

1974, and soybeans at its lowest since 1972. The Times article notes that in one of the poorest rural counties, the average income is less than \$4,000, while in Manhattan, New York, the average income is close to \$70,000. In rural North Carolina, where I come from, last year alone in the State we lost 32,000 manufacturing jobs because of plant closings and layoffs, 43 percent more than we lost in 1998. An old plant closed and a new plant opened in Ashe County. Only 200 of the 300 workers were retained. The new plant laid off workers because computers now do the jobs that they did.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, in many parts of America, the help-wanted ads are full, unemployment rates are low, incomes are high, wealth is being accumulated. Not so in rural America. A \$15 million satellite site opened recently in North Carolina to support the needs of a \$350 million plant. Because of computers, only three workers were hired to operate this satellite plant.

What can we do, Mr. Speaker? We can emphasize education, preparing our students, and training our workers to compete in an increasingly high-tech and global economy. We can provide incentives to business to locate in rural America. We can improve our infrastructure, provide better water and sewer systems.

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We can begin to close the digital divide and provide Internet access to even those in remote, rural areas, and we can improve our roads, helping to get rural goods and services to customers throughout the Nation and throughout the world.

Most importantly, we can and we must use organizations like our recently organized rural caucus as a place to discuss, a place to generate new ideas. We can strengthen the economy in rural America and allow for all of our citizens to share in our Nation's growth. We can close the income and wealth gap in that it is growing between urban and rural America. We can strengthen our economy, Mr. Speaker, in rural America, and we must.

#### EDUCATION IS TOP PRIORITY FOR AMERICANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GARY MILLER of California). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, we are here today to talk about the tremendous progress that we have made in education over the past 7 years. Even better, over the past 5 years, we have seen some measurable results. Fourth grade reading scores in high-poverty schools are up. Eighth grade math scores are up. The gender gap in math and science scores are shrinking. The number of advanced placement

tests, the AP tests with scores meeting college requirements increased overall, and more importantly, also for minorities and women. More high school students are taking tougher classes and are including the AP classes which are the advanced placement classes. More women and Hispanics and minorities are going to college than ever before. These are all just over the last 5 years.

Mr. Speaker, this is all good news, and the progress we have made has been largely due to the Clinton administration and the efforts they have made throughout the country with good, sound solutions for our Nation's children. Knowing that 90 percent of our school-age population attend public schools, many of us here have worked hard with the administration to ensure that States and school districts are working together to reform their systems where they are. Along with the reforms is the need to hold our students accountable and make sure that they are held to higher standards. Raising standards, which we have been doing and talking about for much of the past decade, means that all children are reading well by the end of the third grade, and making sure that our eighth graders are on the college track and are taking algebra and geometry.

This is really a reform that has been working, and it is something that we as Democrats feel very strongly about and need to continue to make that commitment.

At the heart of the Clinton administration and the Democrats' reform is the focus on literacy. In 1996, we worked with the administration to implement the America Reads program, which mobilized communities to work together to fight illiteracy. This has been effective, especially with our community colleges working with our local school districts. In addition to the America Reads program, we have made sure that landmark legislation to support local and State efforts to improve literacy through professional development, as well as family literacy programs and tutoring. Let me add that we have found also some startling results, that when we work with parents on literacy, we also find that those youngsters of those parents have a direct impact in making sure that they also stay in school, and a lot of them choose not to drop out.

Reading scores in San Antonio have improved over the last 5 years and it is due to these investments that we have made, both in the Federal and some of the local level areas.

Clearly, ensuring that our children are literate and that reading is a priority is not a new agenda item. The presidential candidates would like to think that it is new. Reading is not a new agenda and claiming credit for educational reform is unfounded.

During a press conference on March 28, Governor George Bush claimed progress for reading scores in Texas. I would like to read an excerpt from the Department of Education press release

in response to this claim. That particular claim indicated that educational reform in the State of Texas has happened largely as a solid foundation that was set back in the 1980s by Governor White, and also a particular commission that he had developed by Ross Perot. He was revolutionary at the time and implemented reform measures much like what we are advocating today, in which we are advocating smaller class sizes, which makes sense; a significant increase in funding for education; a focus on qualified teachers and making sure that we do have those qualified teachers.

Mr. Speaker, these are the measurements we have been implementing in the last 20 years, items that 20 years ago that we have been contributing to making progress as we move forward.

I would like to bring to the attention of my colleagues a cartoon that was in the Washington Post of April 1, 2000, and the young man, as we have here, and the older man who says, here is my plan to boost child literacy, by spending another \$5 billion, and then the response is, how can you afford this and your tax cut? The response: Hey, this is my reading plan. Math comes later.

We are going to hear a great deal of these kinds of talks. The bottom line is we need to do the math now. The reality is, and we know that for the last 2 years we have had a surplus. Our last surplus was about \$170 billion, and it has estimated, and this is an estimation only, that for the next decade, we probably will have approximately \$170 billion to \$200 billion for the next 10 years.

