I speak as a member of the Subcommittee on Defense that wants to strengthen our defense, and we are doing it because we are still strengthening it even after applying the same standard to them as to the rest of government.

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, again, we are actually adding $2 billion more to this defense budget than this White House and the Pentagon requested.

Facts are stubborn things. No means no. But to the minority party in this chamber and to the folks at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, no apparently means maybe when it comes to the Social Security Trust Fund.

Mr. Speaker, let me repeat, the transcript of what transpired today in the White House press room, a journalist to Joe Lockhart, the Press Secretary, question: ''Just to be clear, the third option you would consider, you would under no circumstances accept going to the Social Security surplus at this point; is that correct?'' Mr. Lockhart responds, ''We have put forward a better way. We hope they will consider it. We will be here. They understand what our ideas are.''

This President stood in the well. He said save 62 percent of the Social Security surplus, implying he would spend 38 percent of it on other programs. He outlined various new ways to raise revenue. We brought it to the floor of this House. Not a single Member voted for the Clinton tax-hike package, not anyone on that side. So no meant no when it came to raising taxes.

All we say is this, Mr. Speaker, our 1 percent solution, one penny out of every dollar in savings will save Social Security and stop the raid. A penny saved is a retirement secured.

ARMENIAN TERRORISM AN OUTRAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Maryland (Mrs. MORELLA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MORELLA. Mr. Speaker, I appear here to add my voice to those who are expressing our strongest sense of outrage at the reported terrorism against the Armenian Congress which has so far claimed the lives of Prime Minister Vazgen Sarkisian, the Speaker of the Assembly Karen Demirchian, Deputy Speaker Bakhshian, Energy Minister Petrosian, and senior economic official Kotanian.

I was pleased to lead a congressional delegation to visit Armenia during the August month. We had the opportunity to personally meet with these individuals who were clearly professionals on all they did, dedicated to the well being of the country and its people, and repeatedly demonstrated their obvious commitment to bringing peace and prosperity to the region. In fact, we were there to help to promote the peace process with Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan.

Prime Minister Sarkisian, only a few days before we arrived, had addressed the people of Armenia on a television broadcast talking about the window of opportunity that Armenia had for the peace process as well as opportunities for trade in Armenia by those from other parts of the world, as well as the need to do something about corruption, to prevent corruption, and for transparency, for openness of the system. He got great applause; but it was, indeed, a very courageous statement he made.

He was also here less than a month ago, and many of us who were interested in Armenia met with him and again discussed the process of the peace progress as well as the openness to trade and the advancements that are being made by the brilliant Armenian people.

I am just very saddened by what we have learned about what has happened. This unwarranted intrusion against the Armenian people's democratically elected leaders must not in any way deter the commitment of the Armenian government to further develop and strengthen the nation's democracy.

Our prayers and our best wishes are with the people of Armenia in the hope that the current hostage situation will be peacefully resolved and the perpetrators of this heinous crime are brought to justice.

DIGITAL DIVIDE AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentlman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. LARSON. Mr. Speaker, today across our Nation, we are most fortunate that this economy that we are participating in continues to surge and roar. Yet, Mr. Speaker, today based on the finding of the Commerce Department, we find an alarming trend throughout this country as it relates to something that is commonly referred to as the digital divide.

□ 1800

The genesis for this special order this evening is to discuss that divide and potential solutions through prospective legislation that will be introduced in a compendium of bills that colleagues from the Committee on Science and the Committee on Education and the Workforce will be addressing as we move forward this evening.

In a conference report entitled Falling Through the Net, Larry Irving, in testifying before the Subcommittee on Empowerment of the Committee on Small Business, and speaking directly to the ranking minority member, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD), reported the following: He cited that there is an alarming trend that is taking place all across this Nation. Even though there is greater access to the Internet, what we find is that the gap is widening between those who have access to information and those who do not. And for those who do not, most disturbingly we find that it is happening along the lines of race, gender, geography and wealth.

We must seek to close that gap. We must seek to make sure that in the policies that we enact here in the United States Congress that we leave no one behind in this economy.

This poses a problem for us because of this gap. It is three-tiered. First, in terms of the economic isolation that it creates; economic isolation that all too often takes place within our urban areas and, therefore, impacts our minority populations who live there; economic isolation that takes place in our rural communities because of the inability for us to reach those communities with the technology they richly deserve and need; and it also results in an inferior form of education.

The gentleman from Michigan (Mr. EHLERS), who serves on the Committee on Science, and the gentlewoman from Maryland (Mrs. MORELLA) on the Committee on Science, have pointed out, there is not a sufficient pipeline for us to make sure that there is a transition in our public school systems from school to work. In fact, many people have come before this Congress, many from the business community, asking us to ease immigration quotas so that they can import people from abroad to provide for the more than 350,000 jobs in the high-tech area that are currently going unfilled.

