

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

ENCOURAGING THE STUDY OF OUR
FOUNDING DOCUMENTS BY
SCHOOL CHILDREN

HON. NEWT GINGRICH

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, August 4, 1998

Mr. GINGRICH. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing a House Concurrent Resolution encouraging schools to dedicate at least one day of learning during the school year to studying the founding documents of our great nation: the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Federalist Papers.

These works establish the fundamental principles upon which the American experiment in government is based. They are the core that makes America unique and different from the rest of the world. In Europe, power was bestowed from God to the King who ruled the people. In this model, the center of power is the state. However, in the American model, power comes from God to the citizen who then lends it to the state. Self governance requires very hard work, patience, and persistence, but it also guarantees us freedom.

Further, I think it would be very healthy for every teacher and every student in America to spend time wrestling with the question. "What did the Founding Fathers mean by the term "Creator"? The Declaration of Independence states: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness." I believe that when children start to realize that each and every person is endowed by God, then they begin to understand that if you sell them drugs, you are corrupting a person endowed by God. In fact, every violation of a person's unalienable rights is a violation of a Creator endowed right. I believe this understanding of our relationship with each other reorients the way we view each other in and the American body politic.

These are fundamental concepts which need to be reinforced for every child in America. I want to commend Senator Grace Kearns from Ohio, Senator Don Benton from Washington, Senator Colin Bonini from Delaware, Georgia Senator Chuck Clay, State Representative Andre Bauer from South Carolina, and Alabama Representative Bob McKee for introducing bills to implement this idea at the state level and Assemblyman Keith Olberg from California for getting a similar bill passed in California in 1996 requiring these documents to be specifically taught in high schools. I hope that my colleague in the House will join me in encouraging more study of the founding documents by American school children.

ISSUES OF CONCERN TO TODAY'S
YOUTH

HON. BERNARD SANDERS

OF VERMONT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, August 4, 1998

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to have printed in the RECORD statements by high school students from my home state of Vermont, who were speaking at my recent town meeting on issues facing young people today. I am asking that you please insert these statements in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD as I believe that the views of these young people will benefit my colleagues.

STATEMENT BY ERICA LEWIS AND DAN
JOHNSON REGARDING DRUNK DRIVING

ERICA LEWIS: We would like to express a concern that is becoming a big issue with teen Vermonters today. Our concern is probably the same as many others: Teen driving under the influence of alcohol.

Young adults are usually both inexperienced drivers as well as inexperienced drinkers. These two combined is a fatality waiting to happen. Alcohol, when consumed, decreases alertness, causes depression, nausea, unconsciousness, hangovers, and possible overdose, which could lead to death. We, as teenagers, should be aware of the serious risks that are involved when wrong choices are made and lives are at stake. Driving should be considered a privilege, not a right, for we all have the right to be safe while driving, and when alcohol is involved, no one can predict the outcome. Anyone of us here today could be driving down the road next week and, because of a drunk driver, never make it to where we were headed. Because of this increasing problem, there needs to be more awareness of alcohol and its effects. It is up to us, the younger generation, to make an impression on our peers and those that follow, and most of all to prove to our elders that we have what it takes to make the right decisions and follow through.

There is no overall solution to this problem, but we, as mature young adults, should make a strong effort to plan ahead before it gets to a point where it might be too late, whether that be make arrangements for a designated driver or staying until you are capable of driving.

DAN JOHNSON: A suggestion that we have and strongly agree with is a paper called a contract for life. It is an agreement between teenagers and their parents stating, if at any given time that either they feel incapable of driving, there will be transportation provided, and safe transportation, for them. This contract was given to us from our drivers ed teachers at the Essex Technical Center. Other suggestions that we agree with is larger penalties for adults in furnishing alcohol for minors at stores to sell this. Teen drinking and driving will always be a problem, but, hopefully, with our help, we can reduce it. Thank you for our time.

Congressman SANDERS: A very important contribution to this discussion. Thanks very much.

STATEMENT BY JESSE FIELD, RENAY THOMPSON AND ELAINE GRIFFEN REGARDING CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

JESSE FIELD: Last year, every U.S. citizen committed 45 homicides. None of them were ever prosecuted. These crimes were planned out at least ten years in advance, and the victim not only knew about the coming execution, but was kept in prison the entire time. How, you may ask, can this happen. Well, the answer is, these crimes were legal.

You may realize by now what we are talking about: Capital punishment. You may also be saying, but these people were the scum of the earth, they don't deserve to live after what they did. This statement raises a serious moral question. But there are other reasons, as well, to abolish capital punishing: High costs, increased murder rates, and discrimination.

ELAINE GRIFFEN: Many people often argue it takes a lot of their tax dollars to keep an inmate locked up, and why should they have to pay so he or she can live? The truth is, it does cost them a lot. A study from 1997 found that it costs \$20,000 per year to keep a prisoner in jail. That's \$800,000 to lock them up for forty years. However, the same source found that it costs taxpayers \$2 million to execute someone. This is mostly because there are so many more appeals and Court costs attributed to an inmate on death row. So, in fact, taxpayers are not getting a break when they execute a criminal.

RENAY THOMPSON: Another common argument for the death penalty is capital punishment deters crime. This is not true at all. When a crime is committed, often the last thing on a potential criminal's, mind is what consequences they will suffer as a result of this.

And as George Bernard Shaw says, "It is the deed that teaches, not the name we give it." Murder and capital punishment are not opposites that cancel one another, but similars that breed their kind. Studies done have shown that, as the number of executions increase, so does the murder rate. Georgia, which reinstated capital punishment in 1983, saw an increase of 20 percent in their murder rate in the following year, also a year in which the national homicide rate fell 5 percent. When Florida started executing prisoners again in 1979, the 1980 murder rate went up 28 percent, and 1981 and 1982 were the highest in recent history. These incidents show, as Michael Godfried put it, that the state may be, tragically, leading by example.

JESSE FIELD: Discrimination is also a major issue in sentencing and executions. Poor people cannot afford lawyers, and their defense is not as good. They are convicted and given the death penalty more often. There are also issues of racial discrimination involved. While only 12 to 13 percent of our nation's population is African-American, 41 percent of people on death row are black. A study done by the New Jersey Supreme Court shows there is strong evidence of racial bias in jurors. They are more likely to give the death penalties to minorities than whites. New Jersey is considering abolishing capital punishment on this issue alone, because it leads to a constitutional violation.

ELAINE GRIFFEN: Despite the strong case both points make against capital punishment, the most important issue by far is that of morals. For some people, it takes the

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