

THANKING THE PEOPLE OF THE 12TH DISTRICT OF FLORIDA FOR THE HONOR TO SERVE IN THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. CANADY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CANADY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, some time in the next few days, the last vote of the 106th Congress will be cast. For those of us who will not be returning next year, that vote will mark the end of our legislative career.

Mr. Speaker, 260 years ago, Samuel Johnson wrote of those "points of time where one course of action ends and another begins," times when "we are forced to say of something, 'this is the last.'"

For those of us who will soon end our course as Members of Congress and begin some new endeavor, the sense of the honor it is to serve here is felt more keenly now than ever before. As I approach the point in time when I am forced to say with the vote I cast that this is the last, I wish to express my thanks to the people of the twelfth district of Florida for giving me the opportunity to serve as their representative over the last 8 years.

What a great privilege it is to serve in this House and to participate in the great American enterprise of government by reflection and choice. What an awesome privilege it is to be chosen to come from the communities we represent to this House and to take on the responsibilities imposed by our oath of office: the responsibility to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; the responsibility to bear true and faithful allegiance to that Constitution; and the responsibility to well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which we enter. I will always be humbled by the knowledge that the people of the district I represent had the confidence in me to entrust me with these important responsibilities.

God has blessed our Nation in many ways. It has been a single blessing for the people of the United States to have a Constitution, a Constitution which has indeed secured for us the blessings of liberty.

Among the chief objects of our Constitution was to establish justice. The work of this House involves many mundane issues of passing significance. Much that takes place here will not long be remembered, but when we act to further the constitutional goal of establishing justice, we deal with matters of enduring significance.

As Members of this House, we can come to stand and to speak in this Chamber. We can rise in this place to speak against injustice; and when truth stumbles in the public square, we can sound a warning that in our life as

a people, as well as in our individual lives, nothing is more important than the truth. We can sound a warning that justice is in peril whenever the truth is not respected. As Members, on occasion we have the privilege to stand here in defense of the powerless and to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. The value of the opportunity to do such things is inestimable.

To all those who have made it possible for me to serve as a Member of this House, I owe a great debt of gratitude, a debt of gratitude which I do not have the words to express as I would like. I can simply say, thank you for allowing me to be your Congressman.

SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to talk for just a few minutes about an issue that is critical not only to my district, but to communities and children all across this country. This issue is school construction. I am pleased that several of my Democratic colleagues have agreed to join me this evening to talk about school construction and other priorities in the Democrats' education agenda. I shall restrict my remarks mostly to school construction.

Today is October 25. The fiscal year started October 1; and yet, the Republican leadership of this House has failed to do its work and get the work done for the American people. To put it in school terms, they are tardy and they are incomplete. They have failed the test of leadership for the American people. Today, the House passed a stop-gap spending measure to keep the government from shutting down for one more day. This is the fifth time this year that we have had to pass one of these bills just because the leadership, the Republican leadership has failed to get the people's work done.

Specifically, they have failed to act on important educational priorities, like the bipartisan school construction bill that is desperately needed in communities all across this country. The bill would provide \$25 billion in school construction bonds to build new schools, renovate them, and to relieve overcrowding, reduce class size, and enhance the opportunity for discipline in the classroom and improve education by making sure that all of our children get the kind of individual attention that they need to learn.

Mr. Speaker, I have been working with my colleagues on both sides of the political aisle to pass this bill since I first came to this people's house 4 years ago. We have gathered more than 228 members on H.R. 4094; and yet, the Republican leadership has refused to simply bring this bill to a vote.

As this Congress crawls to its conclusion, more than 3 weeks late, the educational funding bill is the very last priority of the Republican leadership. While education languishes under the threats of cuts and the current congressional leadership has loaded up the appropriations bill with special interest pork, we are still waiting.

Last week, I told this body about a Senator from Arizona's observation that the leadership's pork has swelled each of the spending bills that have been passed. For example, he pointed out that the transportation appropriation contains some \$700 million in transportation earmarks for the Chicago Metropolitan Transit Authority in the home State of the Speaker of the House. The transportation appropriations bill also earmarked \$102 million for a bridge across the Mississippi River in the home State of the majority leader of the other body. A senior Republican appropriations member got \$1.5 million to refurbish something called the Vulcan Statue in Alabama.

Today, I was shocked to read in the paper that one of the Republican appropriation members describing the raid on the U.S. Treasury by the chairman of the Senate Committee on Appropriations. The House Republican described items like \$1.25 million for repairs to a church, \$176,000 for a Reindeer Herders Association for somewhere in southeastern Alaska. That Republican concluded by saying, "You need a cargo plane to carry all of this money back."

Mr. Speaker, each of these projects may very well merit Federal support. These projects may not be the big spending Federal pork that they appear to be. I am not an expert on these items. But as a former State superintendent of the State of North Carolina, I know that our local neighborhood schools need our help. Our schools are bursting at the seams, and our communities do not have the resources to build or repair and provide the quality schools that our children need. As a result, children are stuffed into overcrowded classrooms, substandard facilities and rickety trailers that they should not be in.

My Republican colleagues like to talk about block grants, but when it comes to their own special projects, they are not shy about adding earmarks, and all of us in this body know what earmarks are. They are directed projects to be spent specifically for that purpose. If they were not so important, why did they not just put them in the transportation bill and let them decide at the local level how to spend the money. When it comes to roads, airports, bridges and prisons, special interest pork is powerful when it comes to powerful politicians.

Mr. Speaker, we should be able to come up with common sense legislation to build a few schools for the children in this country, and I think H.R.