Any economist worth their salt has spoken at length about the Information Age. We have come to acknowledge that knowledge will be the future currency in this country, and it is knowledge that will make this economic engine that is propelling us forward continue to thrive in a global economy. Tonight, we hope to address this by way of solutions.

Now, I know all too often that Congress has a deserved reputation of talking at length about the problems but does very little in the way of solutions. What we are hoping to address by way of legislation is to look at three fundamental areas. All of us involved in education understand the three Rs of reading, writing and arithmetic, and yet to guarantee in the future that teachers will have the best tools afforded to them, that we will be able to provide our children with the very best and most up-to-date technology within the classroom, fundamentally we have to do three things: We have to look at retooling our infrastructure; we have to look at retraining our teaching force; and we have to rethink how we look at education from the bottom up.

We are of the mind, and hope to address this this evening as well, three bills that are before the Committee on Science and the Committee on Education and the Workforce. Those bills focus on the problem. And let me start with the issue of retooling.

What do I mean by retooling? Fundamentally, most Americans, when they think of retooling, think of our great failure in the 1970s when we found out what happens when a business does not retool, as was the case with respect to the automobile industry. We did not make the necessary steps in that area, and we found that we lost market share. We found that all of a sudden the United States, once the preeminent producer of automobiles, fell behind competing nations. It is a lesson that we learned hard.

That was in the automobile industry. The industry we are speaking about this evening is education and, fundamentally, it is our children that we are talking about. We need in this Nation, just like we have a national highway system and a highway infrastructure that transports our commerce, and that our parents made sure was constructed after the Second World War, we need to make sure that our children have an information superhighway that links up our public schools and our libraries so that everyone can have access to information; so that everybody will be able to have access to the knowledge that they are going to need to flourish and to grow in the Information Age in an increasingly shrinking world in this global economy of ours.

We expect to close this gap. If we expect not to leave any child behind, we also must provide for having teachers who are able to utilize that technology within our classrooms. I am a former school teacher. I understand implicitly the need and the desire on the part of teachers to be able to individualize instruction for all of their students. We now have the capability, we now have the technology to do just that; to allow the teacher to individualize instruction; to be more diagnostic in their approach to teaching and, therefore, more prescriptive in the remedies that they apply to their students.

We have the opportunity to allow the gifted to learn as fast and as far as their minds and creativity will carry them. We have the opportunity to remediate for those students that need our help the most and, for the vast majority of students, to allow them to participate and thrive in the fullness of this economy, by providing them with the skill sets that they are going to need.

Frankly, that is going to require a change. We have to provide incentives for our teachers. First and foremost, tax incentives so that they can pick up equipment on their own, purchase computers, purchase the hardware and software that they need and receive a tax credit for it; to go back and get an education and receive a tax credit for that so that they can be further trained in their ability to integrate voice, video and data within the context of their lesson plan, within the context of their curriculum, so that they are a more effective and efficient teacher.

And incentives need to be provided to the business community as well; to allow them to buddy up with teachers, to allow them to buddy up with school systems. And where they will provide hours, by lending the expertise of their corporations to public schools, they should receive a tax credit for that as well.

Secretary Riley has pointed out that we are going to need 2 million teachers over the next 10 years, and we have to make sure that our universities are turning out teachers that are well versed in voice, video, and data technology, and capable of integrating them within their lesson plan.

Now, I am constantly reminded by my wife and by others, and I believe this to be true, that no piece of legislation, no bill that is proposed, ever reads to a child at night, or tucks them in, or provides them with encouragement. Only caring parents can do that, and only professionally trained teachers, within the context of the classroom, can provide for the kind of ubiquitous individual education that I believe the technology that we possess now can provide for our students.

But we need to act now. And what I am suggesting this evening is that aside from the infrastructure needs that I know that we must address, and besides the retraining, that we fundamentally have to think about that technology and how our children use that technology. It has been stated on more than one occasion that oftentimes the fifth grader in a local school knows more than the teacher, or is the technology expert in the school. We have to take advantage of this.

We are submitting legislation that focuses on creating a National Youth Tech Corps starting in the fifth grade, reaching out to children, making sure they understand the importance of not only being served but providing service, letting them participate fully in mentoring other students and, in some cases, of course, teachers as well.

We want to let them also participate civilly and understand the importance of putting a civic face on technology and the responsibility that goes along with that. Let them work with the elderly in a community and help shut-ins use E-mail and talk directly through technology to their children and to their grandchildren.

I know that it will take some time to look at what is the most efficient technology and infrastructure. Will it be wide band, will it be radio wave, will it be infrared, will it be satellite transmission that we use to bring this ubiquitous form of technology to our public schools and libraries? And to fully train teachers is going to take time as well. But our youth are already hungry. Our youth already understand and grasp the technology oftentimes better than their parents. And I believe that from the bottom up, if we encourage their involvement, and acknowledge and recognize them for their effort, that we can move this Nation forward.

