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GIVE THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT THE HIGHEST PRIORITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SNOWBARGER). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. BASS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BASS. Mr. Speaker, last week I introduced House Resolution 399, to work toward fully funding the Federal Government's statutory obligation under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, IDEA. This resolution says, and I quote, ''Resolved, that the House of Representatives urges the Congress and the President to give programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act the highest priority among Federal education programs by working to fund the maximum State grant allocation for educating children with disabilities under such Act.''

For those who may not be familiar with IDEA, it came about in 1975 as a result of a Supreme Court decision in the early 1970s that essentially said that we have an obligation under our Constitution to provide education for all Americans, regardless of what level of educational ability one might have; a very good decision and an important decision.

Unfortunately, however, when Congress passed the original IDEA bill in 1975, we enacted a statutory commitment to cover 40 percent of the excess costs of educating a learning-disabled student. Mr. Speaker, we have never done it. The fact of the matter is that, since 1975, we have never funded IDEA at any higher rate than about 7 to 7½ percent.

It is this Member's opinion that this practice has to end. There is no issue, there is no issue, that is more important to school districts, to school administrators, to school boards, to parents, and perhaps most importantly, to property taxpayers across this country than the chronic underfunding of special education.

I introduced this resolution last week. It is currently pending in the Committee on Education and the Workforce. I am hopeful we will see some action on it in the near future.

I believe it is time for this Congress to step forward and say it is time to end the mother of all unfunded mandates, a mandate that costs our cities and towns and municipalities over $10 billion a year. It is time, in 1998, to fully fund IDEA.

If we want to improve local education, if we want to take the burden off of families that are under stress to provide education for their children if their children may be disabled or coded in some form or fashion and not separate them from the rest of the community, if we want to fulfill the Government's mandate that was enacted over 20 years ago, do it for the first time in 1998. This is the year to fully fund special education.

I urge my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, to join me in cosponsoring this important legislation and send a message back to our constituents that the time has come for the Federal government to live up to its obligation to provide our school districts, our cities and towns, with the relief that we promised to provide them over 20 years ago in fully funding special education.

CURRENT HIGH OIL PRICES CAUSED BY GREED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. JACKSON) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. JACKSON of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to call attention to a contradiction in market economics. About 2 weeks ago, American consumers were told that oil prices had hit a record low, and last Tuesday the New York Times reported that crude oil prices rose 13 percent on the basis of a pledge to cut the supply. Thirteen percent was the biggest one-day rise in oil prices since the Persian Gulf War more than 7 years ago, yet there was no national or international crisis that precipitated the rise to 13 percent.

There is presently an oversupply of oil on the market. One would expect prices to be low and stay that way until demand overtakes supply. But this is not a rise in price because of a reduction of the supply or increase in demand. That just simply could not happen in a week. This is not a response to the market. This is a reaction to the promise, the promise, of cuts in crude oil supplies.

From my perspective, this is raw greed. For those Americans who are observing this process today, there is not one product that I can imagine, that many of us can imagine, that is not impacted by the price of crude oil, from our cars, motors, our engines, to the suit that I am wearing, to the tie that I am wearing, to our socks, to our shoes, to paper products, to all plastics, to paint, to chemical manufacturing, to computers. You have name it, just about every product that we produce in our Nation has some oil-based content.

So today the Federal Reserve Board will meet to set interest rates. If they raise interest rates because they think oil prices will be low and overheat the economy, the economy will simply slow and the oil companies will make out like bandits.

With the mere promise of higher oil prices, they can continue to produce oil in a glutted market, charge higher prices and, clearly, make out like bandits. So if the Federal Reserve Board today meets to raise interest rates, and therefore slow down growth of the U.S. economy, please do not blame the Democrats and, for that matter, do not even blame the Republicans. Just blame the oil companies, who happen to be Republicans.

THE PARENTAL FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. TIAHRT) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few minutes this morning to talk about the Parental Freedom of Information Act.

Educators and parents agree that students do much better when parents are involved in the education. But there are many barriers to getting parents involved in the education process. What the Parental Freedom of Information Act does is try to remove some of those barriers.

Some of those barriers are something that are just indications of how far down our culture has slid. We have many broken homes, and many homes have both parents working. It is quite often too difficult for parents to spend the time they need to be involved in their children's education.

It certainly is a sacrifice of time when there are so many financial demands on parents these days because of the cost of housing, the cost of clothing, the cost of living, that they cannot spend the time to get involved because they are working.

Mr. Speaker, other forces in society have also caused a downhill slide. Quite often, we have lost touch with the virtues that built this great Nation, virtues like faith in God, hard work, honesty, integrity. That loss of virtues is also reflected in our school system.

Getting parents involved in the child's education will help build a structure where children will be able to rely on their parents to help improve their education. Like I said, in education, teachers, superintendents and parents all agree.

What the Parental Freedom of Information Act does is it allows parents access to the information related to their children's education. That includes medical records. It includes psychological testing. It includes test scores. It includes curriculum, anything involved with the curriculum.

What we have seen in some situations across America is that school systems have denied parents access to the information, even when it includes medical treatment or psychological testing.

In one case in Pennsylvania, in excess of 60 young women, girls, actually, in junior high were subjected to physical exams, which included exams that required them to take their clothes off. This was very much a shock for these girls. It was very difficult for them, traumatic for them, and many had to receive counseling afterwards. This was all done without parental consent, without parental notification.

The Parental Freedom of Information Act would give parents access to