

legislator have this issue near the top of their agendas.

The president used his State of the Union speech to address aspects of education, and I would like to respond. He recommends bringing public education more under the authority of the federal government. He also makes some points that should be common-sense to most Americans, but to him are more of a revelation that only the federal government should implement.

His first point was to end social promotion. Children should not graduate with a diploma they can't read. Who could possibly oppose this? Already schools—at the local level—are endeavoring to ensure reading skills are mastered at the earliest grade levels.

His second point was to close low-performing schools. Will the federal government decide this issue? By what standard? Indiana already examines each public school's performance and intervenes when necessary to help those schools to meet their specific needs. We don't need the federal government to transcend the state authority already in place.

His third point suggested that teachers only teach subjects they are trained in. This is another local issue—one manipulated by contracts, state licensing rules and course offerings requested by students. What we at the local level need is greater flexibility in putting qualified teachers into the classroom. Indiana should modify the licensing procedure to allow people to teach who are qualified in the material but do not necessarily have a major in education.

An example is: Schools are in great need of vocational program teachers. People who have vocational skills but may not meet licensing requirements could pass their experience on to students. For example, people just out of the military or retirees could fill this need.

His fourth point was to allow parents to choose which public school to send their child to based on school "report cards." Indiana already requires each district to publish information about schools' performance. Charter schools have been a state issue and should remain so. One aspect of charters that makes them unique is the avoidance of many current state Department of Education regulations. I suggest that if some schools can do this, all public schools should be allowed to avoid these rules.

His fifth point was to "implement sensible discipline policies." Not long ago, the president pushed through the mandatory one-year expulsion for any student who comes to school with a handgun. Every state had to make this into law. Indiana already had a law forbidding handguns to be within 1,000 feet of a school. Why was it necessary to federalize this issue?

I would like to make some suggestions in contrast to the president's agenda.

First, give real tax relief to families. When families have both parents working out of necessity, they have less time for their children. A parent waiting for the child to arrive at home is better than after-school programs. Families are paying approximately 40 percent of their income to taxes. One parent is effectively working just to pay the government. Children need their parents—not another government program!

Second, do not generalize when talking about education. Every school has unique problems—and many have unique successes. Create opportunities for all schools to succeed in the areas that they want and need. Rather than add more bureaucracy, remove what currently exists. Free the public schools up so that they can compete equally with private schools. It is tempting—and easy—for legislators to get their hands into the means of education. Be more concerned

about the results and leave the means implementation to the local school districts. They can better assess their specific needs and respond to them directly.

Third, let the local districts decide how to spend money. The recent "100,000 teachers" legislation is a perfect example. Considering the amount of money appropriated, it will never meet the need to hire that amount of teachers. It creates an obligation to the school districts to make up a difference that they may not have.

Finally, I would ask that education remain a local issue and that the state resist any further federal intervention. There are problems in public education, but they can be much better resolved at the local and state level. Washington doesn't need to involve itself any further.

I realize I do not have the influence on lawmakers that the president or governor may have. But I am only a school board member. I want to do what is in the best interests of students in this district. I ask parents who support these ideas to contact their representatives and tell them how they feel.

[From the Ft. Wayne Journal-Gazette, Mar. 2, 1999]

PRaise SCHOOL THAT FIGHTS DRUGS

It has long been said that one picture is worth a thousand words. Unfortunately those words do not have to be the truth or accurate. Such is the case with the Feb. 26 editorial cartoon. It infers several incorrect concepts. The first is that education will take a secondary role to drug testing at Concordia High School. One only has to look at ISTEP scores, graduation rates, percent of graduates going to college and SAT scores to refute that idea.

The second is that the testing will occupy the entire school day. Testing can be completed in a very short period of time, being minimally disruptive to the school day. For a non-drug user an inconvenience—to a drug user, surely no more disruptive than days missed because of over indulgence.

His third incorrect concept is the most damaging. His attempt to ridicule the recently announced plan for random drug testing at Concordia, by overstating his case, will give those who have a misguided belief that drug testing is evil and an invasion of privacy the belief that taking action to help prevent good kids from making bad decisions is an unworthy undertaking.

Rather than swelling up with righteous indignation over the alleged loss of privacy, I would suggest the editorial staff consider looking at the educational success gained at a high school where standards are set, expectations delineated and students and faculty are held accountable for their actions. This action to take care of a problem that occurs in every high school in this area is the act of responsible administrators and parents who are taking action rather than burying their heads in the sand.

EARNIE WILLIAMSON,
Fort Wayne.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

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

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

ST. JOSEPH'S DAY BREAKFAST

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform my colleagues about an important event, the St. Joseph's Day Breakfast, that will be held on March 18th, and I strongly urge anyone who can be present to attend. The St. Joseph's Day Breakfast is sponsored by a truly exceptional organization called the Faith and Politics Institute.

The St. Joseph's Day Breakfast celebrates the day of St. Joseph, who is the patron saint of the worker. This event brings Members of Congress together with leaders of our Nation's labor unions. As they break bread together, they will remember the religious values and the moral imperative that underlie the struggle for economic justice.

This is a bipartisan event sponsored by our colleagues the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JOHN LEWIS) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. AMO HOUGHTON) to honor those who have acted courageously on behalf of the working men and women of our country. The St. Joseph's Day Breakfast is also the primary event of the Faith and Politics Institute, and the motto of this wonderful organization best sums up their goals and their accomplishments: spirit, community and conscience in public life.

