

our differences and work for the betterment of our Nation. We must act now to ensure that the United States has an accurate and open election system, we must act now to ensure that our elderly and disabled voters can cast their votes independently, and we must act now to ensure that every one of our Nation's military voters counts.

We can attain all of these goals, but we must begin our efforts immediately to reach them by 2002. One person, one vote is the fundamental principle upon which American democracy stands. Please join me in cosponsoring this resolution and in learning about the various voting technologies at the secretaries of state demonstration I am sponsoring next week which will give us an up-close look at the various types of voting technology available and in taking an open-minded, bipartisan approach to resolving this national problem. Nothing can be more important to Congress than guaranteeing every American free and fair access to our democratic process.

□ 1245

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

(Ms. WOOLSEY 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 Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DAVIS of Illinois 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 California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

FOCUS ON SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING

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

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, I was delighted to see in last year's campaign all the attention that candidates, whether it was for Congressional or Senate offices, but especially at the Presidential level, devote so much time and attention and substance to education policy. In fact, this is a reflection of the concerns that the American people have genuinely, certainly the constituents who I represent in western Wisconsin. I am continuously reminded by them of the importance of education. They recognize,

as I think we all do in this Chamber, that education must be a local responsibility, that there is a strong State interest, but it should be a national priority.

That is why I am hopeful that as we are beginning work on the Committee on Education and the Workforce in this session of Congress, especially trying to reauthorize the elementary and secondary education bill, that there can be a lot of ground for bipartisan agreement, providing needed resources back to the local school districts with flexibility on how best to use those resources, but along with some accountability, so we see the desired results in student achievement in the classroom.

However, one area of education policy that previous Congresses have woefully fell short on has been our responsibility to fully fund our share, our obligation, to special education needs throughout the country. In the last couple of sessions of Congress, there was a recognition that we were underfunding the IDEA, Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, and we were not living up to the promises that we made to so many children across the country. In the last session of Congress, we, in fact, increased the appropriation level by 27 percent for special education needs. But nevertheless, we have a responsibility to fund that at 40 percent of the per pupil expenditure throughout the country. Even with that 27 percent increase last year, we are still only funding our share at slightly less than 15 percent of the 40 percent that we should be doing for local school districts.

This is the number one issue I hear about back home from teachers and administrators and parents, that if we can do one thing right in this session of Congress, that is to live up to our responsibility and fully fund IDEA. But the fact that we are not funding it at the appropriate level has a dramatic impact on countless students across the country.

Just some quick numbers. Roughly 6.4 million disabled children in America receive special education services. There are 116,000 of these students in my home State of Wisconsin alone identified as needing special education services. By 2010, it is expected that there will be an additional half a million students served by special education nationwide.

With the advancement of medical technology and medical breakthroughs, school funding is on a collision course with modern medicine. Children who normally would not have survived to school age are now entering the public school system, increasing the responsibility of providing a quality education for these kids, along with the incumbent expense that comes along with it. I believe that this is more than just an education issue, it is a civil rights issue, that we make good by these students who, through particular needs, require more attention and more resources to meet their educational potential.

As elected officials here in Congress, I believe it is our obligation to ensure that funding for programs assisting students with special needs meets the needs of the schools struggling to be fair and inclusive for these students in the school system. In fact, it is one of the fastest growing areas of virtually every school district budget throughout the country, and will continue to be so. Special education services will require a greater responsibility for us here in Washington and to live up to the commitment and the promises that we have made in the past. First, with the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, and then with the act which was renamed the Individuals With Disabilities Act back in 1990.

Now, recently, 40 of my new Democratic colleagues here in Congress wrote to President Bush calling for the administration to commit greater resources to the IDEA mission. We are striving to see that that 40 percent Federal responsibility in special education funding as required by law is, in fact, honored. We believe it is a matter of budgetary priorities, and we hope that the administration, when they finally submit a detailed budget plan, will show that commitment to IDEA funding. But, at the very least, we hope it will show the continued commitment that we have established now over the last couple of years in Congress for increasing Federal appropriations so we can finally achieve full funding at 40 percent.

We also advocate increasing the Federal appropriations for part D of IDEA, which is used to provide professional development opportunities to special education instructors and staff. Again, it is a constant refrain that we hear from the school officials back in our school districts.

It is imperative, however, that we do not embrace full funding of IDEA in exchange for reduced Federal funding for other ESEA-related programs. In this era of unprecedented budget surpluses, we have a unique opportunity to provide effective government support that is most sought after by American families and we should not squander this opportunity by shortchanging any of our children's educational potential.

FULL FUNDING FOR IDEA

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

Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak briefly about an issue that has become very near and dear to my heart. I spent the last several months speaking to superintendents, teachers, parents, and community leaders across my district, and one of the issues they say is the most important to them is full funding. When I talk about full funding, this is for the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, full funding which, in this