

through the problems and struggles associated with crises. I can recall serving on the local co-op board during the farm crisis of the 1980s. It was a tough time, but I was sure glad to have the associates that I had. Now, American agriculture is again faced with a growing crisis, and again cooperatives will be there to lend a helping hand and, in many cases, the glue that holds communities together.

□ 1945

By joining together and marketing their products together, farmers are better able to gain strength they need to compete with the large multinational corporate farming operations that now control much of agriculture.

There are going to be many dramatic success stories coming out of the current agriculture crisis, and once again it is going to be the farmer cooperatives playing a very significant role. Cooperation by whatever means and whatever name you call it, networks or co-ops, is what built our system of family farms in the Midwest, and they may well be the best strategy for preserving it to the greatest degree possible as we meet future farm challenges.

Once again I am pleased to join with the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) and the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY) to honor and appreciate the importance of America's co-ops.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I offer the following: "I must study politics and war that my sons and daughters may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy. My sons and daughters ought to study mathematics and philosophy, geography, natural history, naval architecture, navigation, commerce, and agriculture, in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture, statuary, tapestry, and porcelain."—Letter to Abigail Adams from John Adams [May 12, 1780].

Mr. Speaker, Jamie Whitten, the former chairman of the House Appropriations Committee and chairman of the Agriculture Subcommittee for forty years, said the only real wealth we have is the land. Much like President Adams, he believed that what farmers do provides us with the greatest security in the world—the freedom from hunger so that we are afforded the freedom to undertake other endeavors.

Farmer Cooperatives have been a real source of strength in the 20th century. They provide an opportunity for many small producers to band together to create strength among themselves for themselves. Farmers have been able to purchase supplies and sell product through cooperatives. They have banded together based on commodities or region for the betterment of all.

They also have been a vital source of development in rural areas with telephone and electric power services.

They provide collaborative financing for producers and rural businesses (Farm Credit Services).

There are more than 3,500 cooperatives in the US, with total sales of over \$100 billion.

They employ nearly 300,000 people, with a payroll of \$6.8 billion.

Cooperatives have been storehouses of ideas and innovation. As we see consolidation in the agriculture industry today, co-ops offer farmers the opportunity to vertically integrate and take advantage of profit sharing as a way to keep rural areas and rural families productive, while offering new opportunities for prosperity.

Farmers have been unfairly portrayed as unsophisticated individuals who could easily be fooled by "city slickers". The next time you want to talk with someone who is knowledgeable in cutting edge science, the intricacies of international trade, who is prepared to compete on a global scale, and must depend upon every available tool to stay ahead, you might want to think about Intel and Microsoft. But you would be wrong. The person you need to talk to is the American farmer and his co-op manager. There are no more savvy people like them in the world.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, October is Coop Month and I am delighted to join with my colleagues in recognizing the importance of cooperatives to our country.

The cooperative idea is as old as civilization itself. It began with people recognizing that by banding together for their mutual benefit they could achieve much more than they could as individuals.

When we think of co-ops in America we generally think of agricultural organizations who, beginning in the Midwest in the 1860s and 1870s, understood this principal and began to organize around it. Because of the foresight and determination of a number of pioneers in the Grange, founded in 1867, rural Americans began to enjoy the benefits of cooperative stores to serve their members with farm supplies and machinery, groceries and household essentials. Soon, farm commodities from cotton to milk to wheat were being marketed through co-ops.

In the following decades the fortunes of co-ops fluctuated, but by the early decades of the twentieth century co-ops had become the prevailing feature of the farm economy helping farmers not only with supplies and marketing, but with financing, housing and electrification. Today, Rural Electric Co-ops alone operate more than half the electrical lines in America and provide electric power to more than 25 million people in 46 states. In the field of telecommunications, cooperatives have become vital in ensuring that rural residents are not bypassed by the information revolution.

Today, co-ops are a common feature throughout both rural and urban America and throughout all sectors of the economy, while they remain a vital part of the food and agriculture industry. In recent years, cooperative members have been spreading that message abroad to the developing world and to newly-emerging democracies in Eastern Europe. And, with the help of Congress and the federal government, new co-op development is underway here at home through Co-op Development Centers and the Co-op Development Grants Program at the U.S. Department of Agriculture whereby small federal investments are helping to leverage substantial amounts of non-federal support to help start and strengthen businesses, create jobs and build communities.