I have felt for some time that as a nation we have our head in the sand with respect to this issue, and that we, as a Congress, have got to wake up and understand. If we will consider just for a moment the dilemma the local superintendent of schools or boards of education face, all wanting and desiring to light up the desktops of their children and the blackboards of their teachers, but faced with enormous economic costs and something that we refer to as Moore's law on the Committee on Science, where technology is eclipsing itself at a rate so that every 6 to 12 months it has become almost obsolete, no superintendent, no principal, no board of education is going to be able to find themselves in a position to put the monies forward needed to bring this technology into their classroom if there is not a plan for ongoing maintenance, and if the very technology that they install could be obsolete in 6 to 12 months.

Mr. Speaker, this requires the best and the brightest minds in this country, an alliance for progress that will bring together the National Science Foundation, NASA, the Department of Education, the business community, and government focusing on the best solutions to bring that technology into our classrooms and our libraries.

I am joined this evening by a distinguished colleague on the Committee on Science as well, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WU), and at this time I would yield to him.

Mr. WU. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Connecticut. I have had many occasions in recent months to observe the digital divide as it plays out in my home State of Oregon. On some of my elementary school visits there are whole roomfuls of computers.

□ 1815

In one school that I visited just about 10 days ago, there was a roomful of windows, Intel machines, and there was another roomful of Apple computers; and in that particular elementary school, there was literally dozens of computers on two different software systems. And in stark contrast, in some other schools that I have visited, there are barely two computers available to the entire school.

This is one example of the digital divide. I would guess that the same situation is played out at home, that the wonderful parents that have contributed these machines at the school with

two rooms full of computers, that they also provide computers at home and in the other neighborhoods where they have struggled to put two computers into the entire school, that at home perhaps there is much less access to computer technology and all the marvels that it can bring into our lives.

I think we need to address this digital divide situation and we need to address it aggressively. By all estimates, in this century and going forward in this century, 75 percent of all future jobs will require some form of computer literacy.

Now, one of the things we know is that, just as in the private sector, where the cost of putting a box, a machine, a computer on a desk and its associated software is only about 30 percent of the cost of actually implementing computer technology. The other 70 percent is really the cost of training the users of the computer and fully integrating that into the business.

The parallel in the education arena is that while it costs a lot to put computers into the classroom, and many classrooms still have not successfully done that, it will cost even more and take even more time to integrate the computers into educational curricula, to properly train teachers, as well as students, in the use of the machines which we hope to make available to them.

Mr. LARSON. Mr. Speaker, my colleague has made several good points, and I just want to amplify a couple.

Another concern that has arisen, and I spoke about the need to retool with respect to the need for infrastructure improvement. In this Congress, the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) has introduced bills with respect to school modernization. It is important that we modernize our schools. It is important as we do this that we bring in the kind of technology, as I will continue to say, that will light up the desktops of children and the blackboards of teachers.

Other nations are moving ahead of us. And just like the automobile industry was arrogant in the 1970s, not believing that anyone could ever compete with them, we are being leap-frogged by other nations. Countries like Costa Rica, nations like India in many instances have more sophisticated technology within their classrooms and understand its importance if they are going to thrive in a global economy.

And so, we have got to make sure that, as a Nation, that if we anticipate leaving no one behind and if we are going to close this digital divide, that the way to do that is through our public education system.

These are not reports that came from the Department of Education. This is the Department of Commerce. The Department is citing this alarming gap; and it understands fundamentally, as does the business community, that we lack the sufficient pipeline coming from our school systems that will provide them with the workforce that they need in the future.

So it is of vital importance that we are able to get this legislation enacted and that we are well on the way to closing this divide.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the distinguished gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE), a member of the Committee on Science and the Committee on Education and the Workforce and a leader in educational issues and an expert in this area.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Connecticut for yielding.

Let me thank him for bringing this issue before us tonight and hosting this special order so that we could talk about an issue that is important not only to schools. So many times when we talk about them, we talk about as if it is important only to schools and to children and to teachers and to parents. But my colleague has properly framed it. It is important really to this country and our competitiveness.

We have seen in the 1990s, as an example, where business has absolutely used technology to increase productivity at a level that we have not seen since the dawning of the industrial revolution in this country literally, and it has increased our productivity and given us one of the best economies really that we have had in our lifetimes. If we can just sustain it for a few more months, it may be the longest sustained economic period of growth in the history of this country. And a lot of that goes to the technology that is driving our economy.

That being said, your point of acknowledging that the challenges we face at the public school level and the digital divide that is there already, that is why the business roundtable as come forward on education and put their shoulder to the wheel, as some would say, the titans of industry. But they are not industry as we expect; they are industry that understands that a well-educated citizenry, as Thomas Jefferson said, is really our key not only to a democracy but to a thriving economy.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and almost every chamber of commerce now across this country, and I had the privilege when I was State superintendent in North Carolina of working not only with our, what is called the Citizens of Business and Industry, which is really our State chamber of commerce, each chamber of commerce now has an education component.

