

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.

□ 1030

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.