In 1908, Teddy Roosevelt's Country Life Commission recommended cooperatives as a means to improve economies of scale, strengthen agricultural production and supply and promote infrastructure development. 90 years later, the National Commission on Small Farms called for increased federal investments to support rural cooperative development at the grassroots. While America has changed almost out of all recognition in the intervening years, the cooperative principals upon which much of America's wealth and values is built remain as important as ever.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to help celebrate Co-op Month and to recognize the vital role that co-ops have played in the development of our nation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COOPERATIVES

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

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, October is National Co-op Month, and throughout the month of October cooperatives, whether agricultural, consumer, electrical or child care, from all over the Nation will celebrate the importance of cooperatives. Across the United States more than 100 million Americans benefited by 48,000 cooperatives that will generate \$100 billion annually to our Nation's economy.

Tonight, I would like to highlight the importance of cooperatives to my home State, North Dakota. Throughout their history cooperatives have been a symbol of rural America just like the wind mill, the old country barn, and the four bottom plow. Cooperatives represent the very fiber of American ingenuity and community that have made this country great.

From the first successful cooperative organized in the United States by Benjamin Franklin to the 1990's cooperatives, like housing and baby-sitting cooperatives, cooperatives were created with the belief that individuals joining together in cooperative efforts can best market the product they produce. Cooperatives are associations of people uniting voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs through a jointly owned, democratically controlled organization.

Cooperatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, cooperative members believe the ethical values of honesty, openness, and social responsibility in caring for others.

In the 1920s, the country witnessed the growth of the dairy cooperatives; in the 1930s country grain elevators were created; in the 1940s oil and gas cooperatives; and in the 1950s, electrical and telephone cooperatives were created. Each of these co-ops provided the basic essential, providing quality

products for consumers and producers at the most cost-efficient beneficial means. Over the past 20 years cooperatives have entered a new and exciting phase. We have begun to observe a new wave of cooperation such as the North Dakota examples I will speak about tonight.

Specifically in responding to consolidation and concentration in agriculture occurring at an alarming rate, cooperatives have helped provide an avenue for farmers joining together. In North Dakota cooperatives have become, it seems, our State's newest best strategy in bringing to farmers a value-added component of marketing their products. North Dakota is a leader in cooperative development.

All the necessary ingredients are there, the long history of progressive prairie populism, its rural population used to pulling together to meet trying times. Now our heavy dependence on agriculture has made the ability to produce the value-added component to the product very, very important.

Since 1990, nearly \$800 million in value-added facilities have been creating 600 new jobs in North Dakota. Some of the examples, the American Sugar Crystal Cooperative, one of the most recognizable cooperatives in North Dakota founded in 1972, and now with literally hundreds of growers, it has been a very, very successful marriage between the grower and the producer through this shared cooperative experience.

The Dakota Pasta Growers, one of the most fascinating cooperatives in North Dakota. The Dakota Pasta Growers, founded in the late 1980s by durum farmers who believed they could pull together and get themselves a better market for their product by actually producing the seminola flour and the pasta products itself; and Dakota pasta has succeeded in the face of many skeptics in Carrington, North Dakota, by hard work, ingenuity and producing a very top quality product. Today they will increase storage capacity from 120,000 to 370,000 bushels doubling milling capacity, all in all an outstanding success.

The North American Bison Cooperative, an excellent example of how farmers can band together to try new products. The prairie bison, now jointly slaughtered in this cooperative slaughtering plant. Five years ago, the co-op got off to a terrific start, and every year its product marketing continues to grow. This past year they slaughtered 8,000 bison in this 5-year-old cooperative, to give you an idea of how things have grown.

Now clearly as we look at the cooperatives in total, the government at all levels has a role in cooperative development and maintenance. It is important they work. They bring economic opportunity to people, and they have as a result different tax statuses,

different contracts and, most importantly, nonprofit philosophies.

As a Federal law maker when it comes to cooperatives, I believe it is my role to maintain and preserve the opportunity for development of cooperatives so especially essential to our rural communities.

The 1996 farm bill increased the risk of production agriculture on the family farmer. It is more important than ever therefore to have the farmer be able to pull together and create new economic opportunities in the value-added piece, in the wonderful examples of the North Dakota cooperatives that we have demonstrated.

