, that would normally apply to a scholarship program. Lacking independent antidiscrimination provisions elsewhere in H.R. 2746, section 6405(a) effectively means that out of the myriad of uses of Title VI funds authorized, only the scholarship program authorized by H.R. 2746 would be exempt from the civil rights statutes cited above. Without clear confirmation that section 6405(a) cannot be construed in this manner, it will remain a serious concern for the USCC. Contrary to what some may argue, we have been advised by counsel that applying the civil rights statutes to the attenuated indirect benefits that participating private schools may receive from enrolling scholarship students will not result in an Establishment Clause violation.

Again, the USCC expresses its support for the intent of the proposed legislation, but is unable to support H.R. 2746 due to the reasons outlined above.

Very Truly Yours,

Rev. Msgr. THOMAS J. MCDADE, EdD,

Secretary for Education.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. ROTHMAN].

Mr. ROTHMAN. Mr. Speaker, today unfortunately the radical Republicans in Congress are continuing their all-out attack on the public school system. They want it to wither on the vine, because just like with Medicare, the conservative extremists do not believe in public school education.

Public school education is the key that unlocks the door to the American dream for 90 percent of America's children, including my own two kids. We cannot allow these people in Congress to destroy America's public school system. Besides, what would be next? Are we going to give people vouchers to buy books if they do not believe in the public library? Are we going to give people vouchers to buy their own swing set if they feel that the local playground, local park, is inconvenient?

No, because we are still a country that believes in the collective good and the American dream. Let us fix our

public schools, let us encourage charter schools to create competition, but let us not pillage the public school system in America. That will not be good for America.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds to suggest to the gentleman who just read that prepared statement that he ought to listen to the poignant testimony of Devalon Shakespeare, who is the parent of a child who attends a parochial school in Cleveland under the Cleveland parental choice program, and who testified at our field hearing there. Here is Mr. Shakespeare's words. He happens to be an African-American:

"I'm not going to tear down the Cleveland Public School System," and we are not trying to do that on this side, but he went on to say, "I don't have time to wait for a school system to get themselves together. I'm trying to raise my children now."

Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the bipartisan efforts of the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. ROEMER] on the charter school bill, and I hope later tonight or tomorrow, whenever this week we vote on that legislation, a majority of his Democratic colleagues are going to support final passage of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. GILCHREST], a former public school teacher.

Mr. GILCHREST. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time. One of the previous speakers made mention that this legislation, and I support this legislation, was a radical idea. Let me just tell Members some of the radicals in this Nation's history. THOMAS Jefferson was a radical, and he broke with tradition. Martin Luther King, Jr., was a radical, and he broke with tradition. Those people from our past had dreams.

I am a proud product of the public school system. I graduated public school 33 years ago, and it was an integrated public school. I am a proud former public school teacher. The only way we are going to improve the quality of our schools is to break with tradition. The only way we are going to improve the quality of the public schools is to come up with ideas and find alternatives. This Nation is based on ideas. This Nation is based on dreams. This Nation is based on vision. This is a visionary piece of legislation. I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. DAVIS].

Mr. DAVIS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, one thing we can all agree upon here tonight is we have a fundamental obligation to confront the facts as we debate what is going to happen to children around the country in our public school system. I think it is clear the burden has not been met by those who are advocating the vouchers to prove that this will have a substantial impact that is positive to a substantial number of kids in our public school system.

It has been suggested our schools are broken. It is our fundamental obligation to fix those schools, working with the State, working with school boards, working with cities and counties to make those schools work. If we were to invest a fraction of the time and energy that has been devoted to these vouchers in trying to come through with positive reforms for our schools, we would have some positive impacts for all of our kids.

Let me give Members one specific example. Charter schools. Charter schools in my State, in Florida, are resulting in a serious reduction in the administrative costs in school systems. What the schools are doing is they are taking that money and they are putting it into class size. An average class size is 17 children in the charter schools that have been opened in many places in Florida. That gives a teacher more opportunity to provide attention to the gifted child, to the child with learning disabilities and to the average child. Equally importantly, it gives that teacher the opportunity to control unruly and disruptive kids in that class. That is positive reform. That is real reform. That is making a difference.

Public school choice, which we also adopted in Florida, is another meaningful way of empowering parents to choose the school of their choice for the child. We have also had success with magnet schools, both in Tampa, my home, and the State of Florida. These are proven, positive reforms at work. All we need to do is invest in making them happen. This is the way we impact our kids positively. Let us defeat vouchers and get on with some real business.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, after hearing the last gentleman's comments, I can tell he is very genuine and sincere, but I cannot understand why the National Education Association, the nationwide teachers union and the core constituency of the national Democratic Party opposes the Riggs-Roemer charter school bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from California [Mr. CUNNINGHAM].

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, I just want to address the gentleman from New Jersey saying that we had radical ideas. My wife is a public schoolteacher and a principal today. She has got a doctorate in education, a master's in business, and a master's in education. I was a teacher in the public education system. My children have gone to public schools.

The last thing we want to do is hurt public education. But when we look at the position we are in in many of our schools, we do not want to deny children to get the same education as anyone else does in an education system. It is not a radical idea, it is an idea for the time.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Tennessee [Mr. FORD].

Mr. FORD. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. CLAY] for yielding me this time.

It is so interesting to hear my colleagues on the opposite side of the aisle quote African American parents and their desire to have vouchers. I think that it suggests a few things. I would hope that the Republican Party and my leaders on the other side of the aisle would listen to African American families more often as they debate health care and debate education and debate ways to balance our budget in humane and compassionate ways.

But if we want to talk about African-American kids, I think it is somewhat unfortunate, because this is, indeed, an American issue. America's single greatest threat in tomorrow's marketplace is an uneducated work force. I would caution the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS] and all of his colleagues as they travel down that treacherous path.

I have been to a school in my district this last few days, Mr. Speaker, called Mitchell High School, where all of my aunts and uncles graduated from. They are the recipient of a corporate grant from the Pfizer Corp., which allows them to engage in an environmental study program at the school. All of the kids in the class came into the school yesterday, although school was out, to allow parents and teachers to engage in parent-teacher conferences. The kids all said the reason that they enjoy this class, Mr. Speaker, is because it is interesting, it is challenging, it is stimulating. No one talked about vouchers, no one talked about public schools, no one talked about choice.

If we are so concerned in this body about children and African American children, Latino children and inner-city children, let us listen to what the young people are saying. They want to be challenged and stimulated in the classroom. There is no guarantee that vouchers will do it or charter schools will do it, although I am a supporter of charter schools. But one thing is for certain. The plan that the gentleman has put forward will only impact a minute, finite number of kids in our school system and say they are helped. What do we do with the remaining 52.3 million kids in our school system, Mr. Speaker?

Mayor Daley in Chicago has shown us that the public school model can, indeed, work. Chicago is faced with every conceivable ill in the public system, yet Mayor Daley has tackled it, embraced it and moved forward.

I would say to my friends on the other side, defeat this bill, do what is right for kids. Let us challenge, stimulate them and empower them.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE].

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleagues on the other side, particularly the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. GILCHREST] when he talked about innovation. We are all for

innovation. I think the Democrats have clearly shown that we would like to see innovative programs in the public schools. But what we are saying is that that innovation should not be through private education, it should be through public education.

We went down a couple of weeks ago when the Republicans brought up the school vouchers bill in the D.C. schools to the Brent School, I think it was, just a couple of blocks from the Capitol. What we saw was a very innovative program in the public school, a public school that was doing great with tutoring programs, with some innovative programs in various ways.