Now, there is a reason to have an education component and a support unit there for public schools. Because they recognize that if we are going to have a strong economy and children are going to be able to produce in the 21st century, and the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WU) was talking about 75 percent of those who are going to be moving into the workforce need to have computer skills and I would challenge him, I think it is 100 percent, the truth is everyone is going to have to have some knowledge of computers. But we are going to have to have a much higher competency on a large segment of our population in the 21st century because most jobs are going to be driven in one way or another by technology.

The thing that I see in our public schools and the issues my colleague has talked about in the bills, and I want to commend my colleague for the bills that he has in committee that he is working on, I have a bill on school construction that the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) is on and he has been since I have signed on, it is important to get those bills in and get them moving. Because just to have technology without space for children and to have those buildings, some of those old buildings just absolutely will not take the wiring and the technology that is needed to get on the Internet. The school is the ramp that we are going to get onto the Internet to get to the world, and too many of our schools do not have an on-ramp.

And unfortunately, as we talk about computers and Internets in our schools, as badly as they are needed, too many of our classrooms do not even have telephones, things that we thought of years ago that were important that on every executive desk and that in each one of our offices where we have computers.

I went in a classroom just this past Monday and visited where they are trying to get just five computers in each classroom, a very modern school in a very progressive county in my district. But guess what happened? They could not afford to have them and have them tied to the Internet. So now they have computer labs.

Computer labs are not all that bad. The problem is children get to use them only when they go. How would we like to have all the automobiles that we have placed in a garage and we could only use them once a week? That is really what we are doing with computers. As important as computers are to a child in learning, we are saying you can get to them once a week; and by the way, you can only use them about an hour and we will teach you how to drive it. That is really what we are doing. And an item that is so important, the technology that is driving the changing world and yet we want to deny it to our children.

I commend the gentleman for what he is doing. I think we are on the right track. And I would trust that this Congress would do everything within our power not only to raise the issue to a

higher level but to put some money behind it. Whether it takes allocating resources or whether it takes tax credits to encourage the private sector to help us, it is so important to make sure that that is in the classroom where children can learn, whether they are in the inner city or whether they are in isolated rural areas. If they are part of the digital divide, they suffer just as badly no matter where they are. Every child ought to have that opportunity no matter what their economic or ethnic background might be.

Mr. LARSON. Mr. Speaker, I have been to several hearings and a variety of different forums as it relates to this issue, and the general public and the business community and in fact the academic community is crying out for leadership.

This Nation has always been able to move forward on critical issues. We have always been able to respond, especially when the very fabric of our economy is at stake here. If we are going to continue to thrive and compete in a global economy, then we have got to make sure that we have the students who can make that transition from the school to the workforce, that, in a knowledge-based society, that our students going on to higher education are exposed to the same kind of data and research.

But what we find from the Department on Commerce is that, while more people today have purchased more technology, i.e. computers and voice video and data integration within the context of work and home, fundamentally the gap has widened between those who have access to that information and those who do not, creating the haves and have-nots in the information age.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield on that point for just a moment, because I think he is absolutely correct. But the point he made that was made earlier by the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WU), as we talk about technology in the classroom, it is imperative that we make sure our teachers get the staff development training they need so that, whatever that technology may be, it is not just computers, it is integrated technology, that they have it so they can integrate it in the curriculum.

Because it has to be a part of the taught curriculum, not just an add-on to the daily activities. And until it is taught and the teachers have the time, and many are doing it and many States are working at it, but they need every bit of help we can give them to do that so it becomes a part of the active curriculum every day.

Mr. LARSON. Mr. Speaker, in my State, in Connecticut, and in my hometown of east Hartford, united technologies have buddied up very successfully with fourth and fifth grade teachers to expose them. These are teachers that had, frankly, not ever used computers, who had never seen a laptop, who were exposed to it. And as they became more familiar and were able, as my colleague pointed out, to integrate the technology within the context of their daily lesson plans and their curricula, then they began to see the wonders of this technology.

I have pointed out this evening that there is wide concern about rural areas, many of which my colleague represents in North Carolina. But there is no one who is more sensitive and understands more succinctly the problems of urban America with respect to technology than our esteemed colleague, the gentleman from New York (Mr. WEINER), who also serves on the Committee on Science with us.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman at this point.

Mr. WEINER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON) for yielding. I also wanted to thank him for bringing this issue to the floor. He has really tried to push this issue to the forefront, and he is frankly bucking some of our conventions around here in the House of Representatives.

One of the things that we are known for in this great body is acting with great alacrity, with great speed in times of crisis. It is a time when we come together on both sides of the aisle and we manage to get the People's work done, whether we stare down the barrel of very often misfortune or war or crisis in the country.

But it is very difficult often to discuss the types of issues that my colleague is discussing here tonight because it requires our making an intellectual leap not just to next week or next year but maybe to events that might happen 10 or 15 years down the road. And when we are looking at issues like this, frankly, this process has never been very good at it. We have never been very good on planning for the next generation for 4 or 5 years hence.

