

Because of the efforts of Senator John Whitmore and Representative Kevin Bailey, Texas created a separate children's health insurance program for children at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty line.

This will provide health insurance for 500,124 Texas children through age 18. In my region, this means 90,802 children will have health insurance.

While this is a good development, we still have a long way to go.

Other states are further along in providing health coverage for children. In the first year of the program, Texas expanded coverage for 58,286 children. By comparison, Alabama enrolled 38,980 children; California enrolled 222,351 children; Florida enrolled 154,594 children; Georgia enrolled 47,581 children; Massachusetts enrolled 67,852 children; Missouri enrolled 49,529 children; New Jersey enrolled 75,652 children; New York 521,301 children; North Carolina enrolled 57,300 children; Ohio enrolled 83,688 children; and South Carolina enrolled 45,737 children.

Of the states that chose to create a separate children's health program, many are extending coverage to more children than is Texas, including California at 250 percent; Connecticut at 300 percent; New Jersey at 350 percent; Vermont at 300 percent; and Washington at 250 percent.

Texas can do more. And we should do more. We have the highest rate of uninsured persons in the country.

And, Texas has the second highest rate of uninsured children in the nation. Over 41% of parents of eligible uninsured children postponed seeking medical care for their child because they could not afford it.

There are 1.4 million uninsured children in Texas—600,000 are eligible for, but not in Medicaid; nearly 500,000 qualify for CHIP.

Texas covers children whose family incomes range from below the federal poverty level to 200% of the federal poverty level. Yet the Federal government allows coverage to children as high as 300%.

Texas, like the rest of the nation, could do more to conduct an aggressive outreach to ensure that eligible children receive the services they need.

New outreach is clearly needed—now, more than ever. Like many states, after federal welfare reform was enacted in 1996, we saw a huge drop in the number of persons applying for and participating in Medicaid. 193,400 Texas children fell off the Medicaid rolls during the past three years, a 14.2% decline.

Because these two programs are no longer linked, many lower-income persons do not realize that they are eligible for health insurance.

Unfortunately, Texas is the worst state in the Nation in terms of retaining low-income kids on Medicaid.

And, a recent New York Times article shows that Texas has used none of the federal funds it is entitled to for outreach. We can do better.

Why are so many persons not receiving the Medicaid and CHIP services they're entitled to?

Red tape burdens the neediest families in Texas.

Medicaid program eligibility requirements in Texas include:

A Face-to-face interview

An Asset test

No continuous eligibility—families must periodically re-enroll

No presumptive eligibility—even if families have proven that they are eligible for another program with the same income guidelines, they must go seven states (Texas included) expanded coverage to only 100 percent of the as quickly as possible implement changes in Children's Medicaid eligibility.

Texas can take steps now to reduce its state government bureaucracy. For example, the state could:

Eliminate the assets test for children's Medicaid. Texas now makes parents of Medicaid-eligible children document not just income, but also the value of savings, IRAs, automobiles, and valuables.

The test is not required by federal law, and 40 states plus the District of Columbia have already dropped it for children.

Texas could also drop the requirement for face-to-face application/recertification interviews for children's Medicaid and allow mail-in applications.

Thirty-eight states plus the District of Columbia allow mail-in application for children. Three states also allow community-based enrollment outside the welfare office.

Texas could adopt for children's Medicaid the same simple, flexible documentation and verification options used for Texas CHIP. To make a joint mail-in application feasible, children's Medicaid and CHIP must accept the same documents for income and other required verifications.

Federal law allows states to reduce income documentation for children's Medicaid in any way, or even to eliminate it in favor of using third-party verification. Seven states require no income documentation for children's Medicaid.

The state could adopt 12-month continuous eligibility for children's Medicaid. Children enrolled in Texas CHIP stay enrolled for 12 months, regardless of any changes in income during that period.

In Texas Medicaid, parents must report any income change within 10 days, and Medicaid is cut off the next month if the new family income is too high for Medicaid.

Texas could also adopt twelve-month eligibility for Children's Medicaid—this continuous eligibility is a state option Congress created when it passed CHIP. Fifteen states have adopted continuous eligibility for Children's Medicaid, and Ohio will begin the policy in July 2000.

Hopefully, my colleagues in the state legislature will consider some of these ideas as they continue their push to expand health care to the uninsured.

Thanks to their efforts, Texas has done many good things in the past year to reduce the number of uninsured children. We can certainly do more. I am hopeful that successful state partnerships like Medicaid and CHIP will be used by the state to their full potential.

EDUCATION IN AMERICA AND PUBLIC SCHOOL REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHERWOOD). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFF-

FER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I intend to be joined here in a few minutes by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA) and possibly some other Members of the House as well.

Mr. Speaker, we had the occasion today of holding a field hearing in St. Paul, Minnesota, and I want to talk a little bit about the content of that hearing, and also some other issues that are critical with respect to education in America in and public school reform in general.

Mr. Speaker, the hearing was held, as I mentioned, in St. Paul this morning. It was conducted by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA). The subcommittee that conducted the hearing was the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, the committee that deals with most of the investigations not only that we have conducted with respect to waste, fraud, and abuse in the Department of Education, but also focusing on research and investigation into different innovative activities in public schools; finding out what works, for example, and what does not work; finding out and learning more and witnessing firsthand some of the innovative ideas that are taking place throughout the fifty States under the leadership of Governors and State legislators and other more local leaders.

Today we met with the Superintendent of Schools and some State legislators and some others who are leading the way in education reform and providing some great examples in the State of Minnesota. That just adds, Mr. Speaker, to the collection of data and information that we have been assembling from throughout the country. The subcommittee has been now to 21 different States analyzing the various education reform efforts that are taking place in those States.