The development of rural business today is just as vital today as it was 50 or 75 years ago. As I mentioned before, the smaller business owner, the farmer and the rancher is going to continue to be squeezed in the marketplace in light of the concentration that we are seeing; and their best shot at being able to preserve their ongoing place in production agriculture and in the value-added component is by teaming together through the cooperative philosophy, banding together to achieve collectively what it would be impossible for them to achieve individually. That is the miracle of cooperatives.

We certainly are proud to recognize them tonight and wish farmers and others all across the country thinking about how they might achieve a different dimension of success, to urge them to look at the cooperative way. It works as North Dakota examples have shown.

I. OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

Mr. Speaker, October is "National Co-op Month." Throughout the month of October, cooperatives—whether agricultural, consumer, electrical, or child care—from all over the nation will celebrate the importance of cooperatives. Across the United States, more than 100 million Americans benefit by 48,000 cooperatives that generate \$100 billion annually to our nation's economy.

Tonight, colleagues from across the United States and from all sides of the political spectrum will join me in highlighting the importance of cooperatives to our constituents.

A. HISTORICAL ROOTS

Throughout their history, cooperatives have been a symbol of rural America—just like the windmill, the old country barn, and the four bottom plow. Cooperatives represent the very fiber of American ingenuity and community that have made this country great. From the first successful cooperative organized in the United States by Ben Franklin to 1990's cooperatives like housing and baby sitting cooperatives, cooperatives were created with the belief that individuals joining together in cooperative efforts can best market the product they produce.

Cooperatives are autonomous associations of people uniting voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned democratically controlled enterprise. Cooperatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsi-

bility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, cooperative members believe the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

The contemporary cooperative as we know it was created in the 1920's as a reaction to the rapidly growing, unchecked corporate, business climate on Wall Street. Also, in 1922, Congress passed the Capper-Volstead Act which allowed farmers to act together to market their products without being in violation of antitrust laws.

In the 1920's, the country witnessed the growth of the dairy cooperatives, in the 1930's, country grain elevators were created, in the 1940's oil and gas cooperatives, and in the 1950's electrical and telephone cooperatives were created. Each of these cooperatives provided the same basic essential providing quality products for consumers and producers at the most cost-effective, beneficial means.

Over the past 20 years, cooperatives have entered a new and exciting phase. We have begun to observe new wave cooperatives such as the North Dakota examples that I will speak about tonight.

The growth of cooperatives can be compared to the game of football. From their modern-day inception in the 1920's through the 1950's, cooperatives were created in an act of defense. Defense to protect the smaller producers and vulnerable rural communities from the unregulated, massive corporate companies.

Cooperatives have evolved throughout history seeming to continue to be one step ahead of contemporary society by meeting the ever changing needs of consumers.

B. THE IMPACTS OF MARKET CONCENTRATION ON COOPERATIVES

As you all know, concentration is occurring at a very rapid rate in nearly all aspects of our economy. In the past five years, mergers have occurred in the oil, technological, chemical and seed, automobile, and agriculture sectors.

Specifically in agriculture, 4 meat packers control 80 percent of the beef and lamb processing industry compared to 36 percent in 1980, 5 meat packers control 65 percent of the hog industry, four firms control 59 percent of port facilities, 62 percent of flour milling, 74 percent of wet corn milling, and 76 percent of soybean crushing. Moreover, in 1980, the farmer got 37 cents of every dollar consumers spent on food compared to 23 cents in 1997.

Obviously, with market concentration occurring at such a rapid rate in all aspects of our economy, the role of cooperatives as a means to market a product become more important for producers' economic livelihoods.

Cooperatives, as we head into the 21st Century, must be prepared to meet the complex challenges of meeting the diverse needs of the American consumers while at the same time continuing their role of a producer-driven cooperative.

II. THE "NORTH DAKOTA EXPERIMENT"—COOPERATIVES AT THEIR BEST

A. WHY COOPERATIVES ARE WORKING IN NORTH DAKOTA?

In North Dakota, cooperatives have become, it seems, our State's newest obsession. North Dakota is one of the leaders in the nation on cooperative development.

All the necessary ingredients for cooperatives is in North Dakota. North Dakota has a long history or progressive, prairie populism, its rural population does not want to fall victim to corporate greed, and its farmers are tired of receiving low prices for the bountiful products they produce.