But I would argue, and my colleague has made this point abundantly clear, as has the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WU) and the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE), that we are at that crisis mode right now.

□ 1830

Our students today are doing very poorly as compared to other major industrialized nations, in math, in science. Frankly they rank near the bottom. And we are also seeing that there is a crisis and that jobs are very mobile. Perhaps no community is more evident of that than the one that the gentleman represents in Connecticut, one where once upon a time it was unheard of that insurance jobs could be anywhere else except around one another in one community. The same is true for my financial services in New York City. Now with the new technologies being what they are, jobs are extraordinarily mobile and it does not just stop at one district, it does not stop at the borders of our country. Jobs could almost overnight at the throw of a switch leave our shore and go overseas. This is a crisis of our economy.

I have to say that this is also a crisis because decisions that we make today in 1999, on the legislation that you are pushing, are decisions that will manifest themselves 5 or 6 or 10 years down the road. If we do not act on these things now, it is going to be too late if we wake up and see, wait a minute, we have got a terrible brain drain, we have a terrible circumstance where we cannot fill the good jobs that our economy is producing, we better hurry up and invest in education. It does not work like that. You have to invest in 1999 to see the benefits in 2009.

So I would argue we are at the precipice of a crisis in our education system right now. But another element that we are kind of bucking against here and this one is a philosophical problem. Many people in this Chamber and perhaps many people in the country at large still have what I would argue is an outdated federalist notion of education issues. We are still very much hung up on the idea that education is an issue that they deal with at the local level and the city council from where I came, in the States from where you came and the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WU) came and it is really Congress' job to stay out of the way. And in fact we go so far as to say it is our job here in Congress to pave a road but if it goes by a school, we cannot touch it. We can pave a highway but we cannot plug a school into the Internet. That is a philosophical objection that we hear around here from time to time that speaks to a federalist argument that is literally generations behind us.

Today, we have a national crisis. Today, we have an emergency that transcends that type of thinking. Now, I would share the argument that many of my colleagues make here that we should not, once we plug the school in, say here is what we think you should look at with that Internet hookup, here is what we think how many kids you should have in the classroom. Although I have views on that, perhaps that is something for a local school board or a local city or local governance. But for the Federal Government to stand back in the face of what is really an economic battle, an economic war that goes beyond these shores and say we will not get involved really does ignore a major problem.

The legislation that you have proposed and are sponsoring recognizes that the Federal Government has to get in the game, has to begin to participate in solving this problem. This is, I believe, an intuitive point among

parents around this country in districts, Republican, Democrat, independent and the like.

Mr. LARSON. I would like to amplify that point by saying that the legislation acknowledges that decisions with respect to education are best made locally. I am a former member of the board of education in my community in East Hartford. I served locally on a town council and served in the State legislature. I understand the importance of local control. This legislation seeks not to intervene with local control but augment the ability. And to your point, and I think the most critical issue that we face with respect to supplying our schools with the wherewithal to do this without bankrupting them through local property taxes is to come up with a strategic means of supplying information, through whatever conduit, satellite, broad band width, radio wave, infrared, whatever is most economically feasible and efficient to bring technology into those classrooms. That is an information superhighway, not different infrastructurally than a national highway system and only, and I would argue along with you, is the Federal Government in a position to do that. No community, no State, even a city as large as New York or a State as affluent as Connecticut or Oregon can provide itself with the wherewithal to do the kind of infrastructure work and maintenance that will be needed. But this Nation does, because what is at stake here is to make sure that we have the ability to facilitate learning throughout a lifetime.

Mr. WEINER. If the gentleman will yield for a moment, I have to tell you, and it is interesting to hear you use that language. Last night a bipartisan group of Members of Congress sat down and heard a speech by John Chambers, who is the CEO of Cisco. Cisco Systems, they are a company that makes the switches that all Internet commerce and all Internet traffic travels over. They do not actually make the wire. It is kind of like no matter who is carrying the information they are making the switches to get it there. They are a very successful company, a market capitalization that frankly boggles the mind at this point. When he was describing his company, the gentleman sitting next to me was I believe from Chase Manhattan Bank and he turned to me and said, ''That's five times the market capital of my company,'' and he is a major bank. It was interesting because very often we are visited on Capitol Hill by folks who are making narrow appeals for legislation that might help their particular business. But what Mr. Chambers argued for is the two major things that he thought would not only benefit his company but the country as a whole is, as you said, one is the infrastructure, making sure the infrastructure is available for this new economy to travel over, and he harkened again and again to the notion of education. His argument was very simple. He said that a company like his, if he so desired, could in a matter of a year or two move its work elsewhere, move its jobs elsewhere. That is how interconnected the community has become. If you think that is an exaggeration, I would ask you when you go back to your office here at the House of Representatives, if you want a bill, you go onto the Internet and you just print it up on your computer. When I was here working on Capitol Hill, not eons ago, just 5 or 6 years ago, you had to look up in a book the bill number or call over to someone and get the bill number and then there was a House documents room, where you had to walk down, someone would climb up on the ladder and they would actually pull down a copy of the bill and there you had a copy of the bill.