One of the topics that was discussed at great length this morning at the hearing was charter schools. Charter schools really got their start in the State of Minnesota. The idea had been discussed and had been bantered around in the halls of State legislatures throughout the country from time to time prior to that. I think it was in 1991 that Minnesota became the first State to pass charter school legislation.

Charter schools are public schools. They are still funded by the government, run by the government. In fact, they are owned by the government, but they are managed and operated often in different ways, largely defined by a specific contract or a charter, as it is called; hence the name "charter schools."

That contract is one that is usually proposed by a group of parents, sometimes a group of teachers, sometimes

an organization of some sort. In many cases, charter schools are established by existing public education institutions that find particular difficulty with the policies, rules, regulations, or funding mechanisms of the State they are in or the district that they fall under. That usually constitutes the need or the origin of the charter.

What motivates these groups and these operations or individuals and parents to venture off on their own and try a new way of educating, trying to, for example, break the mold of education delivery in a community, it is often motivated by test scores that are insufficient to meet the needs of the parents that consider charter schools.

Sometimes it is a management-related issue. In many cases we have heard, for example, there is a strong desire to treat teachers like real professionals. Too often the union wage scale that is at play in most States around the country prevents teachers from being treated like real professionals. Consequently, most teachers are paid in a way where the absolute best teacher in a district is compensated on the same basis as the absolute worst teacher in a district.

So often we find education professionals and parents who believe that their children learn best in a professional learning environment, where teachers are treated like professionals rather than all treated the same, as though there is no distinction between them.

□ 2000

Charter schools are flourishing throughout the country. We are seeing more and more of them. That is certainly the case in Minnesota, as provided in the testimony to the committee today. I think they said there are somewhere on the order of 60 or 70 charter schools, somewhere in that neighborhood, I do not remember the number exactly, charter schools that exist now in Minnesota. Some have closed, which is something that we should actually focus on a little bit tonight.

These charters, these contracts, are usually for a limited duration and period of time, at the end of which the contract ends or expires and must be renewed between the charter applicant and the school district. If the charter has met all of the objectives and the goals that it outlined in the original application, then the charters presumably will be continued. Sometimes there are political battles that prevent that from occurring, but for all intents and purposes they are generally approved if they met the objectives that they initially set out to achieve.

But if a charter school fails to meet those objectives, they frequently find themselves shut down, put out of business. Often it does not even take that long for the renewal question to be

raised. Often it comes down to a matter of cash flow. If charter schools cannot satisfy customers, in other words if they cannot satisfy the parents of those children, who care about them the most, in a way that convinces those parents that the education of their child is being accomplished, well, then they simply go somewhere else and the cash flow dwindles and the charter school cannot survive.

It is always unfortunate to see a school fail, but it is important that it occur. And that competitive notion, that level of accountability placed in the hands of parents, rather than the hands of government workers, is what makes all the difference in this particular venue of education reform; and it is why charter schools work well generally throughout the country, and why almost every charter school in America has a substantial waiting list of customers that would like to be educated in those schools.

That is the case in Minnesota as well. When a charter school fails or does not meet those objectives, the doors close. So the question ought to be for all of us here, if we look at charter schools as these microcosms of education research, of experimentation at some times certainly, but as laboratories of sorts where different educational methods are tested, we ought to also consider the customer-driven impacts that charter schools are subject to and ask ourselves when will we ever start applying the same kind of standards to the rest of government-owned schools in general?

Mr. Speaker, what I mean by that is that when a regular government-owned or public school fails to meet the needs of local parents and raise the academic standards and the opportunity for children, those are kind of handled administratively. But the children who are in those schools are frequently trapped there, their parents having virtually no opportunity or no choice to go somewhere else or leave. Consequently, there really is no recourse for those parents; no consequence for a school that is not meeting the needs of its community.

So we ought to ask ourselves why, if charter schools and the presence of competition and parent-driven measurements of quality results in about 4 percent of charter schools failing, why is there no equivalent measurement with the regular government-owned schools? And that is something we ought to explore and we ought to perhaps provide. Because what really drives the agenda in regular community schools and government-owned institutions and neighborhoods, regular public schools as we know them, is the particular attributes that are assembled there: the principal that was assigned there by the district and the teachers that were hired there by a school district. Then the parents of the

children who happen to live in a particular neighborhood pick these school for a variety of reasons.

The school curriculum, the way it is managed, the way it is organized, and the way it is funded frequently have little to do with why a family decided to live in a neighborhood, let alone be enrolled in a particular education establishment and education institution.

So it was an interesting hearing because the message that was given to members of the subcommittee was that Washington ought to go slow when it comes to charter schools. Charter schools were created at the State level. They were inspired by local initiative. They were a response to the demands of customers and the responsiveness of State legislators, primarily, in Minnesota, California, and Colorado and in other States since then, those early days in the early 1990s.

Mr. Speaker, it is a response that is working and is providing a remarkable education opportunity for many, many children across the country.

“Keep your hands off of these schools for a while,” is the way I would summarize today’s message on charter schools. There are efforts here in Washington to try to address some of the problems that charter schools are confronting, namely start-up costs and getting themselves off the ground. Finding a way to organize an education institution from scratch is a very difficult endeavor indeed. Finding a building to house a charter school is a critical challenge as well.

So there is a temptation on behalf of those of us here in Washington who want to see charter schools succeed to reach into the Federal coffers and find ways to get funds from Washington, D.C., to help these local problems; and that is a good problem to be concerned about. That is a sentiment that I find gratifying; and I am encouraged by it, that there are people here who want to help charter schools.

But the concern voiced today on behalf of those who actually run those schools was one of appreciation for Federal concern, but a well-placed fear of the mandates that typically follow the Federal funds that come out of Washington.