The Faith and Politics Institute was established in 1991 as an interfaith, nonpartisan approach to reach consensus across party lines and break down the polarization that often engulfs our body. The mission of Faith and Politics seeks to provide occasions for moral reflection and spiritual community to political leaders, and draws upon the moral lessons and religious traditions to encourage civility and respect for one another and differing opinions.

These values, civility and respect, are essential to our strong democracy, and toward this end Faith and Politics have brought Mark Gerzon to Washington for private meetings a year before he led our Members into the historic bipartisan Hershey retreat.

Since its inception, the Institute has brought to Capitol Hill a combination of theological perspective, spiritual sensitivity, and political know-how as it has undertaken projects on behalf of labor, race, economic exploitation, the environment, and kindness to all. Last June this marvelous organization kicked off, with the help of General

Colin Powell, the "Congressional Conversations on Race", which is spearheaded by a bipartisan steering committee made up of equal numbers of Republican and Democrat Members.

The goal is to "evoke the potential among Members of Congress, seeking spiritual insights to provide creative moral leadership on racial issues." They have already sponsored many events to bring about a dialogue on race, and will continue to do so, understanding that the "serious of experiences to deepen Members' understandings and to strengthen their leadership in the realm of race relations" is a worthy goal.

Mr. Speaker, I respectfully urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to get involved with this wonderful Institute, to go to the breakfast, if they can, because it is good for us individually and good for the country as a whole.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

A NATIONAL HOLIDAY FOR CESAR CHAVEZ

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

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and remember a great American leader and hero, Cesar Chavez. He was a husband, father, grandfather, labor organizer, community leader and symbol of the ongoing struggle for equal rights and equal opportunity. March 31, the birthday of Cesar Chavez, has already been declared a State holiday in my State of

California. Today I ask my colleagues to join me in making March 31 a Federal holiday so that our entire Nation can honor Cesar Chavez for his many contributions.

Cesar was the son of migrant farm workers who dedicated his life to fighting for the human rights and dignity of farm laborers. He was born on March 31, 1927, on a small farm near Yuma, Arizona, and died nearly 6 years ago in April of 1993. Over the course of his 66-year life, Cesar Chavez' work inspired millions and made him a major force in American history.

In 1962, Cesar Chavez and his family founded the National Farm Workers Association which organized thousands of farm workers to confront one of the most powerful industries in our Nation. He inspired them to join together and nonviolently demand safe and fair working conditions.

Through the use of a grape boycott, he was able to secure the first union contracts for farm workers in this country. These contracts provided farm workers with the basic services that most workers take for granted, services such as clean drinking water and sanitary facilities. Because of his fight to enforce child labor laws, farm workers could also be certain that their children would not be working side by side with them and would instead attend the migrant schools he helped to establish. In addition, Cesar Chavez made the world aware of the exposure to dangerous chemicals that farm workers and every consumer faces every day.

As a labor leader, he earned great support from unions and elected officials across the country. The movement he began continues today as the United Farm Workers of America.

Cesar Chavez' influence extends far beyond agriculture. He was instrumental in forming the Community Service Organization, one of the first civic action groups in the Mexican-American communities of California and Arizona.

He worked in urban areas, organized voter registration drives, brought complaints against mistreatment by government agencies. He taught community members how to deal with governmental, school and financial institutions and empowered many thousands to seek further advancement in education and politics. There are countless stories of judges, engineers, lawyers, teachers, church leaders, organizers and other hardworking professionals who credit Cesar Chavez as the inspiring force in their lives.

During a time of great social upheaval, he was sought out by groups from all walks of life and all religions to help bring calm with his nonviolent practices. In his fight for peace, justice, respect and self-determination, he gained the admiration and respect of millions of Americans and most Members of this House of Representatives.

Cesar Chavez will be remembered for his tireless commitment to improve the plight of farm workers, children

and the poor throughout the United States and for the inspiration his heroic efforts gave to so many Americans.

We in Congress must make certain that the movement Cesar Chavez began and the timeless lessons of justice and fairness he taught be preserved and honored in our national conscience. To make sure that these fundamental principles are never forgotten, I urge my colleagues to support House Joint Resolution 22 which would declare March 31 as a Federal holiday in honor of Cesar Chavez. In the words of Cesar and the United Farm Workers, *si se puede, yes, we can.*

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

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

FISCAL DISCIPLINE AND REDUCING THE DEBT

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

Mr. HOEFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because we stand on a threshold of a truly remarkable time, a time when we will be able to do wonderful things for this country and for our children.

In fiscal year 2001, we will have for the first time in decades a surplus in our budget, in the general fund budget. What we do with this surplus will tell a great deal about us, about our resolve, about how serious we are in providing a strong, fiscally sound country for those who come after us.

Some would have us spend this surplus on a multitude of well-intentioned programs and initiatives. But this is a time for restraint, not largesse. Others would have us return the surplus to the American people in the form of broad, across-the-board tax cuts. But for the average taxpayer, that would provide a small short-term gain when we have the ability to provide a much longer term and larger benefit.

That benefit can be provided if we use this projected surplus over the next 15 years to keep the budget balanced and pay down the national debt.

Under the administration's debt reduction program, our debt payments will be reduced from today's level of 14 percent of the national budget to only 2 percent by the year 2015.

The numbers are huge. We owe in public debt \$3.7 trillion. Under the President's debt reduction plan, that would be reduced to \$1.3 trillion by 2015. This would be an immense gift to the American people, and it would benefit all Americans, families, farmers and businesses. It would provide a real long-term benefit to almost every economic level of American society, unlike a broad, across-the-board tax cut