North Dakota's heavy dependence on agriculture (nearly 40 percent of the entire state's economy) has made the ability to produce value-added a foremost concern for producers. With producers experiencing extremely low commodity prices in recent years, many have decided to form cooperatives because of their communal marketing advantages to sell the product.

Since 1990, nearly \$800 million in value-added facilities creating more than 600 new jobs in North Dakota. Clearly, the cooperative spirit has had an impact in North Dakota.

B. COOPERATIVE EXAMPLES IN NORTH DAKOTA

American Crystal Sugar.—One of the most recognizable cooperatives in North Dakota is American Crystal Sugar in the Red River Valley. The American Crystal Sugar cooperative was formed in the spring of 1972, when sugar beet growers from throughout the Red River Valley decided to purchase the processing facility of American Crystal Sugar Company. With over 70 percent of the vote (1,065 to 443), the Red River Valley Sugar Beet Growers decided to purchase American Crystal and begin what has been a very prosperous 27 year marriage between the grower and the processor.

Dakota Pasta Growers—Carrington, ND.—One of the most fascinating cooperatives North Dakota has seen in recent years is the Dakota Pasta Growers in Carrington, ND. The Dakota Pasta Growers began due to the ideas of local durum wheat farmers in the late 1980's. The durum farmers were tired of the low prices they were receiving for the high quality, unique product (75 percent of the nation's durum is grown in North Dakota) and were not receiving nearly the benefits of their product they felt they deserved.

In 1993, the Dakota Pasta Growers were born. It is the world's first and only grower-owned, fully-integrated pasta manufacturing company with 1,080 durum producers who serve as the owners. In only four years, the Dakota Pasta Growers doubled their rollstands to 28, increased storage capacity from 120,000 to 370,000 bushels, doubled milling capacity to 20,000 bushels, and increased the size of the plant from 110,000 to 160,000 square feet. Currently, Dakota Pasta Growers produces 470 million pounds of pasta annually with more than 75 shapes and flavors for retail, food service and industrial segments. The Dakota Pasta Growers now has three manufacturing facilities in Carrington, Minneapolis and New Hope, Minnesota.

Clearly, the Dakota Pasta Growers seems to have perfected its very own method of spinning wheat into gold.

North American Bison Cooperative—New Rockford, ND.—The North American Bison Cooperative is an excellent example of a cooperative that is facing a serious at-risk financial situation. The North American Bison Cooperative is an example of how the community cooperative spirit is alive and well, but the complex, intricacies of successfully marketing the cooperative's product have not been met.

Five years ago the bison cooperative got off to a terrific start. Every year, it has grown every year by selling a substantial amount of bison in Europe. But, that growth has brought new challenges. To meet the growing demand for the steaks and roasts, more bison had to be slaughtered. It was real easy to market all of the meat when you only slaughtered a thousand head a year, but it's very different issue when you've increased your production to more than 8,000 animals.

While this cooperative has had excellent markets for every bison steak and roast, it has extreme difficulty in marketing the other half of the animal that is ground up into burgers. Those trim products built up in the freezer while new products and markets were developed. Yes, the cooperative has developed several products—sausages, jerky, and ravioli—and those products are in a whole lot of stores throughout the Dakotas, Minnesota, and Montana. But that has not been enough. The cooperative has developed a strategic marketing relationship with a private firm in Denver, Colorado. This firm also developed new value-added bison products.

But every new product takes time to develop. Therefore, USDA has had to get involved the past two years to assist in the purchase of bison trim to move the Bison Cooperative's product. Clearly, USDA has recognized that this cooperative needs a financial shove and is willing to ante up to allow the Bison Cooperative to survive in its infant phase.

C. NORTH DAKOTA—MORE THAN JUST AG COOPERATIVES

Even though, North Dakota is a predominantly rural state, it has more than just agriculture cooperatives. North Dakota because of its rural communities has electric, credit unions, housing, and telephone cooperatives to name a few.

III. COOPERATIVES AND THE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE

A. BACKGROUND ON GOVERNMENT'S ROLE

Clearly, the government at all levels has a role in cooperative development and maintenance. Cooperatives serve different functions than corporations or small businesses. They have different tax statuses, different contracts, and most importantly, have non-profit philosophies.

As a federal lawmaker, I believe my role in cooperative development and maintenance is essential—especially in regard to agriculture cooperatives.