I say a “well-placed fear” because that is the history, in fact, of the Federal involvement in education. Every time something good happens in education, people here in Washington want to celebrate it and then become a part of it, and politicians just cannot resist the temptation for claiming credit for it. The best way people have in Washington, it seems, to show compassion and concern for something that works well is by dishing out lots of cash. Ultimately, the cash gets attached to Federal rules, Federal guidelines, Federal regulations and pretty soon that enterprise that was a good idea, that started out as a remarkable reform, perhaps a

transformation of education, becomes co-opted by the Federal Government.

That was the concern voiced by some of the most forceful charter school advocates that we heard from this morning in our hearing in Minneapolis.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. RYAN), my colleague, has joined me on the floor. He has heard a little bit of the discussion, and I yield the floor to him.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER) for his leadership on education in the Committee on Education and the Workforce. He is one of the bright, shining stars in Congress on pushing for education reform. I just wanted to come down and join him in this discussion about education. Specifically, about the kinds of unfunded Federal mandates that we are imposing on our local school districts.

This week, Mr. Speaker, we are going to be considering the Labor-HHS-Education bill. That is the bill that funds all the Federal Government education programs. Well, what I find is unique and interesting is that for the last 30 years we have been doing this, and then some, is that in 1975 Congress passed a law, a good law, the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act. Everybody calls this IDEA. Well, what that law basically did was to say that all children with disabilities should receive a quality education.

That is a very prudent measure, and a law that I think the gentleman from Colorado and I both support. But what they did in that law was say that the Federal Government would fund 40 percent of IDEA spending in our local schools and that the State government would then fund the remaining 60 percent. So a local school district would not have to pay for the educational mandate being imposed on local school districts.

Mr. Speaker, that was 1975. That just is not the case today. Today, in the First District of Wisconsin, Janesville, Beloit, Racine, Kenosha, they are getting about 7 percent of the funding for IDEA. Now, nationwide, the average is about 12 percent, because this Congress and a couple before have doubled the commitment to IDEA under the new majority in Congress. But that is just not enough.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to give a quick illustration of what this unfunded mandate does to our local schools. Many of us, and I know the gentleman from Colorado is a leader in this, are advocates for local control. I, and many others, believe that the educational decisions should best be left to those who know our children the best: teachers, parents, administrators.

As a former Secretary of Education, Bill Bennett, once said: "Education is the moral obligation and responsibility of the parent, the ethical responsibility of the teacher, and the constitutional responsibility of the State."

But an education with respect to IDEA, it specifically is a Federal mandate that forces our local schools to pay for this. But when the local school districts come in and have to pay for this, where is Washington? In my case, where is Madison, the State government? They are nowhere to be found. Local school districts are being stuck with the bill.

What this means is that local control is atrophying. Local control is being sucked out of our schools because our local school boards or property taxes are being driven toward chasing unfunded mandates from Washington.

In a State like Wisconsin where we have a revenue cap on education spending and our education budget, it is even felt more. So when we have a revenue cap on what we can spend on education, on how high property taxes can go, and then Washington comes along, as it is doing, and imposes this mandate, a very costly one, a prudent one, but a very costly one, and does not live up to its end of the bargain, what we do is take every dollar out of those local education needs and put it towards chasing an unfunded Federal mandate.

So every time Madison and Washington impose this mandate on our schools on a year-to-year basis, every time a school board in Janesville, Wisconsin, wants to come up with a new innovative program, a new innovative idea to treat the unique needs and problems of our schools in Janesville or Beloit or Kenosha or Colorado, every dollar we send is a dollar taken out of local control, a dollar taken out of that local resource decision-making.

By imposing these unfunded mandates, as we are doing in IDEA, on our local school districts, we are taking money away from local decision-making.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. I yield to the gentleman from Colorado.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, that was the second point I wanted to get into, because we also heard today at that subcommittee hearing in St. Paul from State Representative Alice Seagren of the Minnesota House of Representatives. Alice was a very articulate spokeswoman for not only the charter school movement, but when it came to the discussion of whether the Federal Government ought to provide additional funding for school construction at the local level.

She said, "That is a nice thought and we appreciate the sentiment, but if you really want to help our schools, fully fund the mandate under the IDEA."

Going back to the 1970s, the gentleman is right. This is a mandate that was really handed down by the Supreme Court. And for those of us who are conservatives, and we are now joined by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA), as the three of us here

are, we believe that the role of the U.S. Department of Education ought to be minimal when it comes to managing our local schools. The IDEA program is probably the one Federal program where we have an obligation to put the cash forward for it, primarily because the Supreme Court has interpreted the Constitution in a way that suggests we have to.

But the gentleman is right. What started out as a program where the Federal Government promised to fund 40 percent of the total cost of implementing the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, under the Clinton and Gore administration that percentage was dropped all the way down to 6 percent. We fought for the last 5 or 6 years here as a Republican majority in the House and in the Senate to bump that up. We have got it up to I think it was 12 last year. It is scheduled to go up to about 15 this year. But it is still far short of the 40 percent.

Mr. Speaker, getting us up to 40 percent ought to be our top priority, and I know we are all united in our agreement on that point.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. If the gentleman would yield, so when the gentleman is saying that the President, the Clinton administration dropped the commitment to the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, did general Federal education spending drop at the same time?

Mr. SCHAFFER. Not at all. General education funding has increased dramatically. But the priority of this one mandate that the Supreme Court has tasked this body with funding has gone in the opposite direction and has actually been reduced in funding.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. What we have been seeing with this administration, and the gentleman should correct me if I am wrong, is the fact that they have lessened our commitment. They have gone away from funding the unfunded mandate we are imposing on local schools, to funding more Federal education programs that have even more strings attached to them, which tie the hands of local education decision-makers, and give us even more unfunded mandates in our schools?