The bottom line is that if we have a \$2 trillion tax cut after we figure that out, and we can do the math as this young man here did the math, the result is that what revenues are we going to have for Social Security? What revenues are we going to have for Medicare? What revenues are we going to have for education? The answer has to be none if we go with this tax cut.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to talk about the fact that the Republican opposition has basically proposed two major propositions, and that is, one, vouchers, and the other, block grants. We recognize that in order to respond to these we have a variety of issues that we need to deal with, and the solutions are varied.

I want to take this opportunity, because I know we have with us some Members that have joined with me this evening, and I want to acknowledge the fact that we have the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. NAPOLITANO), and since she is here with me, I want to ask her, since she has done some great, tremendous work, and I want to ask her to comment. I thank the gentlewoman from California for joining me this evening, and I yield to her at this time.

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, it is really important for us to acknowledge that this administration and the congressional Democrats have been at the forefront on educational reform

and improving our public schools and helping to ensure that our students have the basic skills to succeed in this upcoming global economy of ours.

Some of the points that I needed to make sure that I brought out and hit upon is that we have been trying for a very lengthy time to keep Hispanic children in schools. We have made that a priority, to help Hispanic students stay in school. The Hispanic education action plan targeted more than \$30 million to help transform schools with high dropout rates, especially districts that have populations that are largely migrant workers. I say to my colleagues, you do not understand, or if you lived in my area you would have a good feel of how important this particular issue is.

I have some schools that may have as high as a 70 percent dropout rate from high school of Hispanic children, and that does not make for a good economy anywhere in the United States.

Now, if we are able to help keep these young people in school and be able to provide any assistance, whether it is tutoring or any of the kind of family assistance that these children may need to be able to succeed, then we are helping, we are helping communities be more viable and helping our economy, because these young people will eventually become leaders in our areas.

We also have to help students finish college. We proposed a new college completion challenge grant to help reduce the college dropout rate with pre-freshman summer programs, support services and increased grant aid to students. This is a \$35 million initiative to improve the chances of success for nearly 18,000 students. That may be a beginning, hopefully, because I know that more than 18,000 students not only are needy of being able to receive the assistance, but also are deserving of being able to get assistance from us. We need to turn around our failing schools.

There are 11 million low-income students now benefiting from Title I aid to the disadvantaged students, and all our children are benefiting from this higher expectation and the challenging curriculum that accompanies it, which is geared to higher standards. Our 2000 budget provides an additional \$134 million, account bit fund, to help turn around the worst performing schools and hold them accountable for results.

Now, 30 percent of children served by Title I are Hispanic. That tells us that we are failing our young people. We are not providing them with the tools to be successful, and consequently, I think that this Congress has done a great service to be able to target and begin focusing on those issues.

I can tell my colleagues just quickly that the more we provide high-quality teachers, and the more we provide smaller class size, the better our students are going to be. I can point to a group of middle school students that are going to be coming to New York to perform at Carnegie hall. These are

middle school students out of one of my schools, one of my district schools, that have not only performed in the Rose Parade in Pasadena, but are also performing a full orchestral ensemble in New York City. It is because they had a teacher who was of high quality, who cared about these young people and taught them that they can achieve anything they set their mind to. I am very proud of them, and I certainly want to share that with everybody so that others may learn that our youngsters, ages seven, eight, and nine, can also reach those heights.

We have increased the funding for Pell grants. We have increased educational funding for migrant families. There are many of these important things for the State that I represent that are becoming viable for our people, and I certainly want to congratulate my democratic colleagues and those that helped us put these measures through.

Again, education is the key for our young people to succeed, and I am glad to be here to be part of the thrust to achieve that for them.

I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman for those kind words. I know you stressed the importance of some of the solutions, and one of the things that the gentlewoman mentioned is also in terms of early childhood. I know how critical that is. I know Head Start has done some tremendous work, and that early start is critical. Reaching out to those 3 year olds and 4 year olds is real important. The quicker we get those youngsters into our educational system, the quicker they will be able to compete and be able to get that head start that they need.

We also have with us another Californian who I have the opportunity of sharing a committee with, the Committee on Armed Services. I thank the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SANCHEZ) for joining me tonight in talking about education.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for the time that he has yielded to me.

I really am grateful that the gentleman is talking tonight about the state of education and I think there are a lot of things, with the gentleman's background, that he could tell us about in Texas, the Texas experience. In particular, we are looking at a presidential election coming up, and the gentleman's governor, the governor of the gentleman's State, is on the Republican side. I know what the Republicans have not done with respect to education here in the House of Representatives.

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So I am interested, because I have heard so many things about what is coming out of Texas. I think the gentleman is a great person to talk about that tonight.

There are certain things that we know. We know that the type of child that enters the school system, it is important that they are healthy. We know that it is important that they come to school and they are ready to learn; i.e., they are not thinking about being hungry; third, that when they come to kindergarten, they do best when they have already gone through a preschool program or a Head Start program.

I would be very interested to find out from the gentleman what his feelings are with respect to the readiness of children who go in Texas under the gentleman's Governor.

For example, I know that in California, one of the biggest things that we did in the last couple of years was to match the Federal funds in order to put in an insurance program for health for our children in California. Those were children of working parents.