So this is technology that is making every corner of this economy work much faster and much more efficiently. With that same speed, if we are slow on the uptake with education changes, with infrastructure changes, we are simply going to get left behind. It is very easy for somebody like John Chambers who employs thousands and thousands of people at Cisco to say, well, I am going to go to Australia tomorrow because so little of his business actually involves bricks and mortar in Silicon Valley. That was one lesson that I think he left with us that was very poignant.

He kept coming back to education. On some level I would argue, for him, he will find his workforce, because there are going to be countries out there who are smart enough to figure this stuff out and invest quickly. He was describing the slow evolution, perhaps revolution is the wrong word to use about China, I say to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WU), but evolution that is going on where they are starting to catch up and investing more and more of their resources in education. So I think we have a window of time here. You have described it very well. We have a window of time here where we can take advantage of the enormous intellectual wealth that is being created in this country and try to pass some of it along to our schools and these three bills do that.

Mr. LARSON. A point very well made. I yield to the gentleman from Oregon.

Mr. WU. I thank the gentleman from Connecticut for yielding and for his strong commitment and leadership to advocating for adequate technology training for our teachers and in our classrooms. To further expand upon the gentleman from New York's comments concerning federalism, what we need is a federalism of commitment and not a federalism of convenience. Today, we saw in this House a situation where our commitment to federalism became inconvenient to certain values and we ran roughshod over a certain State's rights, but we are going to stay focused on the issue of education here. And with respect to local determinations, no one would more strongly advocate for completely taking care of educational issues at the school board level, at the school level, at the classroom level than I. However, in my home State of Oregon, because of certain property tax limitation measures which were passed several years ago, the local school boards no longer have the resources or the authority to take care of some of their crucial, basic mission. As a result of that, some of those financial resources and the authority has gone to our State capital of Salem.

It has also become apparent that between the local school boards and our State capital, there is not enough to go around to solve the problems that the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) has tried to address with his school modernization and school construction bills. And I would like to thank the gentleman from North Carolina and the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) for their leadership in school modernization.

In my congressional district, there are schools which are only 2 years old and yet they are already overcrowded. I did a class size study of my congressional district and over 70 percent of the students in grades K through 3 were in class sizes which were over the optimum and a significant percentage were in class sizes of 27 and above. Many high school students are in classes where there are more than 40, 45 or 50 students. That is just not an adequate environment in which to learn. Other schools in my congressional district have a lack of facilities, they need to build the additional space so that additional teachers can teach, and other schools have old facilities. In Astoria, Oregon, there has not been a new classroom built since 1927. Some schools do not have telephones. Many classrooms have only one plug in the wall. The bill that the gentleman from North Carolina has sponsored would help address that issue, not by taking that function away from the local school board but by assisting the school board in its job. It respects federalism and it helps education. Between the school modernization initiative which would bring $200 million to the State of Oregon, and the class size initiative putting 100,000 teachers into classrooms across America, that would put 2,500 teachers into the State of Oregon. That is a very important first step. It respects federalism because there continues to be a crucial role for the State and for the local school board, for the teacher and for the parent. But we must do what we can to address these issues of classroom overcrowding and antiquated facilities.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. If the gentleman will yield, he is absolutely right. And tie that together with what the gentleman from Connecticut is trying to do in terms of linking up with technology. My State is one of those fast growing States, not unlike yours where we are just growing by leaps and bounds. Over the next 10 years as we look out, the projections are by the Department of Education, as the gentleman from Connecticut knows, they have projected that the high school population in this Nation will grow substantially, and my State is one of the probably top five fastest growing States. But even with the growth, technology can have a significant impact in helping that, but we need to be able to help not only a facility with technology but also with those teachers in the classroom and staff development.

I have been in a lot of classrooms, as all three of my colleagues have, and I have never in the years that I was State superintendent and as a legislator now as a Member of Congress ever had a child or a teacher for that matter to ask me where the money came from, whether it was Federal, State or local, recognizing that at the Federal level we probably only put in about 6 percent, depending on where you are it may be a little bit more or less in States, not much more than 7, but they have never asked that question.

The problem we face is tremendous challenges. Children never know what they need. They only know what they get. In many cases, they do not know that what they get is not what they should be getting, that it is woefully short in a lot of cases and in a lot of communities. This digital divide that you are calling attention to tonight is a critical issue. It spans whether you are rural or urban. I commend the gentleman for that, because I think all of us need to be better educated but more importantly once we are educated, we need to act on it.

□ 1845

Mr. LARSON. Like so many individuals across this Nation, I participated in Net Day and was responsible in Connecticut for what we referred to as Connect 96. But even there with the electronic barnraising that took place and the single connections to our schools where we are able to hook up libraries and schools, we recognize fundamentally that there was still a problem that persisted.