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman is precisely right. One of the expert witnesses we heard from today, Dr. Karen Effrem, who is an M.D., a pediatrician, put that figure at about 70 percent Federal mandate percentage. She said, paraphrasing her words: essentially, what Washington is doing to States is providing somewhere around 6 to 7 percent of the total funding that actually gets to a classroom, and in exchange for that is attaching about 75 percent of all the rules, regulations, and mandates that a local school has to deal with.

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So the effect of the Clinton-Gore administration in Washington on education is just as the gentleman from

Wisconsin (Mr. RYAN) has described. It has been one to pump more cash into the Department of Education, not to classrooms, but to the Department, the bureaucracy, to spread that bureaucracy wider and to more and more Federal programs, none of which work very well. I might add that the end result at the end of the day is that the few important legitimate programs that Washington ought to be concerned about, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act being primary, is diffused in this morass of waste, fraud, and abuse of bureaucratic expenditures. The taxpayers are getting very little for their education funding when we talk about dollars that come to Washington.

Our goal is to try to shrink the size of the Federal government, reduce its influence on managing the day-to-day activities in classrooms, and give the resources to where the local leaders tell us they need it most, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act being paramount.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I see we have been joined by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA), another education reformer. And I would like to include the gentleman from Michigan in the conversation, but I would like to inform my colleagues of an amendment that I have pending in the Committee on Rules right now that recognizes the fact that Washington has been creating new programs, growing new programs, putting new strings on these programs, and diminishing the commitment to IDEA. I have an amendment which seeks to try and put some more money within the existing appropriations bill into Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to try and help toward funding that unfunded mandate.

What I found is if one looks at the 21st Century Learning Centers, it is a new program that started in 1995. In tracking this program, it was a program conceived of, authored by, and passed by a Republican Congressman from Wisconsin where I come from, Steve Gunderson, who is no longer serving in Congress.

He passed that program at that time to do this, to open up schools, specifically high schools, to rural areas who do not have those kinds of facilities from other means. Meaning if one is in rural western Wisconsin, one does not have a YMCA, one does not have a library or village hall, allow the community as a large to use the swimming pool of a high school, the library of a high school, the computer lab of a high school after schools, during summers. That program was funded with \$750,000 to basically keep the schools open for these purposes. Guess what that is funded at now in this bill, \$600 million. We have seen an 800 percent increase in the funding for the 21st Century Learning Centers.

The other point is this, Congressman Gunderson, who actually offered this, came to the committee fairly recently and said, This program does not look anything like the program I wrote when I passed it into law. This program has gone well beyond its scope and intent. This program has nothing to do with its original intent. It is overfunded. Its mandate is much, much larger. Now it is duplicating other Federal programs we have in the Federal Government from the Department of Education.

So we have another duplicative program from the Department of Education. It has gone beyond its original mandate. It has grown 800 percent in the last 6 years when we are still sending this unfunded mandate on our local school districts, and we still have kids with disabilities who are being educated, and one is almost pitting those kinds of kids against all other kids in schools when Washington continues to send this unfunded mandate to our school districts.

What my amendment would do is take half of the money from this new growing program that duplicates other programs and put it into Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and simply say that, if we are going to be increasing programs from the Department of Education which already duplicates other programs by 800 percent, why do not we first take care of the unfunded mandates we have right now. Why do we not first pay our bills and tell our local school districts, we want you to at indicate the resources. We want you to make the decisions in our schools, in our classrooms, in our school districts.

That is why I am hoping that this amendment will be made in order by the Committee on Rules so we can have a demonstration of our commitment on the floor of Congress for trying to get to this unfunded mandate, for saying no to growing new programs, duplicative programs by the tune of 800 percent, and getting to this unfunded mandate.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Will the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER) yield?

Mr. SCHAFFER. I yield to the gentleman from Michigan.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, I, along with three of our other colleagues, had a great hearing in Minnesota today. It really builds on what we have learned. I think today was the 21st State that we have gone to, the 23rd field hearing that we have gone to people at the local and at the State level. We have asked them what is working in education and then really, and we should maybe do this in future hearings, to give us a grade as to how Washington is either helping them or assisting them in getting them and enabling them to get done what they want to get done at the local level.

I think one of the witnesses that we had today, I do not remember exactly

which one it was, maybe the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER) does, who said when one takes a look at the system that we have created here in Washington, of hundreds of different programs, hundreds of different mandates, and the number that we have heard today was, we get 6 percent of the money from Washington, we get 70 percent of the rules and the regulations.

That is not outlandish. I mean, consistently when we go from one State to the next, Ohio, they have documented it. They said we get 7 percent of our money from Washington, we get 50 percent of the mandates, 50 percent of the paperwork. So that is consistent from all the States that we have talked to.

But one of the people said, "Only you in Washington could come up with a system that looks like this. If you are actually focused on kids, if you were focused on results, which is kids learning, you would have a very different set of programs and requirements. Only a system that is focused on process, you know, that this is what we want to have happen and this funding stream and a system that measures process rather than kids learning is what we have created here in Washington."

Again, we heard it in Minnesota today. We have heard it at every single State that we have gone to; that is, the formula for kids' learning, parental involvement, number one. That is the key. A focus on basic academics.

Again, we have got a charter school today talking, traditional public schools talking about a focus on basic academics. You have to provide a safe and a drug-free school. You cannot have learning go on where kids are concerned about their safety or they are concerned about what their colleagues or their peers are doing in the classroom or in the hallways. You have to focus on getting dollars into the classroom. That consistently is the formula.

The gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. RYAN) is talking about we have got this program, we have got that program, what have we learned? We learned that, when one has got hundreds of education programs, one has got streams of paperwork of bureaucracy; that every time Wisconsin, Michigan, or Minnesota sends dollars to Washington for education they have got to come back to us begging to get some of their money back.