That is beginning to make a difference, because now we have children who have access to health care, so they are healthy when they are starting out in the program.

Secondly, of course, we know a few years ago the Republicans in this House tried to eliminate the lunch program that we have in the schools. I just remember reading in the paper about Governor George Bush, and how he said that there were no hungry people in the State of Texas, when in fact his State is the number two State in the Nation with children who go to bed without food in their bellies.

So I am interested to find out what has been going on in Texas, if the gentleman can tell us.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentlewoman for her question.

In Texas, we were the last State to go into the CHIPS programs, the insurance program for youngsters. These are individuals who are uninsured. I would remind Americans that in America we have both Medicare for our seniors, we have Medicaid for our indigent, but one of the things that we find is that we have a large number of people working, working Americans, who do not have access to insurance. Texas has the largest number of uninsured individuals.

The Clinton administration, one of the things that they have done, as the gentlewoman well knows, is that we have pushed on assuring that these youngsters were insured. Texas was the last State to move into this program. In addition to that, the funding they provided only extended to 60 percent of them, which means that only five to six out of the 10 that actually qualify will be able to get service, which is unfortunate.

The gentlewoman mentioned also in terms of not only health but also in terms of nutrition. Even those individuals that qualify for food stamps, we find that there is a study that out of 10 that qualify, less than four are actually receiving it because of the bureaucratic nature that is there. In fact,

some of those particular complaints came from the grocery industry in Texas, and people say that there are less people participating. It is because they made it very bureaucratic in nature.

I want to go back a little bit in terms of education. The gentlewoman also mentions the importance of early childhood education and how important it is to start. In Texas, we still only fund half-day kindergarten, so we still have a long way from that perspective.

We have made some strides, but it has been a combination of years, and a lot of credit has been given to Governor White in the 1980s, and also to the third-party candidate, Ross Perot, who was on the committee that basically helped to revolutionize a lot of the things that we have there. But we still have a long way to go in making sure that we provide sufficient resources.

For our teachers, we rank almost 47th in terms of expenditures, salaries for teachers, and in some of those categories. So we are really not pleased with where we are at. I think we have a long way to go. That is why I am real pleased about some of the propositions that we have.

One is construction. I know we have been proposing on the House floor the importance of making sure that we have money for construction. Most of our schools, if we look at the studies that have been done, came close to 60 years old. In Texas, some are even older. As the gentlewoman well knows, I live in a home that is 70 years old. That was prior to the microwave.

We recognize the importance of making sure we have good wiring for the new technology, and we need to make sure that we get that burst of resources that is needed.

Along with construction money, and everyone has said this, when I did hearings on school violence one of the things they said was that we need smaller classroom sizes, so there is an importance to add qualified teachers out there. The administration pushed to put 100,000 new teachers out there, and that is really important, as the gentlewoman well knows; and qualified teachers. So that is key.

Along with that comes the need to make sure that we have the classrooms. A lot of Americans out there, we need to recognize the fact that in the 1950s and 1960s we had a boom, the baby boomers. The generation then decided that we needed to come up to the plate and build new schools.

Now we have, as the gentlewoman well knows, we have what we call the baby echo, the kids of those baby boomers, our children. So it becomes real important that we also come up to the plate and build those schools that are needed, where the demographics show that we do have a lot of youngsters out there.

They are smart youngsters, individuals who are doing extremely well.

They are a lot sharper than we ever were at that age. But at the same time, we need to make sure that they have the opportunity to learn and have the technology.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I am glad that my colleague brought up two of the issues that are most important and dearest to my heart.

The gentleman started by talking about Head Start. As most people here in the Congress know, I got my start in 1965 in the first year that Head Start existed when I was a child in that program. So I am proud to be the Head Start child of Congress.

I get very worried because I see an administration, the Clinton-Gore administration, that has proposed \$1 billion of more, more funding for Head Start, getting our kids prepared so that when they start at the starting line of the competition, at kindergarten, they are all equal when they get there, so they are not behind the starting line.

The President and the Vice President have proposed \$1 billion worth of more Head Start. In my county, in Orange County, only about one-third of the children who actually qualify for Head Start are funded, so I am really looking forward to that.

Then I take a look at Governor Bush's proposal on funding for education, his Federal education proposal. I see that he has no funds for Head Start. I think, well, why is that? Then I look at his tax cut plan and I know why, because where he is cutting is essentially that program which I think made such an impact in my life and which has made an impact on so many children's lives.

And then of course the whole issue of school construction. As the gentleman knows, since I have been here, I have been carrying a bill on school construction, trying to get more schools built, because in California we did for 2 or 3 years now, as our colleague who used to be in the House in California, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. NAPOLITANO) noted, we did lower the amount of kids per teacher in California down to 20 to one in the first, second, and third grade level in California.

Everywhere I go, and I have visited probably 130 schools in my district alone, first grade teachers tell me that the biggest difference they have seen is the lower amount of kids. Kids in kindergarten and first grade are reading now at a third grade level in some of my schools, and they attribute it to being able to have a smaller amount of kids and be able to teach them one on one.

And then they add, you know, we need more schools, school classes. We need more places. We have parents who come and volunteer, but we do not have a class where they can come in and work on the projects for the school, for the children.