In my home State of New Jersey through Goals 2000, I can give Members a whole list of innovations that are being accomplished in the public schools in New Jersey. That is a great thing. Innovation should be done, but it should be done in the public schools.

□ 1915

Do not give up on the public schools. And I am afraid that is what my colleagues are doing. They are saying that they want to help the public schools, but this is just taking resources, scarce resources, away from the public schools.

This money today comes from an innovative approach in the classroom fund in title VI block grants which are used for innovations in the public schools. If they keep draining away the resources from the public schools to use them for a voucher program, there is not going to be anything left for innovative programs in the public schools.

The Republican leadership has been steadfastly against public education. They wanted to abolish the Department of Education. They have repeatedly slashed funding for public education in various Congresses, going way back.

So do not tell me that what we hear about today is trying to help the public schools through some sort of competition. That is not true. If my colleagues want to help the public schools, then put the money where their mouth is; put it in public education, do not take it away from title VI programs.

And that is what I see happening here over and over again in this Congress, started with D.C., where they have some of the most serious problems in terms of need for renovation and repairs and could use that money to fix up the schools, and now trying to expand this terrible voucher program nationwide.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 15 seconds to point out I am glad the gentleman mentioned D.C. public schools since he opposed and voted against opportunity scholarships for 2,000 District of Columbia parents and families even though that school district spends \$10,000 per child and has the worst test scores and lowest graduation rates of any inner city school district in the country.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from New York [Mr. FLAKE], a colleague who will soon be retiring from the House of Representatives, who has been a brave, courageous, lonely voice at times on the other side of the aisle and the Democrat cosponsor of this legislation.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, I stand in support of this bill as sponsor of the bill, and I realize that over the last few weeks I have been called everything from an enemy of the people to whatever can be imagined. But I do not have a problem with that, I do not have a problem with that, because I stand on my credentials.

I started my career in Head Start. I saw young people that we were able to get to second grade level. We tested them at second grade, tested the same young people at second grade after they had been in public school for 2 years. They were still at second grade level in most categories.

And I also represent I am a person who built a school almost 20 years ago. That school does produce young people at \$3,200 per child versus \$10,000 per child in the same district we do not test kids in. Those kids are educated; they are able to pass the national tests; they are able to function in an environment that is competitive.

I also served as dean of students at Boston University and as associate dean of students at Lincoln before that, and for those who say I cannot reason, I have an earned doctorate, not an honorary but an earned doctorate. So I do not think I am in a position not to be able to reason.

I just think that this issue transcends party, this issue transcends race. It deals with a simple question of educating our young people. All of our young people are not being educated. There is an upper tier and a lower tier. The lower tier is represented by many of the schools in the district that I represent, and on that lower tier I will tell my colleagues that these young people are not being prepared so that they can compete in the society in which we live.

We must do everything we can to assure that the public school system that we speak about is one that does not discriminate. We talk about discrimination provisions and civil rights provisions. I agree wholeheartedly that that is an appropriate discussion. But the reality is, discrimination is practiced every day in the system when young people in districts like the one I represent cannot go to the school, the better schools, when the young people in my district cannot go even to the better schools in the district because certain of those districts have limited the number of seats that are available for those young people to participate. They will take the cream of the crop; they leave the worst behind. They leave them in situations where they are not being properly educated. That, my brothers and sisters, is discrimination.

I think the system must benefit every child and must benefit them equally. The school system is not doing that. There are too many children who are stuck, there are too many children who have lost their dreams, have lost their hope of ever being able to be competitive in the society in which we live.

And there comes a point in time, and I saw it as I was in charge of the admissions program in both universities, when those young people have to compete with other persons, whether it is the ACT exam, the SAT, or whether they try to go to graduate school and get MCAT's and LSAT's and GMAT's. They are not competitive. We have an obligation to make them competitive in this society. If we are not doing that, we are not being fair to them. We must challenge them, and we must challenge the system.

I will vote for charter schools because I believe that we have to have all of the alternatives that we possibly can, but I also think that scholarships must be considered. I sit on the scholarship committee in New York. We put our 27,000 applications; 1,000 of those applications are all we could afford. Those were moneys that came from the outside. The persons I sit with on that committee represent some of the persons in this country who make the highest salaries, but they will not put those moneys in the public system.

I would say to my colleagues, those persons who pay their taxes every day deserve to have their children educated, and they deserve to have them educated without having a double tax because they turn right around and have to pay for private education.

My brothers and sisters, I will yield when I finish, when I get closer to the finish. My brother who is standing now says that we have not had groups, we have not had focus groups. Well, let me tell my colleagues, I was with 400 people and parents on Saturday at the Tucson Institute. Every one of those parents were there for one reason: Their children are not being properly educated.

I meet with an education focus group. Those people are generally teachers in the public system. They say, we have got to do something; we cannot do the job that we have been hired to do because of the bureaucracy in this system; we cannot do it because other people in the unions are jealous of us and will not let us do the jobs.

I say to my colleagues, let us try something. I cannot afford to see many more children die from this genocide.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield the gentleman from New York [Mr. FLAKE] an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, we must accept the fact that there is a lower tier in the system, and in that lower tier, genocide is being practiced every day, and when they cannot manage these children, they put them in special ed. It is the first track toward incarceration, and we wind up spending money for those children later on.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. FLAKE. I yield to the gentleman from New York.

Mr. OWENS. How long is the waiting list at your excellent school?

Mr. FLAKE. My waiting list is 150 students. That is why we have to create as many slots as we can. And I take back the balance of my time.

Mr. OWENS. How many can you accept?

Mr. FLAKE. I cannot accept them because this program is for a different income class, but I will build another school.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California [Mr. FAZIO].

Mr. FAZIO of California. Mr. Speaker, another day, another attempt to siphon resources away from our public schools. That is what is really before us today, a proposal that will take tax dollars and use them to subsidize private schools.

See, it seems the Republican Party has given up on public schools. Instead of trying to make them better for every child, it wants them to die on the vine by starving them of the resources they need. The bill before us takes money that is targeted to helping public schools and, as the gentlewoman from New Jersey [Mrs. ROUKEMA], a Republican, has said, creates a new educational entitlement for private schools. It is legislation driven by politics, not policy. It is a bill that has no hearing but a well orchestrated press conference behind it.

America's children deserve better than to be part of a poll-driven political strategy, which is just what this is. The answer to the woes in our Nation's schools that we have heard from the majority does not mean giving up on our neighborhood classrooms. The answer is a national commitment to fixing our schools so that every American child can live up to their God given potential.

In a northern rural part of my district, for example, Tehama County, California's Department of Education has just released this year's test scores. Second grade reading scores are up 29 percent over last year; third grade reading scores soared 24 percent.

So how did this school turn things around so that every child in this public school received a first-class education? Let me tell my colleagues. It slashed class sizes from 33 to 20 students, it trained teachers to do their job better through professional development classes, it made sure that teachers and their students committed 3 hours every day to literacy, and it made sure that every classroom was wired to the information highway.

When we make the commitment to public schools, they work. When parents and teachers and students and communities demand accountability from public schools, they work. So why is it that the Republicans want to pluck a select few out of the public

schools while taking resources away from the rest? Why do they want to destroy schools that are accountable to parents and the community and give our tax money to private schools that put their bottom line ahead of the common good? Why is it that the very same people lecturing us here tonight about how public schools are failing are the very same Members who will not support the President's proposal to devote more of our resources to teach children how to read?