We then give it to them. We give it to them with a whole string of mandates so they end up spending it on things they do not necessarily believe are their priorities. Instead of getting a dollar back for every dollar that they send here, when one calculates all the paperwork, all of the bureaucracy, all these types of things, we believe that at most they get 60 cents back.

Maybe sometime later as we go through the process there are some other things that we can talk about.

We can talk about exactly how effective the bureaucracy is here in Washington.

This is a Department that now, for 2 years in a row, has failed its audit, meaning that it cannot come back to Congress, it cannot come back to the American people, the people that fund this agency, and say we have been very careful in managing your money and we can tell you exactly where it goes. We know for 2 years they failed their audit. We know that for at least 3 more years, they will not be able to get a clean audit.

We all know that, in that kind of environment, there have been a number of opportunities for waste, fraud, and abuse. We can maybe outline what some of those are later on as we go through this process. Then we can also talk about what some of our priorities are for addressing this issue.

My colleagues have already mentioned one, which is let us fully fund and meet the commitments that we have made to local school districts by increasing and meeting our commitment on IDEA.

We can talk about eliminating bureaucracy and red tape through the Ed-Flex program, giving school districts more flexibility through the State, the straight A's program where we give them the money and say you decide whether you want to hire teachers, train teachers, reduce class size, or whatever, and also we want to focus on getting 95 cents of every Federal education dollar into the classroom. So there is a whole series of things that we can talk about as we continue through this hour.

I yield back to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER) to either build on some of these thoughts or on some other ideas that he may have.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to express my appreciation to the gentleman from Minnesota (Chairman HOEKSTRA) for holding that hearing in Minnesota. I, as a member of the subcommittee, have benefited greatly just by having the chance to travel to many communities throughout the country and hear the various ideas that have been invented in States with respect to school reform, but to also have the opportunity to hear the frequency and the consistency of the message my colleagues just described.

It does not matter whether we are in Minnesota, in Florida, in Colorado, or in California, the message never really changes with respect to the Federal involvement in education; that is, we really appreciate all you folks back there in Washington caring about schools, but stop trying to run them from out there. You do not know the names of our kids. You do not even know the names of the schools that we have here much less know about the specific qualities of a neighborhood or the needs of a specific community.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. HOEKSTRA).

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, I think the best example today was we know that most States or many States, I think it is over 30, 33, 35 States, have embarked on a charter school initiative. We have gone around and we have heard and we recognize each State is different. This week we are going to embark here in Congress on a program to help charter schools. Part of that is going to be a school construction program. The State representative from Minnesota.

Mr. SCHAFFER. That was representative Alice Seagren was her name.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Ms. Seagren said, Before you go off on this construction program, giving us construction money, let me tell you what we are doing here in Minnesota. We do not build schools. We do lease plans. So if you come up with a construction program for charter schools in Washington, D.C., I am telling you right now that here is one State where this only does not work, it flies directly in the face of the strategy that we have put in place for charter schools in our State. So what is going to happen is people from Minnesota are sending money to Washington, and we are not going to be able to get any of it back unless we let you in Washington change our strategy for funding charter schools. We think we have got a pretty good system. We think it makes sense. It is not perfect, but this works for us, and this is what we want to do. Now, all of a sudden, to get our money back, we are going to have to change our program. Well, up until today, we did not even know that Minnesota had that kind of a strategy in place.

Mr. SCHAFFER. That is precisely right. I want to go back to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. RYAN) and his proposal because I assure him, he is going to have lots of support here on the floor for an amendment that moves to fully fund IDEA at the expense of lower priorities that are funded or proposed to be funded in the education budget.

I think there will be other proposals like that, because we are a long, long way from being just up to the 40 percent. When we say full funding, we are only talking about 40 percent of the total cost of the program. This is expensive.

I do not think any of us deny that those who suffer from various, whether it is behavioral disorder or learning disability of some other case or so on, that those individuals, those students deserve an equal opportunity and access to quality education. We think that is important. That ought to be a national priority. The Supreme Court has certainly established it as a national priority.

Our point, though, is if we really believe that, if we really are sincere in

our belief that all children deserve to learn, and no child should be left behind, then we cannot just come up with the rules and expect somebody else to pay. That is what is going on in America today. So we just want to get up to our commitment to pay 40 percent of the cost associated with these Federal mandates. We are not even close. We are at about 15 percent today.

But the direction of the amendment of the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. RYAN) is really the ultimate local control, because the tremendous cost associated with complying with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act steals dollars from every other important priority that might exist in the State of Wisconsin, the State of Michigan, my State of Colorado, and all States. If we just focus on getting the dollars to the one priority we know we have to deal with through the concept of fungibility, that frees up funds for everything that is important.

So for those States, the gentleman mentioned the 21st Century Learning Centers earlier, for those States that believe 21st Century Learning Centers are what they want and important in that State, paying for IDEA frees up the cash to buy 21st Century Learning Centers. But in my State, it might be something else. It might be teacher pay in my State which is a high priority for us.

□ 2030

Funding IDEA is a way to provide better pay for teachers. And other States they want to lower the property taxes to make it more business friendly, and fully funding IDEA frees up funds to lower the property taxes in other States.