This whole issue of school construction becomes so important, not just

from a technology and modernization standpoint but from a room perspective, a place to grow our children.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I am glad the gentlewoman mentioned that, because I think we all recognize that the solutions to some of our problems are not one answer but a variety of responses.

I think some of the responses need to go even beyond the teacher. We have a tendency also to blame the school for everything. It was interesting to see that one of the schools that was cited in Florida by Jeff Bush, by the way, as not doing very good, in fact doing very poorly, was a school district that had a large percentage of mobility. They had a housing project where a lot of the teachers that had those youngsters, they only had them for a few weeks sometimes and they would move on. So that, in some cases, what we need is a combination of programs that help out the community.

I had mentioned earlier that programs that help adults become literate are some of the best programs that help younger kids, their kids, to stay in school, so that it is a combination.

One of the things that I wanted to share with the gentlewoman was that I got a report by some of the school social workers in Texas that they were having problems with youngsters staying in school, and part of the problems that they identified were child care; that in Texas we have a waiting list of individuals, because the State has chosen not to fully participate on child care for individuals who are in need. The importance of child care for families as well as those individuals that receive the care is great. Other factors that are around the community have a direct impact on our communities.

I know the gentlewoman mentioned the fact that if we want a \$2 trillion tax cut, then that is what we are going to get, but we are not going to get anything for social security, we cannot get anything for Medicare, and we cannot get anything for education. In fact, it presupposes that the economy will continue to have those surpluses of \$170 to \$200 billion each year. So we need to be frugal. We need to be responsible in making sure that we meet those needs.

I know the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SANCHEZ) agrees with me in terms of also the importance of teacher quality and how key that is. Especially one of the things that I like to emphasize is the importance of bilingual education in our schools.

When I started school, I did not know any English. I started, and the statistics show that for someone who does not know any English, that it requires 5 to 7 years for them to be able to pick up a second language. In this case, my second language was English, since I knew Spanish.

So when I look in terms of my grades, and I spent 2 years back then, and it seemed like every Mexican-American, every Mexican spent 2 years in the first grade, and we had no bilingual education. So I really did not

know what was happening until almost the fifth grade. It took me almost 6 years to kind of catch on to what was going on; the importance of bilingual teachers that are well-trained, well educated. I was real pleased to see the administration move on dual language instruction.

Most people do not understand that dual language instruction means it is basically what we are doing now with some of our gifted youngsters, it is what we are doing now with some of the people that go to private schools, where we teach them not only one language, but two.

We find that that is the best time to learn a second language is prior to puberty, because people do not realize that the accent, if a person has an accent, usually it is a result of the fact that they learn the second language after puberty.

If we can begin to introduce in America the possibility, and I am real optimistic that we can do dual language instruction, and we can teach English-speaking youngsters, whether they are English-speaking only, another language, whether it be Spanish or German or other, French.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Or any of the other 92 languages I have in Orange County, where children come from a home that speaks something other than English.

I am glad the gentleman brought that up, because this whole idea of what we do about another language is very troubling for some people across the United States, especially those who have not been in a classroom recently and have not seen what is going on.

I guess a lot of us do not have the historical perspective of why bilingual education became such an important part to those communities that came with a different language to school in large numbers.

The California experience speaks for itself. Earlier in the history of California, before I got to school but not that much before, if you spoke Spanish and you got to the classroom, and you had 18 kids who spoke English and you had two who spoke Spanish, there was no accommodation for them.

Therefore, if you were not at that grade level, the first time maybe you were held back, but the second time you were probably diagnosed as mentally retarded. People were actually labeled that. Then they were put in a class of mentally retarded people. So that is the historical perspective of how we began, and we fought for having a second language like Spanish used in the classroom to get our students up to level and to get them transitioned over to English.

I think a lot of times the American public does not know historically what happened with that situation, but today there are so many people coming, so many students coming with different language backgrounds that this whole idea of immersion and learning the two is actually a great concept, and one that I have seen work over and over in the classroom.

I will just end by saying that I look at education, sitting on the Committee on Education and the Workforce, quite a bit back in my district in California, which as Members know, is a bellwether State for supposedly what will be the future of the United States.

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I am always interested to see what happens between the States and where a person's perspective is coming from. When we do the testing, for example, in California of our students, we do those also that have a hardship with the language. Our tests tend to be lower because of that.

I have heard that, in Texas, while Governor Bush has been touting such great scores, that, in fact, it is because they eliminate a lot of these children and either classify them as special education and keep them out of the actual test scores that are reported.

I wanted to get a comment from the gentleman from Texas on that since he is, in particular, from an area, San Antonio, where I have heard that, in just a year, there used to be 35 percent of students in a particular school who were special ed students, and, in the next year, because of these tests, almost 62 percent of them were now special ed and were kept out of this whole series of how one tests the children. Can the gentleman from Texas comment to that?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, let me just comment a little bit. I think in some cases in Texas I think we might have gone overboard with the amount of testing. In fact, there was a survey that was done recently on, I think, third graders that took about 22 tests, different types of tests. There is a great deal of emphasis on tests to the point that a great number of our teachers are very concerned that most of the emphasis is basically teaching to the tests, which brings up the issue of the fact that we need to make sure that we prepare our youngsters to be able to think and be able to comprehend and be able to learn without having to teach to the test. Yes, there has been some criticism in some of the schools that that has been occurring and that some of that has been happening.