If schools are failing, the solution is not to give vouchers to a handful of children and leave the rest behind. The solution is fixing the problem, fixing the whole school, not providing a hand-out and taxpayer subsidies to private schools.

The choice tonight is clear. We ought to support choice in the public schools, not aiding private schools through vouchers. As a parent whose four children have gone to public schools, and they have never been, I might add, in the racial majority in any of them, I reject this effort to placate the political right.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 10 seconds to point out that under our bill the money goes to parents, and, unfortunately, there are those on the other side of the aisle, such as the gentleman who just spoke, who is perfectly prepared to tell those parents, the poorest of the poor, whose children attend unsafe or underperforming schools that there is no hope for them and for their children.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 15 seconds to the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. TALENT].

Mr. TALENT. Mr. Speaker, the bill will increase the amount of money that goes to the public schools because they are going to be able to keep more of the title VI money. It then lets them have the discretion to use that for these scholarships if they want. So it is going to mean more money for the public schools and more options for them and I think, and I hope, work out for more options for low income Americans.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, just a parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCCOLLUM). The gentleman will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. RIGGS. At this point in time we have two speakers remaining, the majority leader of the House of Representatives and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and it is our intent that if the minority agrees that at this point the majority leader would speak, then there would be one more speaker on their side to close debate on their side, and then we would go to the Speaker of the House to close the entire debate.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman is correct.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the Majority Leader of the House of Representatives, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. ARMEY].

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, let me say at the outset that this legislation that we are debating today has practically no relevance whatsoever to the people who live in the 26th District of Texas, does not impact on their lives, does not mean a thing in their lives. People in my district, in the suburbs of Dallas, are relatively well off. They made their school choice when they took their incomes from their relatively good paying jobs and moved into the neighborhoods where the schools were sound, safe, and of service to their children. They are not interested in this subject, not the least bit. Many of them take their incomes and take their child, while they pay their local taxes to support the public schools, take their child to another school.

I myself took my own son out of the public school in the district in which I paid my taxes and to another public school down the road that had a better music program, and I myself was able to pay for the tuition costs. It is good fortune for my son.

And in this current law, these same schools that are so well off on their own basis received title VI moneys which they can use now for technology curricula or other instructional materials, library materials, assessments, magnet schools, literacy programs, gifted and talented programs, dropout assistance, and other reform activities.

□ 1930

What we are thinking about here is those schools that are quite frankly in the minority among all the schools in America but, strategically relevant to the lives of the children in their communities, simply are failing the children, children whose parents are not well off like the parents in my district, children whose parents are not able to move to a better school district. They are not able to make all of the conventional, quiet, silent school choice decisions that many Americans make, but they find that it is imperative that their child get an education, perhaps even more so than the children that live in my district. They know acutely in their mind that the only hope for their child is to get an education that works in that child's life.

They do not care about theories. They do not care about dogma, they do not care about politics. They care about their child. And we are saying, let us extend the things under which title VI monies might be used by the State, might be used by the State, to construct on behalf of those parents and those children the option to take that child that has now and next year to get through the third and the fourth grades and to do so successfully, so that they can be prepared to go on, and take them out of that school that today is failing that child and put them in that school in which their child can succeed, even though they do not have the independent means to do it themselves, to add another option for the parent on behalf of the child.

I cannot imagine anybody that would look to those parents who so desperately want this opportunity for this child now and say, mom, dad, why do we not wait until we repair this school that is failing this child now, in total disregard to their fear that this child will have lost this year, for this third grade, while they were waiting for help to arrive, that hopefully will arrive.

This is not an expression of lack of appreciation for public education. It is an expression of love for children who are caught in circumstances beyond their parents' control where their only current option is a school that is a proven failure, and a willingness to say to the States, if you have the heart for these children and these parents, you may use these funds to give those parents who cannot otherwise afford it a chance to do for their child what wealthy parents in my district do every day of their life.

I do not understand anybody who can find that objectionable. A child is not precious because he lives in my district. A child is not precious because his folks can afford to pay taxes for good schools that really shine. A child is not precious because his mom and dad can afford Sidwell Friends. A child is precious because a child is precious, and every child deserves whatever help this Congress can find in their heart to do. That is really what it is all about. Is it about heart, or is it indeed about politics?

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 10 seconds to the gentleman from New York [Mr. OWENS].

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to ask the honorable majority leader if he could explain the fact that the State of Texas actually introduced vouchers in the legislature. They actually had a floor vote in Texas and it failed in the State legislature; it was not passed in the State legislature of Texas.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield the balance of my time to the distinguished minority leader, the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. GEPHARDT].

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCCOLLUM). The gentleman from Missouri [Mr. GEPHARDT] is recognized for 4¼ minutes.

(Mr. GEPHARDT asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GEPHARDT. Mr. Speaker and Members of the House, I urge a "no" vote on vouchers and a "yes" vote for public schools. I want to say that I think everybody here tonight is well-meaning and everybody here I would submit cares about what happens to our children, but I believe that we have to enter into a new discussion. Part of that will happen with the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. ROEMER] on charter schools.

There are other ideas that we are wanting to talk about: Early childhood development, Basics by Six, well-trained teachers and equipped classrooms, relief for crumbling and over-

crowded schools, support for local plans to review neighborhood public schools, efficient and coordinated use of resources, parental choice for public schools. This is an agenda that begins to start a national conversation about how we improve our public schools.

I had a meeting this morning in my district with the superintendents of all of the school districts in my district, the City of St. Louis, many of the county districts in St. Louis, Jefferson County, and I asked them about this agenda, and I asked them about what we ought to be talking about. Incidentally, most of those school districts, in fact all of them, get very good outcomes. That does not mean it is uniform. That does not mean that every kid is getting a good education. It does not mean every child is graduating, but they are getting some pretty darn good outcomes.

We never talk much about that; we never congratulate the people in the public schools that are doing a good job and getting a good result, which is the vast majority of our public schools. We act sometimes as if all the schools are bad and all the kids are not getting an education. Not true.

Mr. Speaker, when I asked my superintendents what they thought we ought to be talking about today instead of vouchers, they talked about repairing crumbling schools. One superintendent said, yes, you want to talk about computers? I cannot get an electric line from the electric pole outside my school to support computers. And then once, if I got the electricity and got the computers and got the software and trained the teachers, who would pay the connection charges to the Internet?

They talked about early childhood education. Every kindergarten in Missouri does not have kids go all day at age 5. They said the best thing you could do would be to have the kids come all day at age 5 into kindergarten so we could get a good start. That would probably be more important than many of the other ideas put together. There is a long list of things that we ought to be talking about our public schools.

Let me say to my colleagues, I think the organizing principle of this society should be making sure that every child is a productive citizen. After World War II we knew what the organizing principle in our society was. It was to make sure that we deterred nuclear war and we kept the Russians from invading us, and fighting communism, and everybody knew their role in that great mission that we won when the wall came down. But since then, we do not know what our organizing principle is. And the truth is, it is not just money; it is everybody's commitment to this task of making sure every child gets a chance at a good education.

I was in a school in my district last week, Shepard's School in the City of St. Louis, and they had all the mothers there. The principal goes out and sees

parents who will not come in and work in the school and the one mother got up and she said, I work at night, but I am here every day from 7:30 in the morning until 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and I am here to do whatever the principal and the teachers want me to do. I said, why do you do this? She said, I have 2 kids in this school and I want them to have a good education and I want them to go to college. But then she said, but understand, every kid in this school is my child.