So the key and the strength of the argument that I think the gentleman has in his favor when he comes to the floor with that amendment is that fully funding IDEA really is at the heart of local control in Washington, and it ought to be. It seems counterintuitive to some. Here we are as conservatives talking about pouring money into a program. The reason it works and the reason it is a conservative idea is because it does have a liberating effect on States. It focuses our emphasis here on Washington more narrowly than what the Clinton/Gore administration has tried to do by diffusing dollars to so many programs that do not work, and it ultimately results in more dollars getting to children, which is what we are for.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, If the gentleman will yield, the gentleman has interpreted my amendment precisely correct. I have had the opportunity as a freshman Member to have many, many, many meetings with school board members, superintendents, teachers, administrators, all the different school districts in the district I represent. I have an educational advisory board with these types of people

on there, including parents and home schoolers, to talk about these issues. I get the same thing over and over, let us do our job.

Just in the district I represent, they have vastly different needs, vastly different problems. In one end, in Kenosha, you have different problems; in the other end, in Janesville you have far different problems, let alone the problems that may exist in Harlem or East L.A. or Sante Fe, New Mexico. The point is we have a very vast and different country.

We have a priority of educating our children, but the problems we are experiencing in our school districts are so different. There are so many different ideas out there, so many different solutions out there. By funding IDEA, you free up that decision-making power. So when I bring an amendment to the floor, which I am hoping the Committee on Rules will allow me to do, by funding IDEA or getting closer to meeting that mandate, you are not just voting against one program to put money into another, you are voting for all those programs out there that could be created, if school districts did not have to chase these unfunded mandates.

You are voting for freeing up the hands of parents, teachers, and administrators to get involved in their school districts, to tackle problems, to address the needs that we have in our individual school districts. As a Member of Congress, when you vote to fund IDEA, to free up those local resources, reduce property taxes, find the problems and address them. My school districts that I represent right now cannot do that. They do not have the resources to do the things they think are necessary. And you know why? It is because they are chasing unfunded Federal mandates. That is really the crux of the matter.

I noticed that all of these new programs that are coming up here in Washington through the administration and the Department of Education look pretty good to a politician in Washington. You do not get a lot of political kudos when you simply say let us put more money on unfunded Federal mandates that has been around since 1975. You get more press, you get more notoriety, you sound more proeducation, when you stand up here and have a press conference saying I have this brand new program or this new program or this new program. But what actually ends up happening is each of these new programs takes on a life of their own. They put new mandates on our local school districts; they tell the administrators how to dot every I, how to cross every T. It is a cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all mandate on all of our schools, regardless of the uniqueness, regardless of the individual problems they may have; and it comes at the expense of funding a mandate

that the Supreme Court said we have to fund, that current law says we have to fund, a mandate that we should fund.

That is why I think it is important that as we look at our spending priorities in any budget in Congress, you prioritize; and that is why I am trying to pass an amendment to prioritize this unfunded mandate before going down the road of creating new programs or expedientially increasing new programs that are actually duplicative of other programs. If we fund unfunded mandates like IDEA, you can have a safe drug-free program in every district if you wanted. You could have 21st century learning centers in every school district if you want it.

But guess what, the decision would not be made by politicians in Washington who can take credit for it. It would be made by local decision-makers, school board members, administrators, parents, teachers. That is what the whole debate is about, whether we want Washington to micromanage education or we want our local people, those who know our kids the best, the names of our schools, to manage education. That is what it is really all about.

I just want to say it is a pleasure to be here on the floor of Congress with two of the leaders in education reform, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER), the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA). They have really set the trend, set the way for education reform in America. They have wakened up the call for reform for education in America, and they have really done this country a great service by highlighting some of the waste, fraud, and abuse that is occurring at our Department of Education. I just really applaud the gentlemen for that.

Mr. SCHAFFER. I thank the gentleman for the nice comments. I appreciate that. The theme of local control is really at the core of our reform efforts that we are pushing here. I want to yield back to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA), and I am hoping I can persuade him to reflect a little bit and share with the Members here and those that are monitoring tonight's proceedings about the testimony of John Scribante, who is the businessman who was at the hearing this morning, who started out in his testimony, I know he referred to the Minnesota State constitution which talks about the responsibility of the State of Minnesota for educating all of the children in Minnesota in order to preserve their liberty and by focusing on their intelligence. He focused on that word and underscored the word intelligence; and he said that is not skills, it is intelligence.

He spoke of the importance of the intellect and the training of the young minds of Minnesota, how critical it is to maintain their liberty, that is not

an idea he thought of; but it is one that he saw fit to reference from Minnesota's State constitution. And I was moved by his patriotic compassion at one point in his testimony in which he spoke about the devastating impact that the Federal Government is having in preventing Minnesota from achieving its constitutional objectives.

I am wondering if the gentleman from Michigan can comment further on that. Go ahead.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, I also wanted to build on the comments of our colleague from Wisconsin (Mr. RYAN) because he said some very nice things about us in awakening the call for educational reform. I do not think we have done that. What we have done is we have kind of provided an echo chamber for what people at the local level are demanding. They want their schools back. They know the names of their kids. They know what is best for their kids. Governor Carlson today talked about going back into his public school in the Bronx. We have been to the Bronx. We have had hearings there.

I do not know if we went through the litany with the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. RYAN) of the places where we have been; but it was almost every place that he outlined, we have been there. I mean, we have been in to Albuquerque. We have been into L.A. We have been to the Bronx. We have been to Chicago, Milwaukee, Minneapolis. We have been all over the place.

The response we continually get is from local officials and local parents, and they do not exactly say it this way; but what they do say in so many words is Washington has gotten to the point where you want to build our schools, you are going to give us 6 percent of what it takes to build a school, but we will give you the regulations to tell you exactly how to build the whole thing. You want to hire our teachers. You want to train our teachers. You want to develop our curriculum; you want to teach our kids history, set history standards; you want to teach them about art. You want to have school health clinics. You want to buy our technology. You want to feed our kids breakfast. You want to feed our kids lunch. You want to do after-school programs. You want to develop safe and drug free programs, and this is just a small litany of the programs. But after you give us 6 percent of each of the dollars required for each of these programs and you burden on a whole set of rules and regulations, then you step back and say, but other than that, it is your school.

