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Yesterday, as I heard, as did millions of other Americans, about the tragedy that went on in Littleton, I thought immediately of Ross and 17-year-old Richard Fox and 15-year-old David Fox. I did not know if they went to Columbine or not, so I called Ross. His wife Paloma answered the phone and said they did not go there, that Ross wanted to talk to me.

Ross, who is a successful stockbroker out there, had come home earlier to hug his children and to meet them in the driveway as they went rushing out to see their dad and embrace. They did not go to Columbine, but their friends did. As recently as Sunday, David had been playing basketball with kids from Columbine.

As I called them last night, they did not know if their friends were victims or survivors. The sadness, the confusion, the overwhelming frustration and anguish, was just too much for them. As we talked on the phone last night, I think both of us had tears in our eyes.

We do not know the easy solutions, the quick answers. The tendency in society is to rush out and say we need to change this law or pass this bill, or maybe get this off TV. We do not really know what would be the one panacea that would end this sort of strange, bizarre, peculiar, repugnant type behavior and incidents.

One thing we do know: Right now this country is united with the families of the victims; that they have our sympathy and they have our prayers. As the Speaker called for prayer today, we ask other Americans to pray, and perhaps we should remember that unlike high school kids throughout the country, at least this institution can openly say a prayer for them.

COMMERCE COMMITTEE LEGISLATION TO AMEND NUCLEAR WASTE POLICY

(Ms. BERKLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, this Congress is on the verge of making a monumental mistake.

As we speak, the House Committee on Commerce is trying to pass legislation that would dump more than 70,000 tons of lethal nuclear waste just 90 miles from my hometown, Las Vegas, home to over 1 million men, women, and children.

What is worse, this bill proposes to move this waste on our Nation's highways and rail lines through 43 States through the backyards of 50 million Americans.

Mr. Speaker, it is estimated that this mobile Chernobyl will create between 200 and 400 potential deadly nuclear accidents. I ask my colleagues if such an accident occurred in their district and

they voted for this legislation, what possible explanation could they give their constituents? Who would they send to clean up the radioactive mess, or care for the radioactive injured?

There is an alternative. Energy Secretary Bill Richardson has come up with a good plan to keep the deadly radioactive waste off our Nation's highways and railways. He wants the Energy Department to take control of nuclear waste at our Nation's reactor sites.

Please vote against this horrible mobile Chernobyl before it causes a nuclear accident.

GRIEVING FOR VICTIMS OF SENSELESS VIOLENCE IN LITTLETON, COLORADO

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, first, Pearl, Mississippi; then, West Paducah, Kentucky; then Jonesboro, Arkansas; then Edinboro, Pennsylvania; then Springfield, Ohio; and now, Littleton, Colorado. It all seems too much to bear.

We have no cure-all answers, quick and easy solutions, only questions and prayers. Parents pray for many things in life: that their children grow up to share the same values they tried to teach them, that they realize all their hopes and dreams, that they feel love, and that they love people and life.

One thing they all pray for is that their children spend their days in a safe and wholesome environment at school. There are too many schools in America where the children are not safe, where the environment is not wholesome, where positive values and experience do not triumph. It is a failing, and we must work together to answer the prayers of parents who worry every night about their children's safety.

Today we express our sorrow. We all pray and grieve for those suffering from the senseless violence in Colorado.

VETERANS' MEMORIAL

(Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, to change the subject a little bit, today, along with the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. JOHN MURTHA), I will introduce legislation to authorize a memorial to honor our wounded and disabled veterans. This memorial, the only one dedicated to disabled veterans, would give the American people an opportunity to honor and express gratitude to those who sacrificed so much for our freedom.

We must never forget the terrifying human costs, physical, psychological,

and spiritual, that so many paid that we might be free. They were citizen soldiers, everyday Americans who were willing to make the ultimate sacrifice, and who offered themselves for the good of all. They should never be forgotten.

This memorial will stand forever as a tribute to our disabled veterans and their sacrifices for our great Nation.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIANS ASK REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP TO BRING MANAGED CARE REFORM TO THE FLOOR OF THE HOUSE FOR DEBATE

(Ms. WOOLSEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, in the last weeks dozens of national health organizations launched a nationwide online petition demanding the passage of comprehensive Bill of Rights. This would protect the basic rights of patients enrolled in managed care plans.

In my district north of the Golden Gate Bridge, even though we have some very good health maintenance organizations, people are telling me that they are very concerned about whether their health plan will be there when they need it. So they are getting on this petition, and they are asking the Republican leadership to bring the Patients' Bill of Rights forward so that we can debate it here in the Congress.

They are calling on the Speaker of the House to bring managed care reform to the Floor of the House, managed care reform that will guarantee access to emergency room care, ensure that doctors and patients, not insurance companies, have the final word on medical decisions, and give patients recourse when care is denied.

It is pretty basic, Mr. Speaker. In our health care system patients should be number one, not the almighty dollar.

OFFERING PRAYERS TO THE GRIEVING AFTER A SENSELESS TRAGEDY

(Mr. COOKSEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. COOKSEY. Mr. Speaker, there is little that can be said during such moments of tragedy such as what the Nation witnessed yesterday in Colorado. There are thousands of disaffected, terribly disturbed teenagers across the country, but few will resort to violence. In this case, two of them did. Their violence was of a self-destructive sort resulting in their own self-inflicted deaths after they took the lives of innocent children.