That is the attitude that we have to have on the part of every American in this country. Every child is my child. Even if I do not have a child in the school, I want to be in the school, because we must raise these children to be productive citizens. We must not siphon off the dollars that are so desperately needed by our public schools to go to private schools. We have to make sure that they go to the children that are wanting and demanding an opportunity to succeed.

Let us make that the organizing principle of this society. Let us stop this discussion of vouchers and let us get on to the discussion, the unfinished agenda of this country, to make the public schools in this country better. We can do it, and we are going to do it starting tonight.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, by his comments I guess the minority leader is suggesting that he will help us get a majority of Democratic votes for our charter school bill later tonight or later this week.

Mr. Speaker, at this point in time I am very proud to yield, for the purposes of closing the debate on the HELP scholarships bill, to the Speaker of the House, to the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. GINGRICH].

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Georgia [Mr. GINGRICH] is recognized for 2¼ minutes.

Mr. GINGRICH. I think it should be very clear to everyone who actually pays attention to this amendment that it is about educating our children. It is about educating children in schools where they are currently failing.

Let me give my colleagues the numbers for Washington, DC. If you are in the third grade in Washington, in mathematics, 37 percent of the students perform below grade level. But if you stay in those schools, by the time you are in sixth grade, 55 percent of the students perform below grade level. If you stay in those schools, by the time you are in the eighth grade, 72 percent of the students perform below grade level. If you stay in the schools, by the time you are in the tenth grade, 89 percent of the children in Washington are performing below the grade level.

Now, I do not think that is because children in Washington are peculiarly stupid. I think that is because they are trapped in a system which serves the union, serves the bureaucracy, serves the politicians, but fails to serve the children.

My good friend from Missouri made a great appeal. I want these children, the

89 percent who are scoring below grade level, to have a chance to have a decent life. I want them to have a choice to go to college and not to prison. And I know that after all of the years of trying, that all the speeches on this floor is not going to save a single child by keeping them trapped in a room that fails.

Now, recently, two very successful Americans announced that they would establish 1,000 scholarships, funded with private money, and in 10 days time they received 2,000 applications, 2,000 from parents who love their children and want them to avoid prison by having a chance to go to a school with discipline and having a chance to get an education, in 10 days time.

Now, what does this amendment say? It says that if your State legislature, your State legislature, wants to give children in your State a choice, to give the parents a choice; this is this great, radical, new, terrible thing. That is all it says, is that your State legislature can use some of that title VI money to give the children of your State a choice if they have concluded that theirs is a school district so bad, a school system so terrible that those children currently are being destroyed.

What do our friends over here on the left say? Do not even trust the State legislature to try to create an opportunity for those children to escape the union and escape the bureaucracy and escape the failure. Now, really, is it not sort of frightening to think that we have to trap the children?

I will just close with this observation. I am a graduate of public schools and I taught in a public high school. My wife is a graduate of public schools, both of my daughters are graduates of public schools, we believe in public schools, and in my district, middle class people have a choice because they move into our counties to go to school, and the rich have a choice because they send their kids to private school.

The only people in America without a choice are the poorest children in the poorest neighborhoods who are trapped by the bureaucracies and the unions and exploited against their will. Let us give those children a chance to go to college and not go to jail. Let us vote yes on this amendment.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, weeks ago, a vicious assault was made against Washington, D.C. public schools by offering vouchers as a cure-all solution; today, another assault is being directed against American public education. This proposed \$310 million funding is not an investment with an anticipated return for better education in America; this funding is merely a political ploy. I oppose political motives at the risk of poor and disenfranchised children in America. I oppose this assault on public education.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of the Brown versus Board decision, announced in 1954, our nation began to address the issue of unequal education systems in the United States.

Today, a different phenomenon catches our attention. We witness a continued disparity within our education infrastructure among the

rich and poor children of our society. The rich continue to gain access through the door of opportunity, while the poor are simultaneously condemned to the locked room of despair.

Mr. Speaker, the advocates of this bill say that it would correct the problem of continued disparity in our impoverished and disadvantaged communities.

Mr. Speaker, few students will actually benefit from this scholarship program relative to the entire group of impoverished students in America. Many students currently enrolled in public school will be left behind in inferior and unequal education institutions. Finally, many families, to whom vouchers would be given, would not have the necessary income to defray the residual costs of additional tuition for private schools. It is emphatically clear that the most needy families in America will not benefit from this voucher initiative.

Mr. Speaker, the day Congress appropriates for school vouchers is the day Congress abdicates from the long-lived and enduring concept of quality public education in America.

Mr. Speaker, I support the continued development and success of public education in America. Voucher programs are impractical, and do not allow us to address the real concerns of American public education. I urge my colleagues on both sides to consider the full effects of this bill, and vote against this legislation.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to this legislation. The so-called "HELP" Scholarships would gut our public school system and provide no help at all to the children who need it the most.

It's not surprising that a party with a member who painted public education as a "communist legacy" continues to try to dismantle our nation's tradition of public schools. Time and time again Republicans have tried to push through their anti-education agenda, only to be pushed back by Democrats and a President who has vowed to veto these bills which would destroy our public schools.

A few weeks ago, Republicans passed with a one vote margin a measure to impose vouchers on the D.C. school system. Today they are trying to impose the same experiment on all of our nation's children.

90 percent of America's children depend on public schools to provide them with the skills they need to excel in the future. But the Gingrich voucher experiment will not help these students get a better start in life. Instead, the Gingrich voucher experiment will siphon funds out of the public school system and give them to private schools. Public schools will be left without the resources they desperately need to buy books, fix leaky roofs, and put computers in the classroom.

This is unacceptable. Our nation was founded on the principle that everyone would have an equal opportunity to succeed. Public schools bring together students of all races, creeds and economic classes to learn together. Each student comes in at equal footing, and everyone gets the same opportunities. That is the formula that works.

No one is arguing that public schools don't need improvement. So let's rise to that challenge and give them the means to improve. Let's not set our public schools up for failure by denying them the assistance to make changes and improve their students' performance.

Don't abandon the public school system. Give our children help they can use—invest in

our public schools, and oppose the Gingrich voucher experiment.

Mr. CALVERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in favor of H.R. 2746, the HELP Scholarships Act. The title of this legislation is very appropriate—HELP Empower Low-Income Parents—because H.R. 2746 gives parents greater choices to provide their children with a better education. One of the most contentious battles looming before us today is the battle to save our children by improving education. But now is the time to stop talking about saving schools and start talking about saving students. We must put partisan politics aside and debate the merits of legislation based on what is best for our children, not what is best for the education bureaucracy.

Every child is unique and has different needs from the education system. Public schools may not be the answer for everyone, yet lower income families have no other choice. The system is clearly failing these students when you hear statistics like 40 percent of all 10 year olds can't meet basic literacy standards, U.S. eighth-graders placed 28th in the world in math and science skills, and almost a third of today's college freshman require some remedial instruction.

This bill helps the poorest of our nation and gives their children a chance that they never had to get a quality education. In some cases, that will mean staying in a public school or going to a nearby magnet school. In others, it will mean attending a private or parochial school. But who do we think we are to stand in this chamber and dictate where every child must attend school? We are elected to represent those families, not to dictate their lives. The parents should be the ones to decide which school is right for their child. By means testing this program, as the legislation mandates, it will guarantee that only the lowest income families will be eligible to receive scholarships for their children. No one can claim that this bill is just another way to subsidize middle class parents sending their children to private schools. Scholarships would only go to students whose families are at or below 185 percent of the poverty rate to cover the cost of tuition at any private, public or religious school located in the impoverished neighborhood.

