year, we all have an obligation to consider reforms that both further education policy, and also maintain consistency with our constitutional duties.

The Federal Government began its interference, if you will, in education through land grants, and over time has transformed into a bureaucracy that we see today. I would like to highlight some of the serious flaws in this tangled web we have weaved and pose a question to my colleagues and our constituents as well. Are we better off today with the Federal Government's involvement in education as it has been over the years?

Since 1965, American taxpayers have invested more than $778 billion on Federal programs for elementary and secondary education. The GAO, the Government Accountability Office, reported in 1994 that 13,400 Federally funded full-time employees in State education agencies work to implement Federal education programs. That is three times the number then working at the Department of Education.

The same report found that state education agencies are forced to reserve a far greater share of Federal and State funds for State-level use by a ratio of 4–1, due to the administrative and regulatory burden of Federal programs. And because it cost so much to allocate a Federal dollar than a State dollar, 41 percent of financial support and staffing of State education agencies was a product of Federal dollars and regulations. In other words, the Federal Government was the cause of 41 percent of the administrative burden at the State level, despite providing just 7 percent of overall education funding.

Again, according to the GAO, the testing requirements alone for No Child Left Behind will cost the States about $1.9 billion between 2002 and 2008. And that is if the State uses only multiple choice questions that can be scored in machines, as opposed to essays and what have you.

According to the Office of Management and Budget, No Child Left Behind increased State and local governments' annual paperwork burden by 6,680,334 hours at an estimated cost of $141 million. So while No Child Left Behind advertises that it helps to attract and maintain highly qualified teachers, some States, in fact, have now responded to it by actually lowering their testing requirements for new teachers.

Since the law enactment, Pennsylvania has dropped its testing after finding that too many middle school teachers had failed the test. In Maryland, New Hampshire and Virginia, they have made their basic skills test for teachers easier to pass now than before we had No Child Left Behind.

In Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Missouri, Nevada and West Virginia, they, too, have lowered their requirements for teachers trained out of state. So what is happening is as State officials become more familiar with the No Child Left Behind statute and with U.S. Department of Education's interpretation of it, more States have rushed to lower their own standards. So by September 2004, 47 States had filed requests with the U.S. Department of Education to approve changes to their No Child Left Behind plans that would, in many cases, make it easier for them to show adequate yearly progress than before.

Now, to address all this, in the near future, I will come back to the floor as I will be introducing legislation that will immediately cut both the financial and the regulatory strings between the Federal Government and the States that choose to opt out and relieve the Federal education system.

How it will work is this: Under my proposal, States that elect to opt out of the Federal education funding system would be eligible to keep their own money, keep it in their own States through a mechanism, a Federal tax credit. It would be a refundable Federal tax credit, and it would be available to all the residents in that State that chose to opt out. Therefore, what we have here is not only would that State free itself up from the education regulations and all the costs I have just laid out here, but by taking this deduction, those residents in those States won't have to be taking money out of their pocket, sending it to Washington, Washington handling it for a while, and some of it coming back to their States. In effect, what will happen is you will not have to send your money to Washington at all.

But the bottom line is this: We should not waste this unique opportunity that we have now, now that No Child Left Behind is coming up for reauthorization. We should use this as an opportunity to return sovereignty back to the States, and most importantly, back to the parents themselves.

So Mr. Speaker, I will close on this to say I look forward to the time when all education decisions are returned back to the States, to the legislatures, to the local school board, and most importantly, to the parents themselves.

SUPPORT THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS BUDGET

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

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, the Congressional Black Caucus is offering a budget to help us get out of the financial mess that we're in. We have seen this chart before, it shows the deficit over the years, how in 1993 we started to eliminate the deficit, ran the budget up to a surplus, creating a 10-year budget of over $5.5 trillion. The policies that have now gotten us into a mess have changed that $5.5 trillion surplus into an almost $3 trillion deficit, a swing of $8.5 trillion.

The first thing the Black Congressional Caucus budget does is to repeal the policies that got us into this mess by rolling back the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts for that portion of a person's household income over $200,000. By rolling back the brackets for the first two brackets and eliminating the tax cuts for capital gains and dividends, primarily for that portion of the household income over $200,000. People will say it is a big tax cut. So what. Those policies got us in the ditch. We are repealing those policies to get out of the ditch.

Now what does that do to the budget? The Congressional Black Caucus deficit is better every year than the President's budget. The President's budget is in red, the Democratic alternative is in blue. The Congressional Black Caucus beats both of them every year, except the last year, we only had a $141 billion surplus in the last year, the Democratic budget has $153 billion, but of course, the President's budget is still in the ditch. We have significantly reduced the deficit $339 billion better bottom line cumulatively than the President.

We also save interest. By reducing the deficit, we save interest. Every year, we have saved more and more interest. $27 billion less interest paid over 5 years than the President's budget. In fact, $18 billion more than the Democratic alternative.

We have also addressed our priorities with the money left over. After we have reduced the deficit and reduced the amount of interest, we have also made important investments. SCHIP, $66 billion more in health care than the Democratic budget, over $100 billion more than the President. We can fund health care for each and every child in America.

No Child Left Behind. We are funding over $158 billion more in education and training than the President. We have honored our veterans by spending $42 billion more than the President's budget. We have attacked fraud, waste and abuse in the Democratic budget. We have made communities more secure with investments in juvenile justice, gang prevention, prison re-entry. We have provided community support through community development block grants in nutrition and housing. We have contributed to diplomacy by fighting global AIDS, child survival. We have spent significantly more in these priorities, Mr. Speaker, than both the Democratic alternative and certainly the President's budget.

The Congressional Black Caucus repeals the policy that put us into a mess. We address important priorities that are so important, and we have a much more fiscally responsible budget.

We would ask the House to adopt the Congressional Black Caucus budget that gets us out of the mess and puts on the right track.

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