But, again, some of the progress that we have seen has been a result of, not just what happened in the last 4 years. It is like me, I came in 3 years ago. The first month I came in, they balanced the budget. It is kind of like saying I came in in 30 days and took care of the budget for you. My colleagues know that that is not correct.

I would say that that has been an effort that has been going on. Part of the credit belongs to Governor White in the 1980s. Part of the credit belongs to a lot of the people that have worked hard down there. We still have a long way to go. Part of the credit belongs to Ross Perot and the committee that he had in Texas and making some things happen.

Joining us also tonight is the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN). I am

going to ask her to say a few words. I know she is familiar with Jeb Bush there in Florida, and I know she wanted to make some comments as it deals with affirmative action policies that impact on education and various other comments.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN).

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Texas for really holding this special order.

It is interesting that George Bush, like his brother Jeb Bush in the State of Florida, has promised to improve the educational gap between minorities and white students by trying to do away with affirmative action. I was not at all surprised to learn from my Texas colleagues that under the governorship of George W. Bush in 1996 and 1997, Texas ranked 38 in the Nation for financial aid given to needy students, and that Governor Bush did not include any additional Head Start funds in his 1999 Federal education proposal, despite the fact that it is currently serving only two in five eligible children.

Today I want to talk about the Bush brothers' attack on affirmative action and what has gone on in my State of Florida. In Florida, Governor Jeb Bush is attempting to ram an education plan through the State of Florida called "One Florida." In reality, this plan should be called "Florida School for the Elite." This plan does away with affirmative action in Florida's university admissions.

I am here today as a Member of Congress because of a tool called the Voting Rights Act. It took Florida 127 years to send an African American to Congress, and that was just 8 years ago. So we really still have problems in Florida.

Thurgood Marshall, who was the only Supreme Court Justice, in my opinion, African American, but he said a snake is a snake. It does not matter whether that snake is a black snake or a white snake. If he bites you, the result is the same.

Now, Governor Bush, Jeb, has tried to mislead the people of Florida by telling them that the Clinton administration and the Department of Education support his initiative. That is not true. The policy of the Clinton administration on affirmative action is mend it; do not end it. Mend it; do not end it.

Florida has never been a color-blind or gender-neutral State. In fact, race is a factor and is a factor that is very important. Recently upheld in the Supreme Court, a decision as recently as in 1995, is the Adarand decision.

The law of the land still affirms that affirmative action is lawful in the United States of America. It is in the Government's interest to address this limited minority participation in the social and economic structure of this country.

Now, I want my colleagues to know that my governor had a special session

on how we are going to kill people in Florida, how we are going to execute them in Florida, but would not have one on how are we going to save our kids.

Florida ranks 47th with the number of our graduates that attend higher education, ranks 47th. But yet we want to come up with a plan that would exclude another group from attending our universities.

The real sad thing about it is the courses, he talks about the top 20, half of the courses that they are talking about are not even offered in the public school system in Florida. Half of the courses are not even offered.

So when we were discussing this matter, they say, do not worry about it, do not worry about it. We will put these classes on the Internet. What a joke. Have they not heard of the digital divide? The computers are not in the community. They are not in the schools.

I have been a representative in Florida for over 18 years, and I know what happened as far as the funding of the educational system. The schools that I represent are the ones on the other side of the track, on the other side of the bridge, on the other side of the railroad track. They are the ones that have not been funded.

So we have this A Plus plan and the F plan, and we are going to give money to the A plus schools. Those are the schools that have been given the money all along. The D-F schools, as opposed to try to improve those schools, well, we are going to give them a voucher. So what we are trying to do in Florida is destroy public education. Give them a piece of paper that does not cover the costs.

In fact, 90 percent of the kids in Florida and in this country go to public schools. So rather than addressing the problem, what we are doing, we are coming up with gimmicks and slogans.

People need to understand that it is not who comes to your barbecue, it is how they stand on the issues that is important to you. This has really been a wake-up call in Florida.

Our late governor, Lawton Chiles, as recently as 1998, signed an agreement with the Federal Government to improve minority participation and female participation in higher education in Florida. Not only recruitment, but recruitment and retention because of the historical problems that we have experienced in Florida.

Let me give my colleagues another statistic in Florida. In school districts that are 40 percent black and 60 percent white, 95 percent of the special education students are black boys. Special ed is not a way to go to college. We need to work on that. As I said before, Florida ranks 47th with the number of our graduates that go on to college. We in Florida need to be working to try to improve that program.

I also said almost 50 percent of the African Americans in Florida go to schools that do not even offer the

courses that they are requiring. They say, well, in the top 20 percent, what we will do is we will admit you to a school, a school; but we are not including the schools like the University of Florida, Florida State, or the University of Central Florida.

