

And so, I am pleased to congratulate him on an excellent public career and wish him and his family well in retirement.

FURTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A further message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a joint resolution of the House of the following title:

H.J. Res. 115. Joint resolution making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 2001, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate agrees to the report of the committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 4811) "An Act making appropriations for foreign operations, export financing, and related programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2001, and for other purposes."

EDUCATION AND CONDITION OF SCHOOLS NATIONWIDE

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

Mr. HINCHEY. Mr. Speaker, I want to take just a few minutes to bring to the attention of the Members of the House some information with regard to education and the condition of schools around the country, both in the State of New York and nationwide.

In New York, for example, there are a total number of 4,172 schools currently operating in the State. The total State and local district school construction spending in the most recent year for which figures are available was \$1.6 billion.

According to the Census Bureau, New York, along with Texas and Florida, spends the most on the cost of school construction. However, despite being among the top three spenders for school construction, the poor condition of too many New York schools sends a clear signal that State and local funding is simply not enough to meet modernization needs.

In New York, as is true in many places around the country, the local school districts rely on the local real property tax to pay for the cost of education, including construction and modernization of our schools.

Ninety percent of the schools report a need to upgrade or repair buildings in order to bring them up to a good overall condition. In other words, 90 percent are less than good. Sixty-seven percent report at least one inadequate building feature such as the roof, plumbing, electricity. Seventy-six percent report at least one unsatisfactory environmental factor such as air quality, ventilation, or lighting. There are

computers in the schools, but there is only one computer for every 16 students, 16 students trying to use each computer.

In 1998 and 1999, New York paid \$618 million in interest on school debt. Again, this money comes out of the local real property tax. Sadly, these statistics reflect the condition of school buildings in almost every place around the country.

Two years ago, I conducted a school modernization study in the district that I represent, which is a largely rural district in upstate central New York. It has five small cities, but the rest of the district is largely rural. In addition to finding similar results as those I have just mentioned, I discovered also that nearly one-third of the schools in the New York State district that I represent were built before 1940. More than one-third of the schools surveyed reported being cited for fire code violations at some point within the previous year. Over half the respondents said that overcrowding in their classrooms was a serious problem.

This is costing us. It is costing us in the education of our children and the ability of those children to perform in the future, and it is going to cost our economy unless we face up to this problem.

The Democrats in this House, along with President Clinton and Vice President GORE, believe very strongly that in order to get our schools into the condition that they should be in the Federal Government needs to help local school districts afford to repair and modernize our schools.

We have a bipartisan bill. It is sponsored by Republicans as well as Democrats. It would provide \$22 billion in public bonding authority to help rebuild and repair over 5,000 public schools. This bill would bring \$2.5 billion to New York State alone for school construction and modernization.

The bill is popular in this House. It has 228 sponsors, including a number of Republicans as well as Democrats. And yet, the Republican leadership has thus far refused to allow for any consideration, any reasonable debate or a hearing on the floor of the House.

According to the General Accounting Office, a record 52.7 million children are enrolled currently in elementary and secondary schools across the country. That number is expected to climb to 54.3 children within less than 8 years. Thousands of new public schools will be needed within the next few years to accommodate rising enrollments.

We cannot expect States and local school districts, relying as they do on local real property taxes, to shoulder this financial burden. We ought to bring this bill to the floor of the House. We ought to give it careful and thoughtful consideration. We ought to give the Members of this House an op-

portunity to debate and vote on the bill.

The 228 sponsors believe that if that happens the bill will pass and we will provide the relief that is necessary for school districts and the children and the families they serve across the country.

I hope that before we leave here this bill will come to the floor and we will give it the consideration that it needs. The future of our country and specifically the future of our children and communities all across America depend upon modernizing our schools, providing these school construction funds.

AMERICA'S BETTER CLASSROOMS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mrs. CAPPS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to follow my colleague the gentleman from New York (Mr. HINCHEY) in speaking about our public schools.

Once again, I rise to express my deep concern over the state of the schools across this Nation, which are overcrowded and in disrepair. In these precious last few days of the 106th Congress, I call upon our leadership to pass comprehensive school modernization legislation.

I strongly believe that education is a local issue, but overcrowding is a local problem which deserves a national response.

Just 1 month ago, I stood here holding a letter signed by over 300 students from Peabody Elementary School in Santa Barbara, California, expressing their desire for passage of school construction legislation.

At this school, students receive a top-notch education. Unfortunately, the students also feel the disturbing effects of overcrowding. This is a school built for 200 students, but now it has an enrollment of over 600.

The added portable classrooms take up precious playground space, which should be used so that students can take part in physical education and activities.

I have visited other schools in my district which suffer from similar circumstances. In Santa Maria, the Oakley School's enrollment is currently over 800, while the school was originally built for 480 students. The first of four lunch sessions begins at 10:30. The last children do not finish until well after 1:30 in the afternoon.

In San Luis Obispo County, Cambria Grammar School was built to handle 200 students. With eight portable buildings, they now have 345. Students have very limited playground space here, and their kindergarten needed to move to a nearby middle school because of overcrowding. This kindergarten is