I do not want to leave here this evening, and I want to make sure that I allow you time to talk about an important issue as it impacts schools in your State that has been severely impacted by the flooding that has taken place throughout the great State of North Carolina, but I did just want to reemphasize three points. One, with respect to retooling. We need a national plan; we need a Marshall Plan for our public education system. No different than the ability that our parents recognized when they came home from the Second World War and said, Look, we need to connect this Nation through commerce by an interstate highway system. It is a different highway, but probably, more important, it is an information highway, that without that connection this gap between those who have access to information and those who do not are going to be left behind.

So we need to put the best minds together to focus on the best means of providing universal and ubiquitous service to our children and our teachers, and our teachers are fundamental to this. At no point, first, would anyone, especially the superintendent of school systems of all of North Carolina, or a Congressman from New York or Oregon, recognize fundamentally the role of parents. There is no greater teacher.

That is not at issue here, nor is what is at issue here the use of technology to replace a teacher. What is at issue here is the use of technology to enhance and augment the ability of teachers to get after the goal that every teacher strives for, to individualize instruction for their students, to bring out the very best, to be more diagnostic in their approach to teaching, to open up universes where all of us in this room have here before never traveled and to be able to be more prescriptive in their remedy and, therefore, more accountable.

The accountability between teacher and student, and teacher and parent, and parent and child is enhanced by this technology, and by no means is it ever meant to replace, but augment and provide us with the kind of tools that we are going to need to have the best educated country in the world.

Mr. Speaker, that is what has allowed us to come to this point in history as the preeminent economic and military force in the world. Absent our attending to investment within our public school infrastructure will only mean the slow decay of this Nation. It cannot happen on our watch. We have got to make sure that we move forward on this agenda, and we can do so by inviting our students as well.

There is concern all across this country about kids' involvement with this technology and the Internet, but supervised by adults, caring adults that put a civic tone and civic responsibility with appropriate checks, we can unleash in this country a new civic force starting very young but recognizing the importance not only of being served, but providing service.

That is the goal of this education, of these proposals to retool, to retrain and fundamentally rethink.

I recognize my dear friend and representative from Oregon for some closing remarks so that we can give the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) time to respond to his proposals as well.

Mr. WU. Mr. Speaker, I want to just underscore a couple of positive programs that are occurring around the country and particularly in my corner of the country because I think that we need a sense of hope, a sense of what is going right, a sense of where we are going from here.

The gentleman from New York (Mr. WEINER) mentioned Cisco and the dinner last night. Cisco Corporation has an education foundation here in Washington, D.C., and in my home State the largest employer is Intel Corporation. Intel has made it a practice to donate motherboards to schools. They make a lot of public school donations, and the quid pro quo is that the school is then tasked to bring together the other things that are needed to make an entire computer out of a motherboard; and students and teachers learn together how to do that. It is a complete process of education, and it starts with a motherboard donation by Intel Corporation. That, Mr. Speaker, is the kind of public-private partnership that I think we should be looking for.

Another public-private partnership that is occurring in Oregon is something that is called Saturday Academy at the Oregon Graduate Institute. Saturday Academy brings public school students to sites around the metropolitan Portland area on a Saturday and permits them to study topics in science, mathematics, and other things of their interests, computer science perhaps. Earlier this year we were able to show congressional leadership this program in action, and the question that I faced after that was: Gee, how come this is not happening in my community?

This started, that is, the Saturday Academy program started with a small grant from the National Science Foundation; but it has been leveraged by private donations and donations from the corporate community. I think this is the kind of public-private leadership and partnership that gets us to where we want to go.

There is one particular aspect of the Saturday Academy program which addresses the divide which the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON) has been trying to address in this discussion. What we have witnessed is a drop-off in math and science participation by girls in junior high school and in high school so that by college the participation by young women in science and mathematics just is not where it should be.

We are not training the number of engineers, mathematicians and scientists, female mathematicians, engineers and scientists that we should; and Saturday Academy has a special program focused on girls. It is called AWSEM. Let me make sure I get this right: Advocates for Women in Science,

Engineering and Mathematics. I attended an AWSEM banquet about 2 years ago, and the level of enthusiasm of these junior high and high school girls for math and science was absolutely striking. The AWSEM program, I understand, Mr. Speaker, is going nationwide.

There are success stories out there like AWSEM, like Saturday Academy, like the Intel donation program, and I think that we need to focus both on what challenges lie ahead and what we are doing right today. And with that I yield back.

Mr. LARSON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Oregon. I also thank the gentleman from New York for their contributions this evening. We hope to come back again with another special order to both detail out the progress and at this time yield the floor to our esteemed colleague from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) who has important and critical issues that impact education in his home State of North Carolina to address.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me, and I also thank him for the special order because I think what we have been about this evening is so important, and also let me thank the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON) also for his legislation. The leadership he is bringing to that, there is no question that as he talks about this information highway or the digital divide, not unlike what our colleagues who were here in the 1950s talked about the interstate highway, and he is absolutely correct in talking about that. My friend, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WU), when he talked about Intel, let me remind you that those business partnerships are important.