This bill is about helping parents help their children. I want the parents and children in my district to have access to the best education possible. As a lawmaker, I owe it to future generations. I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 2746.

Mr. FAWELL. Mr. Speaker, I do, indeed, have some troubling thoughts about this bill—H.R. 2746, the HELP Scholarship Act—though obviously well intentioned.

The bill is presented as "Parental Choice," but that choice is obviously conditioned upon the right of private schools to "pick and choose" which students will be accepted apparently on almost any condition—i.e., religion, creed, foreign birth, gender, academic standing, or mental or physical handicap. All in all, there doesn't appear to be as much choice for parents here as there is for the private school.

It is held out as "competition for the public schools". It surely is that, but it isn't "fair" competition, that is, there is no "level playing field". Public schools must accept every child who appears at its doors—regardless of race, religion, creed, foreign birth, academic standing, or mental or physical handicaps. When

we compare public and private schools, after all, we are comparing good apples and good oranges. They do not compete on the same playing field in elementary and secondary education.

I wonder too—as bad as things are in many low income area public schools—what happens to the kids who can't get into a private school and are left behind? There's bound to be a loss of public funds for them, less Ch. VI funds, less state aid which is usually measured on the basis of student population.

I'm also concerned that we didn't have a markup on this bill so we could have aired our feelings and better understood the precedent we are establishing.

I think too that Charter schools are a better vehicle to help kids in low income areas.

I wonder too about the provision in this bill which provides that states "may allow State and local [tax] funds to be used for the voluntary public and private parental choice program."

These concerns will cause me to vote against this bill in spite of the good intentions of the sponsor.

I think it is a troublesome precedent.

Mr. STOKES. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 2746, the "HELP Scholarship Act." This measure amends the \$310 million education block grant, title IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It is another attempt, by the Republican majority, to drain critical financial resources from our Nation's public schools and to put them in the hands of a select few students attending private and religious schools. These resources are needed to raise academic standards and achievements in schools that are increasingly overburdened with complex financial problems.

I am particularly concerned about the manner in which this bill has been rushed to the House floor. When supporters of H.R. 2746 realized that they did not have enough votes to report the bill out of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce last Friday, the full committee markup was canceled. Yet, late Wednesday night, the Rules Committee decided that H.R. 2746 would be considered under a closed rule, so that Members would not have an opportunity to offer amendments. The fact that this measure did not have full support from all of the Republicans on the House Committee on Education and the Workforce is a clear indication that H.R. 2746 is bad news for our Nation's students and public schools.

Mr. Speaker, supporters of school vouchers say that vouchers will foster improvements in the Nation's public schools by creating competition. However, as I mentioned earlier, school vouchers will drain scarce funds away from public schools, hurting the majority of students who will not have the opportunity to attend private and religious schools. Supporters of school vouchers say that vouchers will enable parents to send their children to any school that they choose. However, that is an illusion. Real choice remains in the hands of private school admissions officers.

Supporters of school vouchers also say that these programs raise student achievement. However, the most extensive research on the impact of existing school voucher programs does not show any clear, positive benefit. School vouchers programs are not powerful enough to impact the Nation's public schools

in the way that supporters would like to believe.

The school voucher program in my own congressional district of Cleveland, OH, cost \$6.4 million in 1996, including \$5.25 million that had previously supported the Cleveland public school system's disadvantaged pupil aid program. And, while the program has only been in effect since September 1996, current evidence indicates that it has only had a marginal impact of the educational options available to public school families.

I strongly believe that we are morally obligated to ensure that all students across the Nation have equal access to quality education. We must not abandon our public schools. Instead, we must strengthen our commitment to improve them, doing all that we can to strengthen and reform them, not weaken them.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly oppose—and urge my colleagues to join me in opposing—H.R. 2746. This bill is bad public policy. Education reform can only succeed if all students benefit. There are nearly 46 million public school students in the United States and, it is estimated that by the year 2006, there will be 3 million more. School vouchers will only reach a limited number of students. We must support educational policies that will benefit all children. I urge my colleagues to vote "no" on the HELP Scholarship Act.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in adamant opposition to the "Help Empower Low-income Parents Scholarship Bill." Do not be moved by supporters of this bill who claim that by opposing this legislation you are supporting schools that fail to serve children well. Let me make it clear that I certainly do not support schools that are not able to perform the basic task of teaching children how to read and write. However, I will not give up on the public education system of this country. I will not give up on this system because it has served as the great equalizer for people of this nation. The civil rights movement was based on the notion that if all people are able to have the opportunity to receive a quality education then we truly will make real steps toward equality. By supporting schools that are designed to serve all children we uphold this vision. Giving up on our school system and this notion of educational equality is exactly what this bill will accomplish. It will put federal funds not in the hands of low income parents but in the pockets of religious and private schools that will crop up simply to capitalize on this voucher program. It will do nothing to better the situation education is in today, but perpetuate it and make it far worse. Republicans claim this bill will empower low-income families. However, if they really cared about low-income children, a disproportionate number of whom are minorities, they would have included language that would protect civil rights and guarantee equal educational opportunities for all students. This bill blatantly lacks such language. Instead, this bill contains only watered down anti-discrimination requirements for participating schools. This is a clear indication that Republicans have motives not to improve education but to funnel federal money to private schools and out of public control. Let me make it clear that I do believe that our schools need to be reformed. However, I strongly believe that if there is a problem with something you work hard to correct it. You make an investment and a commitment both financially

and philosophically to change and reform that problem. This is a commitment and investment that the majority party of this Congress has not made. They have not supported legislation to invest in school buildings so that children are not exposed to leaking roofs and peeling paint. In the 104th Congress they attacked the school lunch program that keeps children well fed and their minds ready for learning. They cut education programs when they first took control over this body and only backed down when they heard an outcry of opposition from parents and voters. To make matters worse, they have paid little attention to the positive things going on in public schools across this country. In my district, the Harriet Tubman School in Newark is a perfect example of how our teachers, parents and students are turning things around. I refuse to give up on schools such as Harriet Tubman and implore my colleagues to not give up on similar schools in their district for vouchers that will tear down the notion of educational equality in this country. We must oppose this bill for the future of education in America.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

The bill is considered as having been read for amendment.

Pursuant to House Resolution 288, the previous question is ordered.

The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

MOTION TO RECOMMIT OFFERED BY MR. ETHERIDGE

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I offer a motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentleman opposed to the bill?

Mr. ETHERIDGE. I am opposed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion to recommit.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. ETHERIDGE moves to recommit the bill to the Committee on Education and the Workforce with instructions to hold a full, open, and fair hearing and markup on the bill before reporting it to the full House for consideration.

□ 1945

The SPEAKER pro tempore [Mr. McCOLLUM]. The gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. ETHERIDGE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Is there a Member who claims opposition to the motion to recommit?

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I claim the time in opposition.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS] will be recognized for 5 minutes in opposition to the motion to recommit.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. ETHERIDGE].

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight as a dedicated education supporter and reformer to send this anti-public school bill back to committee. There is a right way and a wrong way to reform education in this country. It is absolutely wrong for the House to pass this voucher bill that sells out our children, our teachers, our public

schools, and the American taxpayer. Let me make it perfectly clear, it is wrong to take the taxpayers' money to subsidize private schools.

Mr. Speaker, prior to my election to the people's House, I served two 4-year terms as the elected State superintendent of the schools in my State. As school chief, I fought to improve, strengthen, and reform public schools so that every child would have the opportunity to live up to his or her God-given ability. I am tremendously proud of the record of accomplishment of the students, teachers, parents, and the entire community as they achieved improved performance in education.