As you may know, the 1996 Farm Bill changed the course of agriculture policy in the U.S. for the first time in sixty years (since the New Deal). No longer does the government provide a safety net for producers who have suffered from low prices and severe weather. Instead, the new farm bill leaves it up to the producer, through his own instincts, to market the product he produces. In my opinion, the farm bill has made the occupation of farming similar to rolling dice.

B. COOPERATIVE COMPONENTS OF THE 1996 FARM BILL

The 1996 Farm Bill did include provisions to promote value-added agriculture. It created the Rural Business Cooperative office of the USDA Rural Development Agency. The Rural Business Cooperative's mission is very simple: to enhance the quality of life for all Americans

by providing leadership in building competitive businesses and cooperatives that can prosper in the global marketplace.

The Rural Business Cooperative has many methods of providing credit for cooperatives to get started. The Business and Industry (B&I) Guarantee Loan Program helps create jobs and stimulates rural economies by providing financial backing for rural businesses. This program guarantees up to 80 percent of a loan made by a commercial lender. Loan proceeds may be used for working capital, machinery and equipment, buildings and real estate, and certain types of debt refinancing.

The B&I Direct Loan Program provides loans to public entities and private parties who cannot obtain credit from other sources. This type of assistance is available in rural areas.

The 1996 Farm Bill, in my opinion, needs to be reexamined because of its lack of a safety net, but I am a strong support of the efforts for value-added cooperatives.

C. COOPERATIVES AND THE 106TH CONGRESS

It is important to me that Congress maintain its commitment to cooperative development by continuing funding for the Rural Cooperative Development Grant Program within the USDA's Rural Development.

The dollars committed to this program have generated hundreds if not thousands of jobs and brought many producers back from the brink of economic disaster.

It is very clear to me just how important this under funded and little recognized program has been to many of the organizations who have come together as part of the National Network of Centers for Rural Cooperative Development.

IV. COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT

A. ABOUT COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT

The development of rural businesses today is just as vital as it was 50 or 75 years ago.

As mentioned before, the smaller business owner, farmer, and rancher will continue to be squeezed out of the marketplace by giant corporate conglomerates that are vertically integrated, beholden to Wall Street and its stockholders.

Cooperatives represent the best hope that most rural communities, rural residents, rural business owners, and farmers have for ever hoping to control their destiny.

Cooperatives require commitment and hard work, and I know that they are not always going to succeed.

Of the eight Centers represented in the national network, I was proud to learn that at least half are involved in establishing value-added agricultural cooperatives.

I'm particularly proud of my fellow North Dakotan—Bill Patrie. Bill has established a phenomenal number of value-added cooperatives in our state, and most have been very successful. But, Bill also knows the pain of witnessing a great idea not succeed.

B. MORE PEOPLE WHO ARE COOPERATIVE LEADERS

Andy Ferguson in the Northeast who is breaking new ground to establish energy cooperatives; Rosemary Mahoney and E.G. Nadeau who are building value-added markets for organic products in the Upper Midwest; Gus Townes who is developing new value-added vegetable cooperatives and credit unions in the Southeast; Melbah Smith who is

building partnerships with state agencies, universities, and private businesses to help small Mississippi sweet potato growers build a multi-million dollar cooperative enterprise; Annette Pagan who is working with poultry producers and small wood manufacturers in Arkansas; and Mahlon Lang and Karen Spatz who continue to work with members of the Hmong in building a cooperative that strengthens their community.

V. CONCLUSION

A. COOPERATIVES AS WE HEAD INTO A NEW MILLENNIUM

There are many challenges facing cooperatives as we head into the 21st Century. Cooperatives will be faced with the struggling challenges of increased competition through market concentration, internal forces urging the cooperative to get bigger, and continuing to meet the producer-owners' interests. And, at the same time, meeting the very diverse needs of American consumers.

Mr. Speaker, October is "National Co-op Month" and it is an excellent opportunity for the American consumer to recognize the importance of cooperatives in "the American way of life."

OUR SCHOOLS ARE TOO BIG AND TOO IMPERSONAL

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

Mr. HILL of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, last April, shortly after the terrible tragedy that occurred at Columbine High School in Colorado, I spoke with my freshman colleague from the State of Washington (Mr. BAIRD). My colleague from Washington is a trained psychologist, so I asked him for his thoughts about the Columbine tragedy. Since Mr. BAIRD is a trained psychologist, I was expecting a long academic explanation using lots of psychological terms regular people do not understand. Instead, he had a simple solution, an explanation. He looked at me and said, "Baron, our schools are too big, and these kids do not know one another."