In North Carolina we actually have students in a number of schools actually getting the motherboard from Intel, putting them in and bringing computers up to modern standards from computers that many businesses will share with them. So, Mr. Speaker, there is tremendous partnerships out there, and we have done it with IBM and a number of our high-tech folks in the research triangle.

So there are a lot of great success stories, and I hope we can talk about more of those at a future time, and this evening I appreciate you yielding the last little bit to me so I can talk about some of the schools in North Carolina, specifically in the eastern part of the State, that have been hit so hard by Hurricane Floyd and then followed up by Hurricane Irene that did even greater damage to our agricultural areas.

But here is a photograph that some of you have seen earlier of towns in eastern North Carolina flooded. The truth is when we talk about that, folks do not realize how large the geographic area was. It is an area that includes about 2.1 million people, and the geographic area is larger than the State of Maryland. So it is a substantial area.

The devastation is substantial. When you look at these for preliminary numbers, it really came out of the local paper early on. They have been refined and are not quite that large, but if you look at the town of Princeville, 100 percent flooded with 2,152 residents. There is Tarboro, 40 percent, 4,300 residents. There is Rocky Mount, 40 percent flooded with a total of 22,900 residents. There is Goldsboro with 24,000, and the number goes on.

The point I want to make tonight, that I call on my colleagues in this Congress, before we go home and wrap up this year, we have to appropriate the funds needed to make sure these people can get their lives back together, they can get in homes, farmers can get their crops in the ground and ready for next year. The devastation has been tremendous. This has been the largest natural disaster in the history of my State. It affected Virginia, it affected Maryland, it affected New York and parts of South Carolina. Preliminary numbers I have here: on November 19, over 30,000 individuals just in North Carolina had registered with FEMA. The number of homes that are going to be destroyed or displaced are now approaching 10,000, and there may be as many as another 15 to 20,000, maybe higher than that, going to need help. There are a lot of businesses in trouble. I talked with a businessman in Wilson who lost everything that he had, his whole life's work. He was in his 50s. His business was flooded. He had no flood insurance because he never had any need for it. It was a 500-year flood plain.

Last Sunday I was in Rocky Mount at the request of a constituent. He wanted me to come down. I went to visit. I went to the homes of his three daughters. One had been in a home 5 years, another one 7 years, the other one a bit longer. She was on the other side of town. They were nice brick homes. Unfortunately, none of the three had flood insurance, and all three of them lost everything they had, and he said to me:

''Congressman, we don't need any loans. If they get a loan, they can't repay it. They owe loans on the house to have even the furniture that was in it. And if we don't get some help, we will not recover.''

I only tell that story because it can be repeated thousands and thousands of times in eastern North Carolina. We had up here today over 70 members of the North Carolina General Assembly House and Senate saying please help us, help us before you go home; and I call on my colleagues to do the same. We should not go home until we appropriate money to help these people who pay their taxes, who live by the rules, who have been subjected to a disaster today we were not expecting. We need to help them. We help people around the world. It is time to help people at home.

THE WESTERN STATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. MCINNIS) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, today the gentleman from Utah (Mr. HANSEN), my good friend, former Speaker of the House of the State of Utah, and I will spend the next hour talking with you about issues that we think are vitally important to the United States, but we think in a large part are being ignored by many parts of the United States. What we are going to talk to you about this evening is the West, the western States, the Rocky Mountains, Federal land, land-use policies, wilderness areas, water, land of many uses, Teddy Roosevelt. There are a number of different subjects, Mr. Speaker, that I would wish that you would think about as we talk because it is very important to the people of the West in this country. Frankly, it is very important to the people of the entire United States.

□ 1900

Let me begin with a little history about the Western United States. As you know from the history of our country, when the pioneers and the settlements in this country took place, most of it was on the eastern coast. Of course, I am stepping aside from the Native Americans. The Native Americans were throughout the country. This is the history as the United States as a country began to become formed.

On the eastern coast of the United States, the philosophy was to acquire more land. Our forefathers had a vision of a great country, and I think today that they would stand here, frankly, and take a look at this country and say you have created a good country. You have a country that is strong in its people. You have a country that is strong in its land. You have a country that has a vision. You have a country that has character.

But that is what they wanted to build, and, in doing that, they wanted to enlarge the country. They did not want just 13 states, they did not want 14 states, they wanted to enlarge the country. So they began to acquire land, through for example the Louisiana Purchase and some of the others, through treaties and so on.

Then they began to urge people to become pioneers. You remember the old saying, ''Go west, young man; go west.'' Well, as people and the pioneers began to go out west, they found wonderful, wonderful lands, the Kansas farmlands, the Missouri lands, the Missouri River and the Mississippi River. They got out there and they found on a