Earlier this year, the respected NAEP came out, the National Assessment of Education Progress, and documented their successes. North Carolina's eighth-graders gained 18 points over the last 6 years on NAEP. That is more than twice the national average. Our fourth-graders gained almost three times the national average. North Carolina students have improved the equivalent of one full grade level during the decade. In other words, eighth-graders this year were one full year ahead of eighth-graders in 1990. That is the kind of improved public schools that the American people are demanding.

Mr. Speaker, I have been honored to have the opportunity to cochair the Democratic Caucus' Educational Task Force to develop a consensus for first class public schools. That proposal includes early childhood development for every child so that they will come to the public schools ready to learn; to recruit and train well-qualified teachers; to relieve our schools, which are crumbling and overcrowded, so children will have places to learn; ensure our public schools are safe and drug-free; and empower parents to choose the very best public schools for their children.

This agenda will work to improve public education for all children. Unfortunately, the bill before us tonight takes a headlong rush in the opposite direction. Instead of strengthening public schools, this bill represents a wholesale retreat from our national commitment to quality public schools.

This bill is a shameful act of cowardice. We must not turn our backs on the schoolchildren of America. Taking taxpayers' money to fund private schools is wrong. This bill is bad education policy. It is not even about education, this bill is about politics. This bill is about a cynical political agenda of some of the most extreme groups in this country. This bill is about dressing up an ideological agenda in a package of sound bites. This bill is about robbing our schools of precious resources needed to provide for quality education for all of our children.

Mr. Speaker, the legacy of this revolutionary majority in Congress has been one attack after another on our public schools. The previous Congress tried to abolish the Education Department, slash school lunches, and elimi-

nate school loans. A few weeks ago a Member in the majority party even compared our public schools to the Communist legacy.

Mr. Speaker, I sought this office because I could not stand by and watch this Congress of the United States continue to launch attack after attack on our public schools. This bill is nothing but an ultimate attempt to scapegoat our schools, our teachers, our students, and our parents, and yes, their communities. Putting taxpayers' money in private schools is wrong.

I believe the American people want basic things: a strong national defense to keep our Nation free; safe streets and communities in which to live, work, and raise a family; an educated work force to keep us strong in an increasingly competitive global economy; and a public education system that provides each and every child the opportunity to make the most of his or her God-given ability. We must work to strengthen public school, not turn our backs on the public schools.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote to recommit this bill, this underhanded attack on our public schools.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the gentleman who just spoke that we have held field hearings in Milwaukee and Cleveland and in New York City with virtually little, if any, participation by Democratic Members of this House. I suspect one reason those hearings were boycotted is because Democratic Members did not want to hear the overwhelming support from parents in those communities for expanded parental choice, such as the HELP Scholarship bill would permit. We have had hearings here in Washington as well, and we have had field hearings in San Fernando, CA, and in Phoenix on expanded public school choice through charter schools.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. TALENT].

Mr. TALENT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

I thank very much the experience shared by my colleague who just spoke. I would say to the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. ETHERIDGE], if North Carolina or any State does not want to use these opportunity scholarships, there is a simple answer. They do not have to under this bill. It is up to them.

I want to read a quote from Jonathan Rauch, who was writing in the November 10th New Republic. I think it is applicable to the debate today.

"It's hard to get excited about improving rich suburban high schools that act as feeders for Ivy League colleges. However, for poor children trapped in execrable schools, the case is moral rather than merely educational. These kids attend schools which cannot protect their physical safety, much less teach them. To re-

quire poor people to go to dangerous, dysfunctional schools that better-off people fled years ago, and that better-off people would never tolerate for their own children—all the while intoning pieties about 'saving' public education—is worse than unsound public policy. It is repugnant public policy."

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. GINGRICH], the Speaker of the House.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Georgia [Mr. GINGRICH] is recognized for 3 minutes.

Mr. GINGRICH. Mr. Speaker, I want to take head on this question about public schools, because I represent a district which is very lucky.

Cobb County Public Schools are very, very good. There is a recent report out on the best high schools in Georgia, and two-thirds of them are in my district. They are in North Fulton, a fabulous area, growing rapidly. They are in Gwinnett County, a tremendous county, growing rapidly. They are in Cherokee County, one of the fastest growing counties in the State of Georgia.

When people of good income come to Georgia, and they move in looking for a job, and they look around, again and again they will say to the real estate agent, now, what counties have a good school? Where can I go to get a good school? And they will move into a good public school area.

I think that is wonderful. We are very lucky, and both of my daughters had a chance to go to the Carrollton Public Schools in Carrollton, Georgia, and they were terrific public schools. That is wonderful. This bill does not do a single thing to weaken those public schools. This bill does not take a penny away from those public schools.

If Members do not want to send their children to public school, and they are rich, they can just send them to private school. Maybe it is a nearby private school, maybe it is a distant private school, maybe it is a boarding school. They should take care of their kids.

That is not what this amendment is about. This amendment is not about people who can move into Cobb County and buy a nice, fancy house, or move into North Fulton or move into Gwinnett or move into Cherokee. Those folks are going to schools that are terrific. They are going to keep their kids in public school. This bill is about the child who is trapped in New York City or Philadelphia or Atlanta, the child who is trapped in Washington, D.C.

I read the numbers. After all the talk about reform and all the talk about help, how can Members of this House in good conscience trap a child in a school where, when you have been there in the tenth grade, 89 percent of the children score below the grade level? How can Members live with their consciences, saying, oh, if you are well enough off, move out to Virginia or move out to Maryland? If you are rich enough, send

your kids to a private, elite school, like many powerful politicians do? But now if you are poor and you are in public housing, and you have no money, and you are trapped in a school where you know that, literally, the longer your child stays in that school, the more likely they are to score below grade level, now, oh, we in the Congress are not going to take care of those kids.

I do not understand it. I do not understand how Members can walk off and leave a generation of children behind and offer them no hope.

Let me remind Members, what this amendment does is simple. It says that the State legislature has the option, it does not have to do it, the option, in a State that has a school system that is failing to offer the poorest children in the State, the weakest children in the State, to give the children with the least background an opportunity to go to a school with discipline, with learning, that is drug-free, and the difference is the difference between prison and college, the difference between pursuing happiness and being trapped in jail.

I would beg Members to look into their hearts, do not be afraid of the unions, do not be afraid of the bureaucrats, do not be afraid of the power structure; to look into their hearts, think about those children, and then vote to give them a chance to have a decent future.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time has expired.

Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to recommit.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to recommit.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Evidently a quorum is not present.

The Sergeant at Arms will notify absent Members.

Pursuant to the provisions of clause 5 of rule XV, the Chair announces that he will reduce to a minimum of 5 minutes the period of time within which a vote by electronic device, if ordered, will be taken on the question of passage.

