May 24, 1999

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The Speaker pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE FOR ALL CHILDREN ACT OF 1999—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 106–8)

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States:

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

I am pleased to transmit for your immediate consideration the “Educational Excellence for All Children Act of 1999,” my Administration’s proposal for reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) and other elementary and secondary education programs.

My proposal builds on the positive trends achieved under current law. The “Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994,” which reauthorized the ESEA 5 years ago, and the “Goals 2000: Educate America Act” gave States and school districts a framework for integrating Federal resources in support of State and local reforms based on high academic standards. In response, 48 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have adopted State-level standards. Recent results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show improved performance for the economically disadvantaged and other at-risk students who are the primary focus of ESEA programs. NAEP reading scores for 9-year-olds in high-poverty schools have improved significantly since 1992, while mathematics achievement has also increased nationally. Students in high-poverty schools and the lowest-performing students—the specific target populations for the ESEA Title I program—have registered gains in both reading and math achievement.

I am encouraged by these positive trends, but educational results for many children remain far below what they should be. My proposal to reauthorize the ESEA is based on four themes reflecting lessons from research and the experience of implementing the 1994 Act.

First, we would continue to focus on high academic standards for all children. The underlying purpose of every program within the ESEA is to help all children reach challenging State and local academic standards. States have largely completed the first stage of standards-based reform by developing content standards for all children. My bill would support the next stage of reform by helping States, school districts, schools, and teachers use these standards to guide classroom instruction and assessment.

My proposal for reauthorizing Title I, for example, would require States to hold school districts and schools accountable for student performance against State standards, including helping the lowest-performing students continually to improve. The bill also strengthens enforcement of State elementary and secondary education resources on those students furthest from meeting State and local standards, with a particular emphasis on narrowing the gap in achievement between disadvantaged students and their more affluent peers. In this regard, my proposal would phase in equal treatment of Puerto Rico in ESEA funding formulas, so that poor children in Puerto Rico are treated similarly to those in the rest of the country for the purpose of formula allocations.

Second, my proposal responds to research showing that while qualified teachers are critical to improving student achievement, too many teachers are not prepared to teach to high standards. Teacher quality is a particular problem in high-poverty schools, and the problem is often exacerbated by the use of paraprofessionals in instructional roles.

My bill addresses teacher quality by holding States accountable for stronger enforcement of their own certification and licensure requirements, while at the same time providing substantial support for State and local professional development efforts. The Teaching to High Standards initiative in Title II would help move challenging educational standards into every classroom by providing teachers with sustained and intensive high-quality professional development in core academic subjects, supporting new teachers during their first 3 years in the classroom, and ensuring that all teachers are proficient in relevant content knowledge and teaching skills.

The Technology for Education initiative under Title III would expand the availability of educational technology as a tool to help teachers implement high standards in the classroom, particularly in high-poverty schools. My bill also would extend, over the next 7 years, the Class-Size Reduction initiative, which aims to reduce class sizes.
in the early grades by helping districts to hire and train 100,000 teachers. And the Title VII Bilingual Education pro-
posal would help ensure that all teach-
ers are well trained to teach students with
limited English proficiency, who are
found in more and more classrooms
with each passing year.

Third, my bill would increase support for safe, healthy, disciplined, and drug-
free learning environments where all
children feel connected, motivated, and
to learn and where parents are welcomed and involved. The recent tragedy at Columbine High School in
Littletown, Colorado, reminds us that we
must be ever vigilant against the
risks of violence and other dangerous
behaviors in our schools. Our reauthor-
zation bill includes several measures
to help mitigate these risks.

We would renew the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act by concentrating funds on districts
with the greatest need for drug- and
violence-prevention programs, and by
emphasizing the use of research-based
programs of proven effectiveness. Moreover, with respect to students who
bring weapons to school, this proposal
would require schools to refer such stu-
dents to a mental health professional
for assessment and require counseling
for those who pose an imminent threat
to themselves or others; allow funding
for programs that educate students
about the risks associated with guns;
expand character education programs;
and promote alternative schools and
second chance programs. A new School
violence-prevention programs, and by

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant
to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair de-
clares the House in recess until 6 p.m.
Accordingly (at 3 o’clock and 18
minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess
until 6 p.m.

The House having expired, the House
was called to order by the Speaker pro
tempore (Mr. PETRI) at 6 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER
PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant
to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will
now put the question on each mo-
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The vote was taken by electronic de-
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