

agencies and city planners in the United States are able to make better decisions about health care services, social services, employment programs, transportation, and other critical areas of modern life.

The cities of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay area, for example, owe a great deal of the work to Professor McFadden in terms of his research in helping to shape the design of our Bay Area Rapid Transit commuter train system, which is very crucial to tens of thousands of people for their daily commute to work.

Professor Daniel McFadden joins 16 other Berkeley colleagues as Nobel Prize winners. This impressive roster of intellectuals also demonstrates the commitment of this university to the larger social and economic world. As an alumna of the University of California at Berkeley, I am especially proud of these accomplishments.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I congratulate Professor McFadden for his Nobel Prize award. I appreciate having this opportunity to express my appreciation for the hard work and commitment of our most recent Nobel Prize winner in economics, Professor Daniel J. McFadden.

EDUCATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on the Congress education agenda, or lack of one.

Two months ago, the Nation's schools opened their doors to the largest number of students in history. Yet, the Nation began the 2000-2001 academic year facing a national education crisis.

Our teachers and students are struggling to teach and learn in underfunded, inadequate, substandard, and crowded conditions. The average American school building is now more than 40 years old, and the estimated price tag to bring our schools into good condition is \$127 billion.

Many of our Nation's communities, like my own, are working to build and modernize schools, but they lack or have very limited funding.

Our President has proposed a school construction tax credit to help communities build and modernize 6,000 schools, and grants and loans for emergency repairs to nearly 5,000 schools a year for 5 years. This school construction relief has bipartisan support in the House of Representatives, and needs to be voted on.

Mr. Speaker, there is also substantial support in the House of Representatives for H.R. 4094, the Rangel-Johnson bill, which would amend the Tax Code to provide incentives for school construction and modernization. It has more than 225 cosponsors. I ask my colleagues to include the provisions of

that bill in the final agreement, as well.

But school modernization and reconstruction is only a beginning. Mr. Speaker, in the district of the Virgin Islands, which I represent, just under 3,000 members of the American Federation of Teachers are in the fifth day of a strike for retroactive wages and better working conditions.

When our teachers strike, our students suffer. We need the Federal government to help us in many areas so we can better address our teachers' very valid concerns and their long overdue salary increases.

We in the Congressional Black Caucus have an important education agenda. We are calling for a public school emergency recovery program, which comprehensively addresses the needs of our poorest and most needy schools. It will cost \$10 billion of the surplus.

The schools in my and other districts need this help. It is more important than a tax break for the richest 1 percent in our country, and it is a much better and more effective way to address the needs of education than our vouchers, which at best is a risky deflection of funding from public schools, where most of our Nation's children are educated.

Mr. Speaker, my daughter Rabiah is a second grade teacher at Barnard School here in the District, a school that would benefit from the CBC's proposed initiative. This week, she and other teachers are being sent home. She had 22 students in her class. Barnard School and many others need more teachers, not less, to meet the needs of their children.

The time has come for us to send a message across the Nation that our children are a priority and that we value and will invest in the education that they receive. We need to pass a budget that reflects investment in school modernization, that addresses the needs of our teachers by creating smaller classes, by increasing opportunities for training, by giving them more support staffing and programs, and by providing incentives to keep good teachers in our classrooms.

I urge our leadership to follow the will of the majority of the Members of this House by bringing to the floor and passing an education budget that fully responds to the real education needs of all segments of our Nation.

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I echo the President's call for continued work to strengthen accountability and raise test scores; to turn around failing schools or shut them down or put them under new management; to expand after school programs and college opportunities for young people; and to ensure a qualified teacher in every class.

Mr. Speaker, as we come to the end of this session of Congress, we will be saying good-bye to several of our colleagues. One of them is a steadfast champion of education as well as labor,

the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLAY). As he leaves the House after his years of distinguished service, he leaves us in this country an outstanding legacy which includes enacting legislation to strengthen Head Start, elementary and secondary education programs, and college financial aid programs, as well as many other mainstays of American education.

I can think of no more fitting tribute to his service than passing landmark funding for this Nation's public schools and creating the Congressional Black Caucus' public school emergency recovery program.

Mr. Speaker, the outcome of our end-of-the-term negotiations this year must begin with an education budget that ensures a 21st century education for each and every one of our Nation's children, truly leaving not one of them behind.

GOVERNMENT MUST DO MORE TO IMPROVE EDUCATION

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

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, for the past few years, the American people have, through numerous focus groups and polls, sent a strong message to all elected officials. Government must do more to improve education. Government at every level, the local level, the State level, and at the Federal level must do more to improve education.

Now we are finally approaching the closing days of the 106th Congress, the scandal of this session of Congress is that, despite the existence of a \$230 billion Federal surplus, to date, the Republican majority has refused to respond to the clear demand of the American voters.

The Republicans have chosen to move in the opposite direction. Republican inaction is sabotaging the Federal effort to improve our schools. Even long-standing programs, such as ESEA Title I have not been reauthorized by this Republican-controlled Congress. Only destructive proposals are being placed on the negotiations table by the Republicans.

Publicly funded school vouchers and block grants are two of the most dangerous Republican proposals on the table. Both of these radical programs will hasten the demise of the public school systems in our Nation.

We call on President Clinton to rule that block grants and vouchers are nonnegotiable items in the end game negotiations that are now beginning to take place. Title I block grants are nonnegotiable. We refuse to accept a situation where block grants would return the power to the States using Federal money to decide how Title I will be spent.

It is the neglect, the savage neglect over the years of the States that have created conditions in our inner city

communities and poverty rural communities that the Federal Government found necessary to address when the Elementary and Secondary Education System Act was established.