I think, again, one of the witnesses today said that, and we were talking about the school-to-work program, it is like we have received \$16 million from Washington to conduct our school-to-work program, but receiving that \$16 million has really driven about a half a billion dollars of State spending, State

spending that came from the Minnesota taxpayers and went to the State government. And I think this is what Mr. Scribante was talking about saying, we love our kids. We want control of our schools, and we want our schools to be focused on developing the skills of each and every child in our community. And the quote that he had from Winston Churchill, I think he is going to get us that so that we get it right, but maybe my colleague from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) has it, but it is really saying, this battle of who controls our schools is important enough to fight and debate today, because now is when we can still have an impact, where there really is still a lot of local control, but where that has been eroding.

I will yield to my colleague from Minnesota, who maybe has the quote right there. He is smiling. He must have it. I appreciate the gentleman very much being a wonderful host today, helping us get an excellent set of witnesses. I think we had 10 or 11 witnesses in Bloomington, I guess we were at today, and just excellent testimony that I think really helped us. I yield to my colleague.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Let me, first of all, say I thank the gentleman, and second I do not have that quote; but I do have it in my office now, and I will be sharing it from time to time. He quoted Winston Churchill, though; and I think the point was well taken.

Let me give you a simpler quote from Winston Churchill, it is one actually my wife needlepointed for me on my office wall, and it is simple, it says, "Success is never permanent. Failure is never fatal. The only thing that really counts is courage."

And what we saw today in Minnesota, and I cannot thank the gentleman enough, I left that meeting so excited about the future of education, not just in Minnesota, but around the country, because it renewed my belief that Americans do care. They care about their kids, and they want to make certain that every child, and this was what really came through with virtually all of the testimony today, that every child, whether they come from a family of privilege or a family of poverty, every child deserves a first-rate education in this country today.

The truth of the matter is, and we all know this, people on all sides of the political aisles of every spectrum philosophically, we all know that too many kids today are being cheated by the system, and we in Washington cannot completely change everything, but I think we can make some reforms. And the gentleman is making reforms, and I want to thank the gentleman for that and we see it happening.

I was so impressed, and I have worked for many years with Governor Ernie Carlson, now former Governor Carlson; but his testimony today was

powerful. I think the only regret I have is that more Americans did not get a chance to actually see and hear that testimony today because it was from the heart. He grew up in a tough section of New York. He told us about PS36. He told us about what it was like when he was growing up, but the great thing was he told us what is happening today with the right leadership, with the right flexibility, allowing that new principal there to control his school, to motivate his teachers, to motivate those students; and, guess what, the results are there.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will just yield, PS36 is Public School 36.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Yes.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. For those who may be observing or watching this discussion, not knowing what is PS36, it is a public school. It is Public School 36 that Governor Carlson went to in the Bronx. When we were there, we were not at Public School 36, but probably a very rough neighborhood, probably low income; and he talked about some of the kids who would come to school and the first thing they would get from their principal each and every day was kind of talking about what happened at night because a number of them may have had a rough night.

So it is a tough part of New York City, and this principal and this public school has gone in and they have embraced these kids and are really making a difference; and what the gentleman said, what the gentleman saw today in Minnesota, I think that is what the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER) and I have had the opportunity to see around the country, is that you get to the local level, these parents, these administrators, these legislators, they have got a passion for their kids.

They absolutely have a passion for their kids, and they are kind of, you know, wanting us to get out of the way so that they can really do and help for these kids, and Governor Carlson's public school 36 is just one phenomenal example where they are having great success, not because of what we are doing, but because they are going in and taking the leadership.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. If the gentleman would yield back, and that was the thing that really impressed me, virtually everybody who testified today did not talk about preserving the status quo or protecting certain vested interest. It was not about protecting, you know, these rights and so forth. It really was all about what can we do to improve the quality of education for kids. And it was not us versus them. Unfortunately, what we hear so many times in the debate about education, both here in Washington and around the country, sort of a trench warfare mentality.

I want to congratulate Dr. Keith Dixon, who is a superintendent of

schools in Faribault in my district, and he came to us from Colorado, and I was so impressed with him, because, you know, he did not get into this debate about charter schools versus public schools versus private schools. His concern was for the kids. He said to us that he really considered himself the superintendent of all of the children in the district, and it was his job to see that they got a chance. And for some kids maybe it worked out better for them and their parents that they got to charter schools.

He said some of them went to charter schools part of the day and part of the day they went to the public schools, and some went to the public schools part of the day and part of the day the private schools, but they are working out arrangements; but it is all about what is best for the kids.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. If the gentleman will yield, I thought he was a wonderful breath of fresh air in how he viewed that job, in saying, I am a superintendent for all the kids; and I recognize that, you know, my traditional public school may not be the best for all of the kids in this district each and every day, and so what I am doing is, in the business world we call it mass customization.

□ 2045

He says, I am using the resources that I have been given and I am going to help parents put together a structured program that matches the needs of every child. And so, if some of the parents believe that home schooling, for whatever reason, is best for their kids, you know, if they come through and they want to use the school for band, for some extracurricular or advanced science classes, we are going to be there and we are going to open the door and we are going to work that out for the parents.

And it is the same for the charter and the parochial. It really was a demonstration of what he said, a superintendent for all of the kids in the district. And what I would guess they are doing in that district is just building a phenomenal partnership and a phenomenal loyalty in that community with all of these groups coming together, with the focal point being the kids, not home schooling, not charter schools, not public schools, not parochial schools, but they are developing a trusting relationship between all of the providers of services to these kids that says, let us keep the kids and learning at the center, let us put aside our differences and let us come together and make sure that we have a relationship that enables us to be creative to meet the needs.