Do not sit here and tell me tonight that the only students that should be able to go to University of Florida are our fine basketball players and football players. No, we want kids in law school and medical school. We want to have others. There is a provision to exclude basketball and football.

But I have to be concerned today as I speak where we have one student graduating at the University of Texas and the University of California, one African American in law. They have the same number as the University of Mississippi.

We are not going to let that happen in Florida. I am committed that our State will remain one of inclusion, that we will consider all of our kids.

I can really thank the Bush boys, because this has really been a wake-up call for us in Florida. We have been kind of brain dead and not involved. But that is over. We are going to be involved in the education of our kids and the future of all of our kids.

Lyndon Johnson says it is not enough to open the gates of opportunity. All of our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates. Let us remember what President Clinton remarked in his latest visit to Selma. He said, "We have come a long way, but our journey is not over." I mean, because of all of the great things that has gone on in this country, we have to make sure that all of our kids, black and white, get an opportunity to cross the bridge.

Mr. RODRÍGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I know the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN) mentioned the issue in terms of the number in Texas. It is appalling to see that the law school at the UT, which is supposed to be a little more liberal than most, had accepted 500. Of those, I think they had about four African Americans. Then only one that actually went in.

So I would agree with the gentlewoman from Florida that, if they outreach the way they do for athletics, they could definitely outreach to get some qualified African Americans to go to law school in Texas.

I know that that is unfortunate that those situations exist. I know when the Hopwood case came up in Texas, we were extremely disappointed that this was not the law of the land. This was a case in the district, and it was not one that should have been.

But as soon as that came out, they wanted to make sure they followed it without recognizing that there were still other cases out there that talked about the importance of doing the right thing.

In most cases, even after the cases come about, we need to continue to ask people throughout the country to do

the right thing. If one has 500 applicants and one does not have a single African American, there is a problem there. There is a need for us to really kind of look at that. We would ask those institutions, they do not need a law to tell them they have got a problem. They should be able to see it.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. That is correct, Mr. Speaker. I want to tell my colleagues that one of the problems is that these proposals is top down, not bottom up.

I talked with the deans, for example, from the school of nursing. What she indicated to me was that all of their applicants have over 3.0 average. But it is important when they decide or develop the class, there should be some reflection as to the communities that they are going to be going back working in.

There is a shortage of African Americans and Hispanics in the allied health. It is important that it includes it.

One cannot come here and talk about affirmative action and not talk about the history of this country. That is part of the problem. We have had years of slavery, years of Jim Crow, and 35 years of half hearted trying to do the right thing or not even pretending to do the right thing.

So now this is supposed to be some magical day and that it is over and we are not going to consider race. Race is a factor, and we must consider the historical fact.

The gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK), when she was in Florida, bright, young lady, could not go to the institutions in Florida. She had to go out of State for education.

Many, many of my colleagues, that was the situation. In certain programs, one could not go to our flagships. One could not go to the University of Florida. One could not go to Florida State. Now, when we are just beginning to make a difference, we are talking about, well, we are going to do away with all of these programs.

Let me tell my colleagues about women, I mean, because that is an area where, even though we have been able to get women into various colleges, we have not gotten into certain programs, like engineering programs or the high-paying technical programs.

So in that agreement that we signed with the Federal Government, we indicated that we would make sure that we would recruit women, not only recruit them, but have programs there for the retention of women in higher education, in various fields.

So we are not going to go back, as I said, not in Florida. We are going to move forward.

Mr. RODRÍGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from Florida for her comments.

Mr. Speaker, I also have with us the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GONZALEZ) who is also joining me from San Antonio. He will be making some comments.

The gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN), I know the comments she has

made are serious. I know in Texas we have a long way to go, and I want to thank the gentlewoman for those comments. I know she mentioned also a little bit in terms of making sure that we provide for our youngsters. As we enter this new century, we have to make sure that one of those cornerstones is making sure that our classrooms are well wired, that our classrooms are well equipped to be able to handle the new technology.

One of the things that, under this administration, I was real pleased to see that we have expanded, when Clinton started, we had only 3 percent that were connected to the Internet. That has gone to 63 percent. It is still not there. We still have a long way to go.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, can my colleagues imagine Florida saying, courses that one has to take, they are going to put them on the Internet? Even though they are wired, they are not hooked up. My colleagues can go to schools in my district, and half of the schools we do not have computers in the classrooms.

My colleagues go to another side of the track, there is computers in all of the classrooms. There are refrigerators and air conditioners. No matter where a kid attends school in this great country, we should have "A" schools all over. We do not destroy our system by doing away with the schools. We work to bring all of the standards up.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I am on the Committee on Armed Services, and I really feel that part of our national defense is going to be directly tied into the level of our education of our people, just like economics.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from San Antonio, Texas (Mr. GONZALEZ), and ask him to join us in the comments.

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas very much for this opportunity to join him tonight along with other colleagues that are discussing one of the most important issues facing our Nation, and that is the adequacy of our education system.

They say that a picture is worth 1,000 words; and that is what I have here today. It is going to be a series of six pictures that I have blown up. I think as people view this, they will be able to relate to it because this is an experience, this is a situation that basically exists in everyone's home district.