Without objection, the vote on the first suspension motion immediately thereafter will be reduced to a minimum of 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 203, nays 215, not voting 15, as follows:

[Roll No. 568]

YEAS—203

Abercrombie	Andrews	Barrett (WI)
Ackerman	Baessler	Becerra
Allen	Baldacci	Bentsen

Bereuter	Hastings (FL)	Ortiz
Berman	Hefner	Owens
Berry	Hilliard	Pallone
Bishop	Hinchey	Pascarell
Blagojevich	Hinojosa	Pastor
Blumenauer	Hooley	Pelosi
Bonior	Horn	Peterson (MN)
Borski	Hoyer	Pickett
Boswell	Jackson (IL)	Pomeroy
Boucher	Jackson-Lee	Poshard
Boyd	(TX)	Price (NC)
Brown (CA)	Jefferson	Rahall
Brown (FL)	Johnson (CT)	Ramstad
Brown (OH)	Johnson (WI)	Rangel
Cardin	Johnson, E. B.	Reyes
Carson	Kanjorski	Rivers
Clay	Kaptur	Rodriguez
Clayton	Kennedy (MA)	Roemer
Clement	Kennedy (RI)	Rothman
Clyburn	Kennelly	Roukema
Condit	Kildee	Roybal-Allard
Conyers	Kilpatrick	Rush
Costello	Kind (WI)	Sabo
Coyne	Klecza	Sanchez
Cramer	Klink	Sanders
Cummings	Kucinich	Sandlin
Danner	LaFalce	Sawyer
Davis (FL)	Lampson	Schumer
Davis (IL)	Lantos	Scott
DeFazio	Leach	Serrano
DeGette	Levin	Sherman
Delahunt	Lewis (GA)	Sisisky
DeLauro	Lofgren	Skaggs
Dellums	Lowe	Skelton
Deutsch	Luther	Smith, Adam
Dicks	Maloney (CT)	Snyder
Dingell	Maloney (NY)	Spratt
Dixon	Manton	Stabenow
Doggett	Markey	Stark
Dooley	Martinez	Stenholm
Doyle	Mascara	Stokes
Edwards	Matsui	Strickland
Engel	McCarthy (MO)	Stupak
Ensign	McCarthy (NY)	Tanner
Eshoo	McDermott	Tauscher
Etheridge	McGovern	Taylor (MS)
Evans	McHale	Thompson
Farr	McIntyre	Thurman
Fattah	McKinney	Tierney
Fazio	Meehan	Torres
Filner	Meek	Traficant
Ford	Millender-McDonald	Turner
Frank (MA)	Miller (CA)	Velazquez
Frost	Minge	Vento
Furse	Mink	Visclosky
Gejdenson	Moakley	Waters
Gephardt	Mollohan	Watt (NC)
Gilman	Moran (VA)	Waxman
Goode	Morella	Wexler
Gordon	Murtha	Weygand
Green	Nadler	Wise
Gutierrez	Neal	Woolsey
Hall (OH)	Oberstar	Wynn
Hall (TX)	Obey	Yates
Hamilton	Olver	
Harman		

NAYS—215

Aderholt	Cannon	Flake
Archer	Castle	Foley
Armey	Chabot	Forbes
Bachus	Chambliss	Fowler
Baker	Chenoweth	Fox
Ballenger	Christensen	Franks (NJ)
Barr	Coble	Frelinghuysen
Barrett (NE)	Collins	Gallely
Bartlett	Combest	Ganske
Barton	Cook	Gekas
Bass	Cooksey	Gibbons
Bateman	Cox	Gilchrest
Bilbray	Crane	Gillmor
Bilirakis	Crapo	Gingrich
Bliley	Cunningham	Goodlatte
Blunt	Davis (VA)	Goodling
Boehler	Deal	Goss
Boehner	DeLay	Graham
Bonilla	Diaz-Balart	Granger
Bono	Dickey	Greenwood
Brady	Doolittle	Gutknecht
Bryant	Dreier	Hansen
Bunning	Duncan	Hastert
Burr	Dunn	Hastings (WA)
Burton	Ehlers	Hayworth
Buyer	Ehrlich	Hefley
Callahan	Emerson	Herger
Calvert	English	Hill
Camp	Everett	Hilleary
Campbell	Ewing	Hobson
Canady	Fawell	Hoekstra

Hostettler	Miller (FL)	Sessions
Houghton	Moran (KS)	Shadegg
Hulshof	Myrick	Shaw
Hunter	Nethercutt	Shays
Hutchinson	Neumann	Shimkus
Hyde	Ney	Shuster
Inglis	Northup	Skeen
Istook	Norwood	Smith (MI)
Jenkins	Nussle	Smith (NJ)
John	Oxley	Smith (OR)
Johnson, Sam	Packard	Smith (TX)
Jones	Pappas	Smith, Linda
Kasich	Parker	Snowbarger
Kelly	Paul	Solomon
Kim	Paxon	Souder
King (NY)	Pease	Spence
Kingston	Peterson (PA)	Stearns
Klug	Petri	Stump
Knollenberg	Pickering	Sununu
Kolbe	Pitts	Talent
LaHood	Pombo	Tauzin
Largent	Portman	Taylor (NC)
Latham	Pryce (OH)	Thomas
LaTourette	Quinn	Thornberry
Lazio	Radanovich	Thune
Lewis (CA)	Redmond	Tiahrt
Lewis (KY)	Regula	Upton
Linder	Riggs	Walsh
Lipinski	Rogan	Wamp
Livingston	Rogers	Watkins
LoBiondo	Rohrabacher	Watts (OK)
Lucas	Ros-Lehtinen	Weldon (FL)
Manzullo	Royce	Weldon (PA)
McCollum	Ryun	Weller
McCrery	Salmon	White
McHugh	Sanford	Whitfield
McInnis	Saxton	Wicker
McIntosh	Scarborough	Wolf
McKeon	Schaefer, Dan	Young (AK)
Metcalf	Schaffer, Bob	Young (FL)
Mica	Sensenbrenner	

NOT VOTING—15

Barcia	Holden	Porter
Coburn	McDade	Riley
Cubin	McNulty	Schiff
Foglietta	Menendez	Slaughter
Gonzalez	Payne	Towns

□ 2017

The Clerk announced the following pair:

On this vote:

Ms. Slaughter for, with Mr. Riley against.

Mr. BATEMAN, Mr. BOEHLERT, and Ms. GRANGER changed their vote from "yea" to "nay."

Messrs. BENTSEN, DAVIS of Illinois, MARKEY, REYES, and Mrs. MALONEY of New York changed their vote from "nay" to "yea."

So the motion to recommit was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The SPEAKER pro tempore [Mr. MCCOLLUM]. The question is on the passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, on that, I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 191, nays 228, not voting 14, as follows:

[Roll No. 569]

YEAS—191

Aderholt	Bateman	Burton
Archer	Bilbray	Buyer
Armey	Bilirakis	Callahan
Bachus	Bliley	Calvert
Baker	Boehner	Camp
Ballenger	Bonilla	Campbell
Barr	Bono	Canady
Bartlett	Brady	Chabot
Barton	Bryant	Chambliss
Bass	Bunning	Chenoweth