I thought it was awesome testimony. Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, it absolutely was. I would bet long money and short odds that all the kids in Faribault are going to benefit from that kind of an attitude.

But the other thing I wanted to mention about Governor Carlson, he said something really profound; and that is that, for too long in public education and education in general, we have measured quality education by inputs. And he sort of reversed. Maybe it is because he came from PS-36. Maybe it is because he was State auditor. But when he was governor, he said, we better start measuring outputs. Because we have all labored under this Lake Wobegone mentality that all our children were above average, and that is not necessarily true. And when we began to actually test the students, we began to find out they were not doing nearly as well in many of the areas as we thought they were doing.

And so, we are starting to measure quality now in Minnesota not by how much we put into the process, and we put an awful lot of money in public education in the State of Minnesota, as my colleagues do in Colorado and in Michigan, as well. But we want to find out how well the students really are doing in terms of learning. And I think that if we focus on the students, if we focus on the children, and if we focus on outputs, what we are really getting out for the resources we put into it, I think in the long run the real winners are going to be the children.

So the testimony today was excellent. I cannot thank my colleagues enough. I came away charged up reminded that the Forefathers were even smarter than we thought they were when they created the system that we have today where each State becomes the laboratory of democracy.

We are seeing this happening in places like Milwaukee and in Minnesota and all around the country from governors, State legislators, private nonprofit groups. We heard from a number of them. The Executive Director of Partnership for Choice and Education spoke to us. Kids for Scholarship Fund. They are offering 1,200 scholarships a year now in the State of Minnesota to poor kids to go to the school of their choice. And we heard from some parents excellent testimony of the benefits of allowing students to have that kind of choice.

So I really came away with a renewed optimism that Americans do care about education, they do care about the children, and, in places like Minnesota, there are a lot of people doing the right things and, ultimately, the kids will be the beneficiaries.

So I want to thank my colleagues for coming to Minnesota. I thought the hearing was excellent. As I say, the only regret that I had was that we did not get more people at that hearing so more people could see what is really happening in places like Minnesota. We would love to have our colleagues come back and perhaps bring some of those folks into Washington to share with some of our colleagues what really is

happening in terms of educational reform in Minnesota.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, the constituents of my colleague were perfect people to testify; and Minnesota turned out to be a perfect place to hold the hearing that we did because their comments were reflective, I think, of the same kind of comments that we have heard throughout the country.

But one of the interesting perspectives that I think we probably spend more time on in Minnesota than most other States is on the topic of the School to Work Program, which passed in 1994 by Congress. It was a program that was inspired by the Nation's desire to see schoolchildren graduating with the skills necessary to help them become more gainfully employed and ready to go to work.

And so, as classically happens here in Washington, there is a legitimate need that is identified by the country; and we throw lots of money at it in Washington. Now, this was before we took the majority. This was when the Democrats ran the House, and we saw even more of that then. But create a new program, throw hundreds of millions of dollars into a program called School to Work; and these dollars were funneled back to the States and once again the States were told, if you want your money back, you have to spend it the way we tell you to.

The School to Work Program is something that is in full force today in all 50 States. It is a mandatory program, there is no voluntary quality about it, that even from the very young ages of kindergarten starts orienting more and more students toward workplace skills. And the concern we heard voiced today was that that focus on workplace skills often comes at the expense of developing one's intellect in an academic approach to learning.

This is a complaint we are hearing more and more about. The School to Work Program, again, built around the right motives and identification of a very legitimate problem that occurs, but the solution is one that deemphasizes academic performance and academic progress in schools and moves the focus to actually an objective that is outside even the Department of Education, that includes the Department of Labor, where this morning the Medicare program is involved in School to Work. And it is kind of a comprehensive Government effort to try to change the way we have educated our children for hundreds of years in America.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, and that is going on at the same time. I still remember the first hearing or one of the first hearings that we did. We did a run through California. And then as we were doing the education at a crossroads hearing, we also did a hearing and we did it in California and we met with a number of the college presi-

dents or the deans of various universities in California. And it was right after this process had started and as we were gathering the data. In one of these initial hearings, the deans came in and said, you know, one of the programs that we need more funding for is for remedial education. And we kind of get a startled look on our face, and these are from some prestigious colleges telling us that they need more money for remedial education. And we hear that from two or three of these experts from the colleges and we finally say, excuse me, why does a prestigious university with high academic standards and high entrance requirements, what do they need money from us for for remedial education?

The answer is, well, 25 percent of the students that are coming to college today are not ready for college requirements. And what does that mean? It meant that they were not at an 8th or 10th grade level for reading, writing, and math. And so, it is one of those key criteria again for successful schools is, rather than overlaying a whole new system on to our education, which is focusing on developing the skills to work, the emphasis should be on teaching our kids and getting them basic academics.

We have seen that on international standards, international comparisons. We are not doing well enough on our kids learning the basics. So before we go off and try to dilute this process any further, let us focus on basic academics.

I do not know if the gentleman was in Arkansas when we went to Arkansas in Little Rock when we were at Central High School.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I was not there.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Again, it was fascinating. The school in Arkansas that gets some of the highest test scores, we asked them the question, Why are you getting such high test scores? Because they were the lowest funded school in the State? The answer was, We only have the time, energy, and money to focus on basic academics.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA) for joining us in this special order. I see we are almost out of time. I hope this topic of School to Work is one we will be able to spend more time on and explore the impact that it has had in other States. I suspect the testimony we heard in Minnesota is similar to the impact to that which we would hear from other States. And it is one example where, once again, Washington is diffusing the emphasis of education on academic learning in a knowledge-based education.

We need to stop that, really, and we need to start allowing schools to focus on what they believe to be important locally.