This first picture is a picture of one of those buildings that are more often called temporary but really are permanent. My colleagues know what I am talking about, those that went up sometimes as long as 30 years ago.

Now, safety is going to be an obvious consideration here. My colleagues can see that it is on blocks. There is an open area underneath there. The sign on the wall says that all visitors stop at the office.

But we know in today's climate, and if one wants one's children in a safe environment, does one want the building

out there that is easily accessible to anyone off of the streets? Of course not. This is the problem that we have.

We will go to photo number 2. Now, this is going to be a picture that is kind of dear to my heart, and there is going to be a special reason for it. Back here, my colleagues see these temporary buildings. They see the old existing building. This is Mark Twain Middle School.

This school is located six blocks from my home. Now, my brothers and sisters went to that school. My father also went to that school. My father will be 84 years old this May. He went to this school more than 70 years ago. That is going to be part of our problem. That is the aging, deteriorating condition of our schools.

In this school, the amazing thing is that kids from these temporary buildings have to go into the main building regardless of weather because that is where the student bathroom is located. They do not have any facilities even near this particular building. I am very familiar with that campus.

We will go to number 3 now.

□ 1900

We all think of libraries as a place of learning. Look at this library. The paint is all peeling off the ceiling. We can see it. It actually flakes and falls off of the ceilings onto the teachers and students on a weekly basis.

What is really startling here is that we see about 10 computers. Those 10 computers serve 900 students at Mark Twain Middle School in San Antonio, Texas.

We will go to number 4. Thank God for counselors; right? Now we can see the counselors' office. Three counselors for 1,000 students; and this is where they are counseled. I will tell my colleagues that I have been in that room, and I am convinced that was once a utility closet. They did not tell me that, but I know they are utilizing other closets for other purposes such as offices.

We will go to picture number 5. Now, do they need space? The good news was that recently the school district bought some additional chairs, and so they brought these boxes in. They just did not know where to put them while they moved out the old furniture. They do not have a square inch in that whole facility to even store anything, so these boxes of course were out there in the middle of the hallway for some time.

We will go to the last picture, number 6. One of my favorites. This is another temporary building that somehow became permanent. The majority of these buildings now, where the students are housed and taught, are really in the temporary buildings. Everyone that sees this can relate to it.

Now, we heard earlier on this floor where we had Members of Congress extolling the virtues and the wonderful performance of the Final Four in the basketball championship. I guarantee

if those kids had started off in this middle school, they would never have honed or perfected their skills, their athletic abilities, because they could not.

If my colleagues can see, back over here is the basketball goal, which is now located 3 feet from the temporary building. It is no longer a playground; it is no longer a basketball court. But that is what is happening in our schools.

By way of background, in 1995, the GAO conducted a study, and this is what they discovered: forty percent of America's schools reported needing \$36 billion to repair or replace building features such as a roof or plumbing. Something as basic as a roof or plumbing.

Two-thirds of America's schools reported needing \$11 billion over a 3-year period for repairs and renovations dealing with accessibility and health and safety problems, such as the removal of asbestos, lead in water or in the paint, and materials in underground storage tanks.

Fifty percent of America's schools reported unsatisfactory environmental conditions, such as poor ventilation, heating or lighting problems, or poor physical security, which should be uppermost in our minds.

One-third of America's schools needed extensive repair and building replacements at a cost of \$65 billion. These schools throughout the Nation house 14 million students.

The demand for Internet in our schools is at an all-time high. This study showed, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, only 39 percent of classrooms in our poorest schools have Internet access. Not having Internet access today is like not having a library.

My colleagues know what I am talking about. This is not what we wish for our children or any child in this great Nation of ours.

In addition, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that in 1999 America's schools were wearing out. The average public school in America is 42 years old, and school buildings begin rapid deterioration after 40 years. We are well aware of that.

That is the problem that faces us. So what do we do about it? Do we throw our hands up and say, oh, we cannot do anything about that; let us give in? Of course not. Our goal, though, is not all brick and mortar. Our goal is not to repair, renovate, and rebuild these schools solely to have a nice building. That is not it. It is part and parcel of a grand plan, and it is an essential component in this grand plan.

What I am talking about is reducing class size. Every parent that goes to a school where they are going to enroll their child, the first question they ask is what is the size of the class. What is the teacher-student ratio. That is the first question anyone would ask. But we do not even have the physical facility to accommodate smaller classes in

most schools in my district, which is in San Antonio.

What do we get out of reduced class size? We have safe and orderly places for learning, to begin with. We have improved performance of students and teachers. Every study reflects the smaller the class, the better an educational experience for the child. There is no doubt about that.

Now, I am not here to say that only Democrats have these concerns, and I am not here to say that only Democrats have all the answers. That is not true. We have most of the answers. And a good example of a bipartisan bill was the Rangel-Johnson Better Classroom Act. And I am now just going to briefly go over it.

This bipartisan bill would subsidize \$24.8 billion in zero interest school modernization bonds. The Federal Government would provide tax credits for the interest normally paid on these bonds. Bonds that would have gone to pay bond interest would be freed for other educational needs. For each \$1,000 of school bonds, States or local school districts would save as much as \$500 in payments. Yes, out of \$1,000, they could save \$500 in interest service payments.