It is all too easy for armchair psychologists to draw hasty conclusions about what explains this tragedy and

the five other school shootings our Nation has witnessed over the past 2 years: guns, the culture, violence on television, nihilistic music and video games, frightening Internet sites. It is simply not possible to explain the cause.

Who could explain why millions and millions of other teenagers, nearly all exposed to the same influences, do not choose to embark on such a senseless path? It is a senseless tragedy, nothing more. We can only offer our prayers to the grieving.

MEDICAID NURSING INCENTIVE ACT

(Mr. OLVER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. OLVER. Mr. Speaker, today I am reintroducing the Medicaid Nursing Incentive Act of 1999, and I want to thank the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. NANCY JOHNSON) and the 13 other original cosponsors, men and women from all over this country and from both parties, for joining me in this introduction.

This bill will provide direct Medicaid reimbursement for all nurse practitioners and college nurse specialists. Each year millions of Americans go without the health care they need simply because physicians are not available to treat them. From the streets of Los Angeles to the hill towns of western Massachusetts and all in between, Americans cannot find physicians who are willing to practice in their urban or small rural communities.

There is an exception to this trend, however. Nurse practitioners and clinical nurse specialists often serve in areas where others refuse to work. Federal law requires Medicaid reimbursement only for certified family and pediatric nurse practitioners and certified nurse midwives.

Extending Medicaid coverage to all nurse practitioners and clinical nurse specialists, as 22 States have done, makes good common sense. By expanding this coverage, these qualified health professionals will finally be able to provide the care so many of our constituents need.

PRAYERS FOR THE PEOPLE OF LITTLETON, COLORADO, AND FOR CONCERNED SCHOOL OFFICIALS WORKING TO HELP CHILDREN

(Ms. PRYCE of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, the deaths caused by two troubled youths in Littleton, Colorado, point out the tragedy of those lonely, alienated teens in our society who feel there is no one

to help, no one to turn to when their lives seem empty and pointless.

Many turn to self-destructive outlets: drugs, alcohol, nihilistic subcultures which celebrate death and destruction. They think there is no one to help them, but they are wrong. The help that is offered by parents, teachers, school psychologists and kindly guidance counselors is rejected. No one can reach them.

But those whose occupations touch the lives of our teenagers must not lose heart. They must continue to do the good work that they rightly take pride in. They must not be discouraged by the failures that they see, the children whom they cannot comfort, and the anger they cannot dispel.

Our prayers go out today to the people of Littleton, and to all those school officials who try so hard to help all of our children.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 800, EDUCATION FLEXIBILITY PARTNERSHIP ACT OF 1999

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 143 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 143

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 800) to provide for education flexibility partnerships. All points of order against the conference report and against its consideration are waived. The conference report shall be considered as read.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). The gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, for purposes of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to my friend, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purposes of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 143 provides for the consideration of the conference report on H.R. 800, the Education Flexibility Partnership Act of 1999, better known as the Ed-Flex bill.

Yesterday the Committee on Rules, by a vote of 11 to zero, granted the customary rule waiving all points of order against the conference report. The House will have 1 hour to debate the merits of this legislation.

As my colleagues may recall, back in March the House passed the Ed-Flex bill by a bipartisan vote of 330 to 90.

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The Senate followed suit by passing its Ed-Flex legislation by an overwhelming vote of 98 to 1.

It is encouraging to know that Democrats and Republicans can come to-

gether on at least one aspect of our Nation's education policy. There are numerous competing ideas for improving our schools and teaching our children; but we all agree that education, perhaps more than any other issue, will dictate our Nation's future, and it must be a top priority.

I do not think anyone would argue that many of our Nation's schools are failing, and there is no excuse. We are the world's only remaining superpower, yet we allow our children to graduate from high school without basic reading and writing skills. Something is not working. It is time to move beyond the status quo and encourage innovative reform.

Passing the Ed-Flex conference report is a good first step in the right direction. This legislation will allow all 50 States to participate in a program that gives local school districts the freedom to implement effective reforms by liberating them from restrictive one-size-fits-all Federal requirements.

This approach recognizes that the Federal Government does not have the magic pill that will remedy the ailments of each and every school. But the least we can do is clear away some of the obstacles found in onerous Federal regulations that are blocking our schools' path to improvement.

The Ed-Flex program is founded in the principle of trust, trust in our State and local leaders who we believe will make good choices for their communities. Ed-Flex has worked in the 12 States that are currently eligible, including my own State of Ohio. This success strongly suggests that we expand Ed-Flex to all 50 States, and that is what this legislation is all about.

Let us be clear. The Ed-Flex program does not simply dissolve Federal education law. We are not simply handing out money and turning our heads the other way. To be eligible for Ed-Flex, States must demonstrate that they have an effective plan for improving the education of poor and disadvantaged children, and they must agree to be held accountable for the results. In fact, this conference report strengthens the accountability provisions of current law.

All told, the conference report actually contains very few changes from the House-passed bill, and it should receive the same broad support. The bipartisan spirit surrounding the Ed-Flex bill was carried over into the conference committee to produce a bill that both the House and Senate can approve and the President should sign.

One example of this bipartisan effort is the decision of the Republican conferees to drop a Senate amendment which the Democrats and the President opposed. The amendment would have provided additional flexibility to schools, giving them discretion to devote more funds to special education, which is a top Republican priority.