Christensen	Hulshof	Radanovich	Markey	Pallone	Skelton	[Roll No. 570]
Coble	Hunter	Redmond	Martinez	Pastrell	Smith (NJ)	YEAS—182
Combust	Hyde	Riggs	Mascara	Pastor	Smith, Adam	
Cook	Inglis	Rogan	Matsui	Pelosi	Snyder	Archer
Cooksey	Istook	Rogers	McCarthy (MO)	Peterson (MN)	Spratt	Armey
Cox	John	Rohrabacher	McCarthy (NY)	Pickett	Stabenow	Bachus
Crane	Johnson, Sam	Ro-Lehtinen	McDade	Pomerooy	Stark	Baker
Crapo	Jones	Royce	McDermott	Poshard	Stenholm	Ballenger
Cunningham	Kasich	Ryun	McGovern	Price (NC)	Stokes	Barrett (NE)
Deal	Kelly	Salmon	McHale	Quinn	Strickland	Barton
DeLay	Kim	Sanford	McHugh	Rahall	Stupak	Bass
Diaz-Balart	King (NY)	Scarborough	McIntyre	Ramstad	Tanner	Bateman
Dickey	Kingston	Schaefer, Dan	McKinney	Rangel	Tauscher	Bentsen
Doolittle	Knollenberg	Schaffer, Bob	Meehan	Regula	Taylor (MS)	Bereuter
Dreier	Kolbe	Sensenbrenner	Meek	Reyes	Thompson	Berman
Duncan	Largent	Sessions	Millender-	Rivers	Thune	Berry
Dunn	Latham	Shadegg	McDonald	Rodriguez	Thurman	Bilbray
Ehlers	LaTourette	Shaw	Miller (CA)	Roemer	Tierney	Bliley
Ehrlich	Lazio	Shays	Minge	Rothman	Torres	Blumenauer
Emerson	Lewis (CA)	Shimkus	Mink	Roukema	Traficant	Blunt
Ensign	Lewis (KY)	Shuster	Moakley	Roybal-Allard	Turner	Bonilla
Everett	Linder	Skeen	Mollohan	Rush	Velazquez	Brady
Ewing	Lipinski	Smith (MI)	Moran (KS)	Sabo	Vento	Bryant
Flake	Livingston	Smith (OR)	Moran (VA)	Sanchez	Visclosky	Burr
Foley	Lucas	Smith (TX)	Morella	Sanders	Waters	Buyer
Forbes	Manzullo	Smith, Linda	Murtha	Sandlin	Watt (NC)	Callahan
Fowler	McCollum	Snowbarger	Nadler	Sawyer	Waxman	Calvert
Fox	McCrery	Solomon	Neal	Saxton	Wexler	Camp
Franks (NJ)	McInnis	Souder	Ney	Schumer	Weygand	Campbell
Galleghy	McIntosh	Spence	Oberstar	Scott	Wise	Cannon
Ganske	McKeon	Stearns	Obey	Serrano	Woolsey	Castle
Gekas	Metcalf	Stump	Olver	Sherman	Wynn	Chabot
Gibbons	Mica	Sununu	Ortiz	Sisisky	Yates	Christensen
Gilchrest	Miller (FL)	Talent	Owens	Skaggs		Clement
Gillmor	Myrick	Tauzin				Kennedy (MA)
Gingrich	Nethercutt	Taylor (NC)				Kennelly
Goodling	Neumann	Thomas	Ackerman	Holden	Riley	Collins
Goss	Northup	Thornberry	Coburn	McNulty	Schiff	Combust
Graham	Norwood	Tiahrt	Cubin	Menendez	Slaughter	Cox
Granger	Nussle	Upton	Foglietta	Payne	Towns	Crane
Greenwood	Oxley	Walsh	Gonzalez	Porter		Cummings
Gutknecht	Packard	Wamp				Cunningham
Hall (TX)	Pappas	Watkins				Davis (FL)
Hansen	Parker	Watts (OK)				Davis (VA)
Hastert	Paul	Weldon (FL)				DeLay
Hastings (WA)	Paxon	Weldon (PA)				Deutsch
Hayworth	Pease	Weller				Dicks
Hefley	Peterson (PA)	White				Dixon
Herger	Petri	Whitfield				Dooley
Hill	Pickering	Wicker				Dreier
Hilleary	Pitts	Wolf				Dunn
Hobson	Pombo	Young (AK)				Ehlers
Hoekstra	Portman	Young (FL)				Ehrlich
Hostettler	Pryce (OH)					Emerson

NAYS—228

Abercrombie	Davis (FL)	Hefner
Allen	Davis (IL)	Hilliard
Andrews	Davis (VA)	Hinchey
Baesler	DeFazio	Hinojosa
Baldacci	DeGette	Hooley
Barcia	Delahunt	Horn
Barrett (NE)	DeLauro	Houghton
Barrett (WI)	Dellums	Hoyer
Becerra	Deutsch	Hutchinson
Bentsen	Dicks	Jackson (IL)
Bereuter	Dingell	Jackson-Lee
Berman	Dixon	(TX)
Berry	Doggett	Jefferson
Bishop	Dooley	Jenkins
Blagojevich	Doyle	Johnson (CT)
Blumenauer	Edwards	Johnson (WI)
Blunt	Engel	Johnson, E. B.
Boehlert	English	Kanjorski
Bonior	Eshoo	Kaptur
Borski	Etheridge	Kennedy (MA)
Boswell	Evans	Kennedy (RI)
Boucher	Farr	Kennelly
Boyd	Fattah	Kildee
Brown (CA)	Fawell	Kilpatrick
Brown (FL)	Fazio	Kind (WI)
Brown (OH)	Filner	Kleczka
Burr	Ford	Klink
Cannon	Frank (MA)	Klug
Cardin	Frelinghuysen	Kucinich
Carson	Frost	LaFalce
Castle	Furse	LaHood
Clay	Gejdenson	Lampson
Clayton	Gephardt	Lantos
Clement	Gilman	Leach
Clyburn	Green	Levin
Collins	Goodlatte	Lewis (GA)
Condit	Gordon	LoBiondo
Conyers	Green	Lofgren
Costello	Gutierrez	Lowe
Coyne	Hall (OH)	Luther
Cramer	Hamilton	Maloney (CT)
Cummings	Harman	Maloney (NY)
Danner	Hastings (FL)	Manton

NOT VOTING—14

The Clerk announced the following pair:

On this vote:

Mr. Riley for, with Mr. Porter against.

Mr. WALSH changed his vote from "nay" to "yea."

So the bill was not passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 2025

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5, rule I, the Chair will now put the question on the following two motions to suspend the rules, on which further proceedings were postponed earlier today, in the order in which the motion was entertained. The additional suspensions debated today will be postponed until later today.

Votes will be taken in the following order: H.R. 2644, by the yeas and nays; and H.R. 1493, by the yeas and nays.

UNITED STATES-CARIBBEAN TRADE PARTNERSHIP ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The pending business is the question of suspending the rules and passing the bill, H.R. 2644.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. CRANE] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2644, on which the yeas and nays are ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 182, nays 234, not voting 16, as follows:

NAYS—234

Abercrombie	Clayton	Fox
Aderholt	Clyburn	Frank (MA)
Allen	Condit	Franks (NJ)
Andrews	Conyers	Frost
Baesler	Cook	Furse
Baldacci	Costello	Galleghy
Barcia	Coyne	Gejdenson
Barr	Cramer	Gekas
Barrett (WI)	Crapo	Gephardt
Bartlett	Danner	Gibbons
Becerra	Davis (IL)	Goode
Bilirakis	Deal	Goodling
Bishop	DeFazio	Gordon
Blagojevich	DeGette	Graham
Boehlert	Delahunt	Green
Boehner	DeLauro	Gutierrez
Bonior	Dellums	Gutknecht
Bono	Diaz-Balart	Hall (TX)
Borski	Dickey	Hansen
Boswell	Dingell	Harman
Boucher	Doggett	Hastings (FL)
Boyd	Doolittle	Hefley
Brown (CA)	Doyle	Hefner
Brown (FL)	Duncan	Hilleary
Brown (OH)	Engel	Hilliard
Bunning	Ensign	Hinchey
Burton	Etheridge	Hinojosa
Canady	Evans	Holden
Cardin	Everett	Hooley
Carson	Farr	Hunter
Chambliss	Filner	Hutchinson
Chenoweth	Forbes	Inglis
Clay	Ford	Istook