The Columbine tragedy and other recent events of violence in our schools have made all of us take a serious look at our children, our schools, and ourselves. These recent tragedies have forced us to think about how we educate our children and how we can make our schools safer and better.

This is a personal issue for me, for my wife, Betty, is a middle school teacher; and my youngest daughter is in the eighth grade at a public school in my hometown of Seymour, Indiana. I do not believe that there is one easy solution to all of the problems our schools and our children face today, nor do I believe that we politicians in Congress could pass some law that would solve every school's and every child's problem. I strongly believe that the people who work with children every day, the parents, the teachers and local school administrators, are in

the best position to make decisions about their schools.

But this week I am introducing a bill that I hope will make some small contribution to addressing a problem that I and other people have been talking about for many years. It is a problem that the recent episodes of school violence in Colorado and Georgia and other places around the country have once again brought to the forefront of our national debate. It is the problem that my colleague Dr. BAIRD was talking about.

Our schools are too big and too impersonal. Too many of our children wake up every day and go to schools that make them feel disconnected and detached from their teachers, their parents and their communities. The goal of my bill that I am introducing, the Smaller Schools Stronger Communities Act, is to make our schools smaller and to help parents, teachers and administrators and students strengthen the sense of community that many of our schools today are lacking.

My strong feelings about this issue come from my own experience growing up in southern Indiana. When I was growing up in Jackson County, there were more high schools than there are today in towns like Tampico and Clear Spring and Cortland. There were high schools that local kids attended and local families supported. These communities were proud of their schools. Their schools brought people together and helped keep their towns strong and vital places to live.

These schools were the hearts of the communities, and when we consolidated, when school consolidation forced their high schools to close, it tore the heart out of these communities. These high schools along with thousands of other smaller schools around America were closed because for many years educators have followed the rule that bigger schools are better. For a long time we all assumed that bigger schools were better because they could offer students more courses, more extracurricular activities, and could save school districts money.

The statistics on school size show how dramatically this bigger-is-better approach has changed the way we educate our children. In 1930 there were 262,000 elementary, middle and high schools in America. Today there are only 88,000 schools. In 1930 the average school had 100 students. Today's average school has 500 students.

Some education experts are now arguing that school consolidation has gone too far. More and more educators today believe that our children do better academically and socially in smaller schools that are closer to their homes and their parents than in the big schools with thousands of students. Because many schools have become too big, they sometimes harm the students

they are supposed to be helping. Many students in big schools never develop any meaningful relationships with their teachers and never experienced a sense of belonging in their schools.

When I start looking at the issue of big schools, I was surprised to find that some of the biggest critics of big schools are high school principals. The men and women who run our high schools, who work with our teenagers every day, say that schools are too big and too impersonal. In 1966 the national association of secondary school principals released a report criticizing the bigness of today's high schools. The principals recommended that the high school of the 21st century be much more student centered and personalized.

Here is what the high school principals said: students take more interest in school when they experience a sense of belonging. Some students cope in large impersonal high schools because they have the advantage of external motivation that allows them to transcend the disadvantage of school size. Many others, however, would benefit from a more intimate setting in which their presence could be more readily and repeatedly acknowledged. Experts have found that achievement levels in smaller schools are higher especially among children from disadvantaged backgrounds who need extra help to succeed.

A recent study of academic achievement and school size concluded that high schools and smaller schools perform better in course subjects of reading, math, history, and science. Students in smaller schools also have better attendance records, are less likely to get in fights or join gangs. A principal of a successful small high school recently wrote that small schools offer what metal detectors and guards cannot, the safety and security of being where you are well known by the people who care for you the most.

The bill that I am introducing, the Smaller School Strong Stronger Communities Act provides grants to school districts that want to develop school size reduction strategy. This bill does not introduce a new mandate or try to micromanage local education authority. It simply supports education leaders in school districts who decide they want to implement a plan to reduce the size of their school units either through new building space or through schools within schools.

I hope this bill will encourage local school districts to take a look at this idea and perhaps think about ways they can make their schools smaller and to find ways to help students feel connected again to their schools and their communities and their parents. This bill and the academic research I have been discussing here today make a very simple point about our schools, our kids, and ourselves. Our lives are