Again, studies have shown that students, I would say rural students, minority students and disadvantaged students, certainly learn better when they have more teachers, more time, and they certainly learn better as other students learn well when they have a good environment.

Mr. Speaker, the education bill being proposed by the President is not only good for urban areas and suburban areas, but also very good for rural areas. Rural North Carolina and the children in North Carolina would benefit from that.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PAUL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time previously allotted to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL).

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

There was no objection.

CHINESE HOUSE CHURCH APPEAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I want to put domestic concerns and partisan concerns aside and speak for five minutes on behalf of the fundamental human right of religious liberty in the House Churches in China.

Recently a number of House Church leaders in China wrote a very respectful appeal to the government of the People's Republic of China. The appeal says nothing against the Chinese Government, but reflects the utmost respect. These House Church leaders respectfully request that their government release those Christians imprisoned in labor reform camps and to stop attacks on the church. In addition, the authors request that the PRC begin a dialogue with the House Church leaders in order to deepen mutual understanding and to reduce confrontation between the two parties.

Mr. Speaker, the House Church leaders who drafted this document and who sent it to Beijing have taken a very bold and possibly dangerous step in hoping for recognition from their government. I encourage the Chinese Government to take steps to increase religious liberty for the Chinese people, to use caution in these matters, and to deal justly with issues of religious freedom. It is vital that Americans support these courageous House Church leaders and members as they appeal to the Chinese Government for protection of their religious freedom.

I would like to read the House Church appeal which has seven points to it for the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. It is entitled ''a united appeal by the various branches of the Chinese House Church.''

One: We call on the government to admit to God's great power and to seriously study today's new trends in the development of Christianity. The government should realize if it were not for the work of God, why would so many churches and Christians be raised up in China? Therefore, the judicial system in the People's Congress and the United Front System should readjust their policies and regulations on religion lest they violate God's will to their own detriment.

Two: We call on the legal authorities to release unconditionally all House Church Christians presently serving in Labor Reform Camps. These include Presbyterians who believe that if one is saved once he or she is saved always; Charismatic Church; Local Church, incorrectly called Shouters Sect; the Way of Life Church, also called the Full Scope Church; the Pentecostal Church; Lutherans who do not attend the Three-Self Churches; and the Baptist Church. They should be released from prison if they are orthodox Christians, as recognized by Christian churches internationally, and have been imprisoned for the sake of the gospel.

Three: There are approximately 10 million believers in the Three-Self Church but 80 million believers in the House Church. The House Church represents the mainstream Christianity in China. Therefore, the government should face reality as it is. If Taiwan with its population of 22 million cannot represent China, but the mainland can with its population of 1.2 billion, likewise the Three-Self Church cannot represent the Chinese Christian Church. The Three-Self Church is only a branch. Moreover, in many spiritual matters there is serious deviation in the Three-Self Church. The government should clearly understand this.

Four: We call on the central leadership of the Chinese Communist Party to begin a dialogue with representatives of the House Church in order to achieve better mutual understanding, to seek reconciliation, to reduce confrontation, and to engage in positive interaction.

Five: We call on the government to spell out the definition of a ''cult.'' The definition should be according to internationally recognized standards and not according to whether or not people join the Three-Self.

Six: We call on the legal authorities to end their attack on the Chinese House Church. History has proven that attacks on Christians who fervently preach the Gospel only bring harm to China and its government. Therefore, the legal system should end its practice of arresting and imprisoning House Church preachers and believers, confining them in labor camps, or imposing fines as a punishment.

Seven: The Chinese House Church is the channel through which God's blessing comes to China. The persecution of God's children has blocked this channel of blessing. Support of the House Church will certainly bring God's blessing.

We hope the government will have a positive response though this united appeal by the House Church.

The Holy Spirit has awakened our hearts. May God bless China. Signed Henan Province. August 22, 1998.

This letter was signed by seven key House Church leaders.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to add that with the definition of cults which some of the authorities in China appear to have adopted, most of the churches in America would be classified as cults, because under that policy, they could not talk about such things as the end of the world, the second coming of Christ, abortion or spiritual warfare.

I would appeal to the government authorities in China to deal with believers prudently and cautiously, to treat them with dignity and respect. I would remind them it is those countries that recognize the importance of religious liberty and treat it as a fundamental human right which are the most stable societies in the world.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. WOOLSEY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time previously allotted to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

THE NEED FOR FURTHER EDUCATION REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SANCHEZ) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk a little bit about school construction, since many of my colleagues are doing that tonight, and I would like to say that I think I have the most experience in this House with respect to school construction.

How many of my colleagues can say that they have constructed six classrooms for the Solvang Elementary School District and redid the bathrooms for the little girls and little boys in that school? Or how many of my colleagues can say they found the money to build a $64 million state-of-the-art tech high school in Antioch, California. Or how many of you can say that you have issued COPs or gone before Standard & Poors or Moody's to get ratings for any of these school districts? Well, I can say that. I can actually say that I have helped build probably over 30 schools in the State of California. Therefore, I think I understand pretty well what happens with the financing equation of school construction.

Let me tell you that the relationship in the State of California, my state, is that of local and state for school construction. In fact, what used to happen was initially, in the beginning, local

schools would be built with local taxes from local areas, and then when the local schools were not able to do that, it became a state issue, and in fact the state was working on that.

Of course, now we have the problem that the state and local municipalities are not able to build the schools fast enough in California, and, yes, it has become a Federal issue.

