

APPOINTMENT AS MEMBER OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, and pursuant to section 103 of Public Law 99-371 (20 U.S.C. 4303), the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following Member of the House to the Board of Trustees of Gallaudet University:

Mr. LAHOOD of Illinois.
There was no objection.

APPOINTMENT AS MEMBER OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF INSTITUTE OF AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE CULTURE AND ARTS DEVELOPMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, and pursuant to section 1505 of Public Law 99-498 (20 U.S.C. 4412), the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following Member of the House to the Board of Trustees of the Institute of American Indian and Alaska Native Culture and Arts Development:

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska.
There was no objection.

APPOINTMENT AS MEMBER OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, and pursuant to section 2(a) of the National Cultural Center Act (20 U.S.C. 76h(a)), the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following Member of the House to the Board of Trustees of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts:

Mr. PORTER of Illinois.
There was no objection.

APPOINTMENT TO COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, and pursuant to section 3 of Public Law 94-304 as amended by section 1 of Public Law 99-7, the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following Member of the House to the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe:

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Chairman.
There was no objection.

THE REPUBLICANS TAKE ACTION ON IMPROVING SCHOOLS

(Mr. SOUDER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks and include therein extraneous material.)

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot today and we will hear a lot more in the future about who is saving social security, but there is a key fact

we should keep in mind. That is, for 40 years the Democrats held control of this House. The number of times they worked to save social security was somewhere around zero.

The important thing here is not whether we talk, but whether we do. Today in the Committee on Education and the Workforce we are considering a bill called Ed-Flex, to give local and State governments more flexibility, and allowing school boards more flexibility in education. Similar bills are being considered on the Senate floor. We are actually doing something about what other people talk about. It is a bipartisan effort. The gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE), the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. ROEMER), and others from both sides of the aisle are reaching forth.

Will the Democratic Party join with us in trying to give flexibility? I will refer to two articles, which I will insert into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD along with these remarks. One is from Steve Gordon, president of the East Allen County School Board, saying, States should fight Federal meddling in the schools. We don't need a national school board in Washington. We need to give more flexibility to local school boards and States.

Another is a letter to the editor praising Concordia High School in my district, which is the largest Lutheran high school in the country, for their drug testing programs. At the local level people are doing things, not just talking.

The letters referred to are as follows:
[From the Ft. Wayne News Sentinel, Feb. 22, 1999]

STATE SHOULD FIGHT FEDERAL MEDDLING IN SCHOOLS

With the start of the new legislative year, one issue that always comes up is education. Of course, the president, governor and every legislator have this issue near the top of their agendas.

The president used his State of the Union speech to address aspects of education, and I would like to respond. He recommends bringing public education more under the authority of the federal government. He also makes some points that should be common-sense to most Americans, but to him are more of a revelation that only the federal government should implement.

His first point was to end social promotion. Children should not graduate with a diploma they can't read. Who could possibly oppose this? Already schools—at the local level—are endeavoring to ensure reading skills are mastered at the earliest grade levels.

His second point was to close low-performing schools. Will the federal government decide this issue? By what standard? Indiana already examines each public school's performance and intervenes when necessary to help those schools to meet their specific needs. We don't need the federal government to transcend the state authority already in place.

His third point suggested that teachers only teach subjects they are trained in. This is another local issue—one manipulated by contracts, state licensing rules and course offerings requested by students. What we at

the local level need is greater flexibility in putting qualified teachers into the classroom. Indiana should modify the licensing procedure to allow people to teach who are qualified in the material but do not necessarily have a major in education.

An example is: Schools are in great need of vocational program teachers. People who have vocational skills but may not meet licensing requirements could pass their experience on to students. For example, people just out of the military or retirees could fill this need.

His fourth point was to allow parents to choose which public school to send their child to based on school "report cards." Indiana already requires each district to publish information about schools' performance. Charter schools have been a state issue and should remain so. One aspect of charters that makes them unique is the avoidance of many current state Department of Education regulations. I suggest that if some schools can do this, all public schools should be allowed to avoid these rules.

His fifth point was to "implement sensible discipline policies." Not long ago, the president pushed through the mandatory one-year expulsion for any student who comes to school with a handgun. Every state had to make this into law. Indiana already had a law forbidding handguns to be within 1,000 feet of a school. Why was it necessary to federalize this issue?

I would like to make some suggestions in contrast to the president's agenda.

First, give real tax relief to families. When families have both parents working out of necessity, they have less time for their children. A parent waiting for the child to arrive at home is better than after-school programs. Families are paying approximately 40 percent of their income to taxes. One parent is effectively working just to pay the government. Children need their parents—not another government program!

Second, do not generalize when talking about education. Every school has unique problems—and many have unique successes. Create opportunities for all schools to succeed in the areas that they want and need. Rather than add more bureaucracy, remove what currently exists. Free the public schools up so that they can compete equally with private schools. It is tempting—and easy—for legislators to get their hands into the means of education. Be more concerned about the results and leave the means implementation to the local school districts. They can better assess their specific needs and respond to them directly.

Third, let the local districts decide how to spend money. The recent "100,000 teachers" legislation is a perfect example. Considering the amount of money appropriated, it will never meet the need to hire that amount of teachers. It creates an obligation to the school districts to make up a difference that they may not have.

Finally, I would ask that education remain a local issue and that the state resist any further federal intervention. There are problems in public education, but they can be much better resolved at the local and state level. Washington doesn't need to involve itself any further.

I realize I do not have the influence on lawmakers that the president or governor may have. But I am only a school board member. I want to do what is in the best interests of students in this district. I ask parents who support these ideas to contact their representatives and tell them how they feel.