

and with youth-related issues every day.

This week, they are serving as effective listeners, allowing students to express their views about the violence which has permeated their lives and surrounds them. I am proud that Raquel Lopez from Santa Barbara is escorting three students from the 22nd district of California. Raquel has spent her career working with youth in her community as a counselor to teen mothers, as an advocate for a local youth center and as a leadership development director for Girls, Incorporated.

Raquel does great work in our community, on the line every day, and is a wonderful presence at this conference.

Today's meeting away from the students for a few hours, chaperons were able to state their own views on why there is so much violence surrounding our students. I wanted to share some of their insightful comments on reducing youthful violence.

Maria Brenes from Oakland, California, says, "I strongly recommend that a national youth leadership initiative be implemented to provide positive alternatives as a larger violence prevention; to empower our youth."

Marcia Kaplan from New Jersey says, "We need some form of parenting education in the school system so that we can provide parents with tools that they need to deal with our kids," with their children, "today, and the issues that they face."

Lucy Santini Smith from Michigan has stated, "We must listen and determine together what programs should be funded, like after school programs and mentoring programs, demonstrate to them that Congress does listen, cares deeply and initiates real programs."

Finally, Benton Billings, a teacher from Lansing, Michigan, said, "If we really want to get at the heart of our Nation's school violence problems, the kids must be involved in the dialogue. They really know what is going on and what solutions would work best."

Mr. Billings, I could not agree with you more. In our efforts to understand and curtail violence among our youth, we sometimes forget to consult our kids. That is a mistake. It is time for us to learn from them. And just by being here, these committed individuals are allowing this to happen. I salute all of the adults who make this Voices Against Violence Conference possible. They really created the event so that the students could attend by coming along with them. As important as our work here in Washington is, we know that the real work in reducing youth violence will come from within our communities themselves.

Our chaperones are going to help make that happen. We have a responsibility here in Congress. We need to set our own priorities straight, with our

children and with our young people in mind, as a number one priority, so that the appropriate resources will be available for them in our communities and through the dedicated community heroes who work with them each and every day.

VOICES AGAINST VIOLENCE ADDRESS ISSUES INVOLVING YOUTH

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

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, like my colleague who preceded me to the podium here this evening, I had the opportunity this morning to speak to 180 of the chaperons who were here with the over 400 students who are here today and tomorrow meeting on and talking about and using their voice, Voices Against Violence, so that those of us who serve in these halls might hear them.

Today and tomorrow, these youngsters from all across this country are participating in this conference and they are going to address the issues involved in youth violence.

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As most of my colleagues know, before I came to this body, I was privileged to serve for 8 years as State superintendent in North Carolina. I certainly have some understanding of what a difference these young people and their adult chaperones can make.

Parents involved and adults involved with children make all the difference in the world because they really are on the frontline of the common-sense solutions that we are searching here and across the country.

Our children's safety ought not to be about partisan politics. It ought not to even be about differences. It really ought to be what we can do jointly together in Congress at the State and local level, in the private sector, and in our communities to make our schools the safest place that our children attend.

We need to support early intervention and prevention. There is no question about that. We need to put resources there. We have to recognize and acknowledge and work toward parents as the first teachers. There is no question about that. But a lot of parents do not know how to be good teachers, and we need to help them. We need to do better jobs of that.

Certainly, we need to fund Head Start and Smart Start, make sure that children have the kind of care and services that they need to grow up to be productive and good citizens. It will save a lot of money later on and make a big difference when these young people get to be teenagers and adults.

We heard today about character education. It is the moral lens, in my opin-

ion, that we look at right and wrong. In North Carolina, we call it North Carolina values, because we instituted character education a number of years ago. I will talk about that a little more in a minute.

Certainly where we need them, we need resource officers in our schools for the protection to make sure they are safe; and that means we ought to have zero tolerance for violence, and it must be enforced.

But I want to commend the young people in my district who are participating in these conferences these 2 days. Anna Tomaskovic-Devey of Garner is a student at Enloe High School in Raleigh, North Carolina. She is doing an excellent job. I had a chance to talk with her. She is participating in the conference. Sunay Shah, a Southeast Raleigh High School junior is making a contribution, and he will take this back to his community, as will George Moore, Jr. of Coats, a Triton High School senior in Dunn.

I want to thank, this evening, the chaperone, Pam Callahan. She also serves as SDA advisor to the school and has been involved in the school life for many years.

Finally, let me just read a couple of the recommendations that these chaperones have made from across the country. Florence Wethe from Walnut Creek, California, she said, "We need to teach core values. It must be taught to our young people in schools. They need to know the difference between right and wrong. Many times, they do not have that, and right and wrong, such as respect, responsibility, decision making, diversity, sharing, and appreciating the differences that we share." I think she is absolutely right.

Here is another one from Annabelle Blackstone from St. Louis, Missouri. She says, "Invest your money in our children. Their schools, their teachers, their communities. They are angry. They are miserable because they believe adults do not really care anymore."

What Annabelle is saying is, where we put our resources is what we value. If we really value our children, we need to put our resources there.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I will read one last card Kim Minor of Pennsylvania. "Class sizes matter in all grades. Teenagers need to know and be heard by teachers as much as first graders." Kim, you are absolutely right.

NO TAX INCREASES OR RAIDS ON SOCIAL SECURITY, JUST FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to start off reading a letter that I