In fact, the President's proposal that we have before us that he brought to us in January, I am very well aware of, because I have sat with him and discussed the bill that I introduced in this House, H.R. 2695, and many of those initiatives are in his proposal.

Now, many of my colleagues on the other side have said tonight, what? We are not in the school construction business. Well, let me tell you, in particular to the gentleman from California (Mr. RIGGS), who spoke earlier about national security and our defense, it is of utmost national security that our children be educated.

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Because of that, the Federal Government must become involved when there is a gap and when we need to fix a problem.

Secondly, we are in the school construction business. In fact, last year, in the Tax Relief Act that was signed in August by President Clinton we had the CZAB bonds, the academy bonds that we now use to renovate schools. So we are in the school construction business.

Secondly, I have heard some of my colleagues say this is a local issue, LORETTA. This should not be done. I am reading here in Congress Daily from yesterday, ''House Majority Leader ARMEY says, prohibit the President's school construction initiative, because we want the decision to be made at the local level.''

The President's initiative does make that a local level issue. Why? Because the local school district needs to stand up and say, we need to build a school; because local taxpayers need to stand up and say, yes, we will tax ourselves in order to build a new school. What happens with this initiative is that we help them to stand up and take responsibility.

Third, people say that this is an administrative nightmare. Let me tell the Members, it is not an administrative nightmare. In fact, I had five superintendents come in from California just about a month ago, talking to me, of course, about school construction, because they know I understand that language. In fact, they came in and they talked about all the initiatives and all the projects that they are getting done under the CZAB bonds.

Let me tell the Members, one said, LORETTA, CZAB is already there. It is on the tax forms. We give the tax incentive there on the form. Secondly, they said, the approval has been so simple. As long as we meet the requirements, we send in one piece of paper to the Board of Education and we send one piece of paper to the Education Department out here, and we get it approved. They have been working on it.

Fourth, someone said earlier that only the President's friends will get these bonds. That is not true. Of the seven initiatives that are already bond issues going on with the CZAB program in California, let me tell the Members, San Diego Unified School District, building John Adams Elementary School, reconstructing it, that is in the district of the gentleman from California (Mr. BILBRAY). He is a Republican. Glendale Unified School District, Hoover High School. That is in the District of the gentleman from California (Mr. ROGAN). Clovis Unified School District, the district of the gentleman from Fresno, California (Mr. RADANOVICH).

This is for those places where we need to build more schools. I hope the people will really take a look at the President's initiative.

CALLING FOR FULL FUNDING OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HILL). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. BASS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BASS. Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that the budget negotiators have come to an agreement over the overall funding levels for education, education programs, but they have not yet resolved how that money will be allocated.

I rise here tonight in the 5 minutes allocated to me to urge negotiators, both Republicans and Democrats, to use this as an opportunity to put money into special education, to fully fund or to move toward fully funding the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

As the previous speaker mentioned a couple of minutes ago, this is a Federal mandate that was established in the early seventies. Originally and today, we are required to fund up to 40 percent of the costs of special education.

When I entered this body in 1995, the level of funding was 6 percent, and now it is a little less than 12 percent. This is a tragedy. It is a tragedy because it hits every single school district and school in the United States. It is a tragedy because it hurts families that have children with disabilities and have to live in communities where the cost of this education, which is perfectly legitimate and necessary, is borne for the most part by friends and neighbors.

Mr. Speaker, the folks who are negotiating tonight need to look seriously at allocating every single one of these dollars to fully fund our obligation to fund special education. Doing so would go a long way toward easing the financial burden that we feel in every community across the country.

Fully funding or using these extra dollars to fund special education would spread the education dollars more equitably across this country. It would give the local school districts and school administrators and parents the right to prioritize spending, not have the folks here in Washington decide who gets these extra Federal dollars.

I represent a rural district, and I hasten to say that it is quite likely under the President's plan that my district will receive little or nothing. But if we were to fulfill this unfunded Federal mandate, every town in my district would get an extra dollar or two to help defray the cost of education.

Mr. Speaker, this is a compromise that can be supported by Republicans and Democrats, by liberals and conservatives, by anybody that has a commitment to fulfilling an obligation that this Congress made over 25 years ago.

Indeed, the true winners in this battle for more education funding will not only be the teachers, will not only be those who believe that we should have better classrooms and more modern schools, but it will also be school administrators, school boards, parents, property taxpayers, and most importantly, the children of this country.

I urge the negotiators in this budget deal that is going to be coming before us tomorrow to look at the issue of special education before we establish new Federal programs, before we establish new Federal bureaucracies, before we decide in Washington what the educational spending priorities should be in school districts around the country.

Let us meet the unfunded obligation of special education. Let us start tomorrow by putting these extra funds into IDEA.

PUT THE DOLLARS IN THE CLASSROOM, NOT BLOCK GRANTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Mrs. MINK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, as the previous speaker indicated, I, too, am advised that the budget negotiators have come to an agreement as to the overall additional funds that are to go into education. I commend them for the initiative that they have expressed in allocating these additional dollars.

I rise here tonight because I am somewhat concerned that in agreeing to the overall dollar allocations to education, and seemingly in agreeing to the 100,000 new teachers that will be placed into our school systems across the country, that in fact what they are talking about is putting these monies into what is known as title VI.

Title VI is a block grant provision that exists in current law, so if we put this extra money presumably for 100,000 new teachers into a block grant provision, there is absolutely no assurance whatsoever that the monies will be utilized for the hiring of additional teachers.