

personally with our delegation. We were not able to do that. Otherwise, the trip was a resounding success. I thank my colleagues for participating.

I urge our colleagues to join us in this effort in backing H.R. 775.

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INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 775, THE VOTING IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2001

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

Mr. HORN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join today with our colleague, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), and others in introducing the Voting Improvement Act of 2001, H.R. 775, as we will call it.

The past election produced a great deal of confusion, turmoil, and uncertainty. Although there were a number of factors in producing that confusion, one major factor in Florida and other States was the continuing use of outdated and even antiquated punch card voting systems.

The bill we are introducing today tackles this problem immediately and directly by establishing a grant program for the States to replace all punch card systems before the next Federal election in 2002. In short, this bill provides a practical solution for solving some of the more troublesome voting equipment problems.

As the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) has noted in introducing the bill, punch card systems have the highest rate of error among all voting methods. One study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the California Institute of Technology recently estimated that the nationwide error rate for punch cards is 2½ percent, and in a national election that would mean that nearly 1 million votes are thrown out and never counted due to mistakes caused by punch card systems. Clearly, we need to make replacements of these antiquated systems a very high priority.

In addition to immediate equipment replacement, this bill establishes an ongoing grant program to assure that new voting systems are developed and deployed so that voters have up-to-date systems in the future.

The bill also assures that voter education and training of poll workers are given increased attention and support, and H.R. 775 establishes a permanent bipartisan commission to act as a nationwide resource for information gathering and studying the best practices for ballot design and other basic election needs.

Mr. Speaker, the Voting Improvement Act is one of several proposals being introduced for overhauling our election laws and making certain that we never repeat the chaos of the past election. All of these demand careful review and the development of a bipartisan consensus for sound reform. This bill sets clear priorities and offers practical solutions that must be part of any final reform plan.

REFORM EDUCATION IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from New York (Mr. OWENS) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, in the President's address last night he reaffirmed the fact that education is one of his top priorities. It appears from the speech that the President made that the only priority which ranks above education is the tax cut that is being proposed.

I salute the President for his selection and for his devotion and dedication to education as the number one priority. I think it is very important that he has taken note of the fact that this has been the priority of the American people for the last 4 years or 5 years.

Education has ranked as either the number one priority or somewhere in the top two or three priorities for the last 5 years. So the President is acknowledging the fact that in a democracy, the directions really come from the bottom.

He is not alone. The previous President chose to call himself the Education President, President Clinton. At one point he said he wanted to be the Education President. And he and the younger Mr. Bush are not the only ones.

Father Bush, I think, first coined the phrase Education President. The father of the present President said he wanted to be the Education President.

Before that, Ronald Reagan launched the movement to reform education in America with a report called *A Nation At Risk, A Nation At Risk*. We are now in our fourth President who has chosen to make education a number one priority. We should be making some tremendous progress in terms of the improvement of education in our Nation.

I regretfully report, however, that this is not the case. Despite the fact that lip service has been paid to the reform of education in America by the last four Presidents, the progress has been fairly slow. The flaw is in the lack of resources.

When *A Nation At Risk* was issued as a report by President Ronald Reagan, President Reagan offered no program with any dollars. He offered strictly jawboning, lectures about how important it was to improve education.

President George Bush, following President Reagan, did offer a program, but it was a very sparse program in terms of dollars. There were a lot of words and a lot of lectures again, but very little was offered in terms of resources.

President Clinton offered a dramatic blueprint for the reform of education. President Clinton did build on some of

the activities of President Bush, Father Bush. Father Bush had launched the governors campaign to improve education. There was a huge governors conference and the governors came together, and they set forth goals to be achieved.

There was a step-by-step progression forward, which President Clinton as a governor, Governor Clinton of Arkansas, had been involved in, and President Clinton did build on what President Bush had started. President Clinton also added some dollars to the master plan.

I think, relatively speaking, if you compare the record of President Clinton on education to the record of his predecessor, Father Bush, to the record of Ronald Reagan, President Clinton had a very outstanding record in terms of resources committed as well as the necessary job owning.

But even the Clinton administration did not dare, for whatever reason, which I do not care to go into today, set forth a bold blueprint and the resources to match it, which would deal with the problem in a constructive way. Why? Why is it? Repeatedly there is a sense within America that ordinary people, the public opinion polls keep showing that there is a gut reaction, a gut feeling that nothing is more important than education. There is a feeling that we are not doing enough to improve education in America.

Why is that? The gut reaction and the common sense feeling does not translate into really bold action. We have had bold action within the last 5 years. We have had bold action in terms of a transportation plan.

One of the boldest initiatives taken in the domestic front was the bill which authorized \$218 billion over a period of 6 years for transportation projects, road building, bridges, et cetera, et cetera. So we did some big spending on a domestic issue.

We have been spending large amounts of money, of course, on defense. And continually under all of these Presidents, the defense budget has done very well. But in the domestic arena, we moved in a very bold way to fund a transportation act which provided \$218 billion over a 6-year period. That is the kind of action that I always dreamed of, and I think it was necessary.

I maintain it still is necessary if we are really going to come to grips with what has to happen in the area of education.

Education suffers from a lack of resources, and that is the primary problem. We cannot escape that. No amount of jawboning and no amount of theorizing, no amount of testing will escape the fact that there is a definite lack of resources.

Let me just set the stage and establish some parameters which are both local and national. At the local level, in New York City, we have just received the results of a 7-year court case. A ruling has been made after a 7-year trial by a Supreme Court judge