Why should we abandon the very schools and communities that the Elementary and Secondary Education System Act was meant to help? There is no honorable trade-off possible for block grants and vouchers. We hope that, in the negotiations, there will be a flat refusal to trade off with the Republicans on block grants and vouchers.

The bad news is that Republicans have turned their backs on education as the number one priority of the American people. But the good news is that Democrats have responded vigorously. All year long, we have made proposals.

Democrats have proposed two school construction initiatives. One that most people know about is the Rangel-Johnson initiative that proposes to pay the interest on money borrowed by States and local governments. Up to \$25 billion would be covered by a Federal allocation of about \$4 billion to cover the interest. The President has also proposed a direct appropriations initiative of \$1.3 billion.

Democrats support funding for smaller class sizes. Democrats support funding for more teachers in the classrooms, and therefore the ratio of students to teachers would be a more acceptable ratio and encourage greater teaching.

But one cannot have smaller class sizes if one does not have the classrooms. The construction initiative is vital to the implementation of the Democratic initiative to get smaller class sizes. Certainly in the poorest schools in the poorest communities, we do not have the classes for the smaller class sizes.

The 21st century learning centers proposed by the Democrats for after-school programs, for summer school programs, those programs also need room to operate in. One cannot operate effective summer schools unless one has buildings that are air conditioned in most parts of the country.

The community technology centers are an initiative of this Democratic administration. They want to expand that. We need space. We need buildings.

An increase in Head Start and preschool programs is another Democratic initiative. We cannot increase Head Starts in the poorest communities where they are most needed. We cannot increase preschool programs in the poorest communities where they are most needed unless we have new facilities. We have to have better buildings and more buildings in order to accommodate these programs.

In our inner-city communities, school construction comes first. In Brooklyn, in my 11th Congressional District, we worked vigorously to get rid of coal burning schools, schools that have furnaces that burn coal. I am

happy to report that the end is almost in sight, that the School Construction Authority in New York City has an agenda where by the end of the year 2001, there will be no more coal burning furnaces in our schools.

It is imperative that we act now to construct more schools. The Democratic initiative is necessary.

EDUCATION

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

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the public schools in our country. I know that should not be a major statement, but after hearing all of what people want to do with vouchers and everything else, maybe we need to have an affirmative affirmation that says, yes, we support our public schools in our country.

Some of the key priorities for our public schools are class size reduction, school modernization, and technology improvements of both our elementary and our secondary schools.

We need to fund the President's plans for school modernization and class size reduction, to ensure that our most valuable national resource, our children, will not continue to suffer from substandard school facilities and overcrowded classrooms.

Studies by the National Center for Education Statistics show that, on the average, public schools in America are 42 years old. School buildings begin rapid deterioration after 40 years. Additionally, 30 percent of our schools were built before 1970 and have never been renovated.

These schools are also lagging behind in our efforts to connect every classroom to the Internet. Only 42 percent of schools built before 1985 are connected to the Internet, compared to almost 60 percent of those built since.

According to GAO's estimate, it would cost \$112 billion to bring all our Nation's schools into good overall condition.

In my home State of Texas, where my wife teaches algebra, we have over 4 million students in almost 7,000 schools. Of those schools, 76 percent of the Texas schools need repairs or upgrades just to reach the "good" condition; 46 percent need repairs to a building such as plumbing, electrical, heating or cooling systems; 60 percent have at least one environmental quality like air quality, ventilation, or lighting; and the student-to-computer ratio stands 11 to 1, 11 to 1 student-computer ratio. So one just has to wait one's turn for the use of that computer.

The cost for this alone in Texas is estimated to be \$10 billion to modernize school infrastructure and over \$4 billion to address the technology needs.

Aging schools, however, are not the only problem we have before us. We have to address the growing student population.

Again, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics, elementary and secondary school enrollment, already at a record-high 52.7 million, will climb to 54.3 million by 2008.

Again, in Texas, we see similar trends. Our education system has stretched past a breaking point when one adds in the expected growth in the number of students.

Over the next decade, the number of students in the elementary and secondary schools are expected to grow almost 8 percent in Texas alone, approximately 316,000 students. It is estimated almost 13,000 new classrooms will have to be built to handle this influx of new students.

Voters in my own hometown in Houston are trying to address this problem. In a recent Houston ISD bond election, they approved \$678 million to repair over 70 schools and to build 10 new ones. Fifty of the schools in HISD are over 50 years old. Twenty-five are over 70 years old. Much more is needed because they downsized it.

Also, voters in the Aldine school district where my wife teaches just approved a \$115.8 million bond package that would fund six new schools, a transportation center, and would provide upgrades for existing campuses.

Aldine Independent School District is already feeling the impact of increased enrollment with the number of students having grown over 1,200 each year for the last 7 years.

\$678 million and \$115 million sound like a lot of money, but it is really a drop in the bucket. School populations continue to increase, newer schools are beginning to show wear and tear; and facilities must be upgraded to keep our schools equipped with the cutting edge technology our children will need to be competitive in tomorrow's job market.

These numbers show that it is absolutely vital that Congress address the conditions of our Nation's schools now because the situation will obviously get worse.

Now, most of the school construction comes from, first, local money but also State money. But we need to make sure that we help what we can. Even if it is only a few pennies on the dollar, Mr. Speaker, we can help. That is the reason I support the President's plan to reduce the class size and build more classrooms.

Additionally, I join my colleagues from around the country sponsoring legislation that will make tax credit bonds available to our schools, offer incentives for teachers who choose to teach at low-income or underserved areas and offer tax credits and student loan forgiveness for college students who choose to make teaching their profession.

I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting these important initiatives, and that we can work together and provide funding for our schools to educate our children. Our most important natural resource is the brains in our children that are being educated today.