So what was the Federal Government's role in this? What would be the burden on the Federal Government? What would happen to local control? States and eligible school districts would complete a review of construction and renovation needs. I repeat, the school districts and the States would conduct the studies. State plans would include processes for allocating funds to areas with the greatest needs. The Federal Government would provide a tax credit to the bond purchaser equal to the interest that would otherwise be paid on a school construction bond. No new Federal bureaucracy would be created.

So my colleagues might say, that sounds like a great idea; what happened to it? It died in a Republican-controlled committee. They are in the majority, and they can do it if they want to; and they did it in this bipartisan bill. Not bipartisan enough as far as the number of Republicans that would come and join us in this wonderful plan and proposal. But this is the problem today.

I started off my remarks by saying that a picture is worth a thousand words. I also will end it by saying that talk is cheap. Words are cheap. What we want to see is action. What we want to see are tangible results. So we may have individuals out there that are touting themselves as the education governor of Texas, but if Texas is such a great model, then I would ask all of my fellow Members in this House, 434, those that are not from Texas, I would ask them to adopt Texas as the model; strive for Texas's great place in education, if that is the great progress that has been made in the past 5 years under Governor Bush.

Talk is cheap. I ask Governor Bush and I ask Members on the other side of

the aisle to join hands. Let us not give up on an educational system that provides an education to 90 percent of the children in this country, the public school system. It needs improvement. There is no doubt about that, and we all agree. And we can do it if we work together. But we cannot replace it by simply saying we have a voucher program or let us just privatize it. That will not work.

Let us not lose faith in our public schools. If we lose faith in our public schools, we lose faith in the students. We lose faith in our children. We lose faith in our future.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman for those great comments. I think he has brought this to light in terms of one of the issues. And I want to share with the gentleman the fact that when we did a hearing on violence, one of the key things that they found was classroom size and the importance of making sure we had construction money to rebuild our schools in this country.

I think it is going to be important to make sure we upgrade our technology. We want to make sure that the digital divide does not occur and that cyber-segregation does not happen. I think it is important that every school have that opportunity to be able to provide for their youngsters what is needed.

The gentleman mentioned libraries. I know libraries are having difficulty buying books and also buying the new technology.

□ 1915

Those resources are key. And I want to take this opportunity to thank my colleague for joining me tonight as we have talked about this particular issue which is very key, and that is meeting the needs of education in this country.

As we move forward, we know that the solution is a variety of answers. Both classroom sizes, making sure we have new construction for our schools, making sure we meet those demographic needs that are out there, making sure that we have after-school programs, making sure that we reach out to those 3- and 4-year-old youngsters with Head Start and a variety of different types of programs, and also making sure we have qualified teachers that are out there providing that instruction that is needed.

That requires a commitment, and we are here to let our colleagues know that we are going to make that commitment to make sure that we meet the challenge of the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our colleagues for allowing us to have this opportunity to be here tonight and dialoguing on the important issue of education, which, as my colleague recognizes, is very important and very key to all of us and one of the things that we need to all be responsive.

#### GRANTING PERMANENT NORMAL TRADE RELATIONS TO CHINA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GARY MILLER of California). Under a

previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight in support of granting permanent normal trade relations to China, a vote that this House will face possibly as soon as next month.

I consider this to be the most important vote that I will take as a Member of Congress and am strongly in support of it, not just for the economic advantages that it will bring to the U.S., but for the far more important reason of national security and global security, a peaceful world. I think both of these issues are critically at stake in this vote that we will take.

What permanent normal trade relations for China means is that the U.S. has negotiated a trade agreement with China. In exchange for giving them permanent normal trade relations, we will get from them dramatic reductions in tariffs across the board on goods and services.

This is tied into China's entry in the WTO. But it is important to point out that, regardless of what this body does in permanent normal trade relations, China will probably enter the WTO. The rest of the world has as much to say about that as we do.

What we can decide in this House is whether or not we gain the benefits from the permanent normal trade relations treaty that was negotiated with China. In other words, will we begin the economic advantages of reduced tariffs on goods and service across the board to China.

There was a lot of concern about the trade deficit with China. What better way to reduce that than to have a trade agreement that lowers China's barriers to our goods but does nothing to change the barriers to their goods coming to our country. It helps level the playing field and would be a tremendous economic advantage for this country. In agriculture, in my own region, in aerospace and software, name it, we would have an advantage of gaining access to the Chinese market and, therefore, help improve our economy.

As I pointed out, this does not necessarily mean China will come into the WTO. The rest of the world will decide that issue. But the economics are only a tiny part of it.

What is far more important to me is the national security implications, the long-term implications that that has for this country and the rest of the world. We need to peacefully coexist with China. I, for one, do not want another Cold War.

I do not want a hostile relationship with China. We must engage with them to prevent that. I believe that we can. We have followed a policy of engagement and we must continue on that if we are to have a peaceful world. Another Cold War could lead to trade wars and can ultimately lead to military wars and World War III. I do not want that.