

Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the more than 53 million children across this country that right now are attending school in our Nation's classrooms. That is more students than at the height of the Baby Boom and there will be more next year.

Unfortunately, too many of our children are stuffed into trailers, closets, cramped bathrooms, overcrowded and substandard facilities. Our schools are literally bursting at the seams.

For more than 2 years, I tried to pass my school construction bill to provide tax credits to help local communities build quality schools for our children. But the Republican leadership has refused to allow this essential legislation to pass. The same Republican leadership that has tried to eliminate the Department of Education, slash school lunches, refuses to pass this modest bill to build just a few schools for our children.

This same leadership has constantly pushed private school vouchers, block grants, and even antipublic school bills that have suffered from time to time.

Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, a bipartisan group of Members have come together to support a common sense compromise to school construction legislation. The Johnson-Rangel bill will pay the interest on about \$24.8 billion worth of school construction bonds across this country. I urge my colleagues to support it.

EDUCATION HAS ALWAYS BEEN A STATE AND LOCAL PRIORITY

(Mr. KINGSTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to talk about education a little bit, because if one looks at the record on education, Republican versus Democrat leadership, it is not even close.

Republicans have put far more resources into education, far more flexibility for local teachers, far more money into the special Individuals with Disability Education Act, far more money into school lunch program.

I hope that some of these Democrats will actually read the bill. They will see if they want to measure their money. They have lost.

Now, this proposal to construct new schools is great if one is in Chicago or New York City where one has not kept up with one's education or here in Washington, D.C. where one's roofs are leaking. Do my colleagues know why? Because the cities and States have not made the investment into education.

Why should my South Georgia school districts be penalized? They have raised taxes locally. They have done the right thing. They have been responsible. They built new school systems. Why should they be penalized to subsidize Chicago and New York City school systems. It is ridiculous.

Education has always been a State and local priority. We do not need to federalize it and have Uncle Sam in the Department of Education knowing best.

EDUCATION

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, this education problem is not only a big city problem in spite of the comments of the previous speaker. Yesterday, the National Education Association estimated the country's construction needs at over \$300 billion. This includes basic necessities, a desk in a classroom rather than in a broom closet, plumbing that works, computers capable of reaching the Internet.

My State, the State of Ohio, rural, urban, suburban, is home to one of the greatest needs, ranked 49th in the country for infrastructure, in spite of local effort and State effort. Ohio faces a \$25 billion bill to provide children a safe and healthy learning environment.

The State recently committed to spending \$10 billion over 26 years to do just that. Unfortunately, that is just not enough. In my district, Elyria High School is over 70 years old and does not qualify for any State funds. The children of Elyria, as are other places across the country, simply cannot wait any longer. If we work together, they will not have to.

I am cosponsor of the America's Better Classroom Act by providing zero-interest bonds, it would leverage local and Federal resources to begin to take care of this national disgrace.

Only a unified front can fix this problems. I urge my colleagues to support it.

TAX FREEDOM DAY

(Mr. HEFLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, Americans love to celebrate landmarks and anniversaries: Christmas day, Independence Day, New Year's Day. But yesterday was one of my personal favorites, Tax Freedom Day. That is the day when hard-working Americans have finally paid their tax burdens and can begin earning for themselves and their families.

This chart illustrates when that day is over the years. I invite Members to use this opportunity to reflect on the problems with our current tax system. First, it is cumbersome. Our Tax Code exceeds 2.8 million words, more than War and Peace and the Bible combined.

It is unfair. It discriminates against married couples, the elderly, even the dead. It is discouraging. It punishes investing and saving and steals profits from healthy businesses and confuses a

large majority of Americans trying to decipher its complicated forms.

Today, I encourage my colleagues to support reform and tax reduction measures that will truly provide tax freedom for hard-working Americans.

EDUCATION

(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, education must be our Nation's number one priority. Our children are 25 percent of the population, but they are 100 percent of our future. If we act now to strengthen our education system, our children and our country will be prepared for the economic and growth challenges of the future.

The Democrats' Safe and Successful Schools Act of 2000 would give teachers, parents, and students the tools they need for success.

As Democratic legislation proposes, investing in modernizing schools; hiring new, qualified teachers; and providing safe after-school programs for children will, indeed, take us into the new millennium and truly help our children and their future.

Let us not play politics with our children's future. Let us work together to support the Safe Schools Act and show our children that they are our number one priority.

The Republicans have proposed what they would call reforms, but, Mr. Speaker, closing troubled schools, doling out vouchers is not the answer. Investing in our education system is.

PERMANENT NORMAL TRADE RELATIONS TO CHINA

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

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, later this month, Members of the House will be casting their votes on one of the most important trade issues that we have faced in recent years. I am referring, of course, to extend permanent normal trade relations to China.

The United States and the international community have been working together with China for decades to bring China into the WTO. For the first time in history, the doors of China's economy will be opened up to international commerce and competition.

Congress will be faced with a simple choice then. If Congress passes PNTR, we will allow U.S. companies to freely participate in the nearly \$4 billion Chinese economy. However, if we do not pass PNTR, American products and American workers will be denied this opportunity.

Faced with these options, I think the choice is clear. I urge my colleagues to