

Health and Human Services, and Education, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2001, and for other purposes:

Mr. MOORE. Mr. Chairman, I rise to express my grave concern with the bill before us today. This bill critically underfunds important national priorities that are too numerous to mention.

Many Members of this House have expressed their concern about the Federal Government's chronic failure to meet its commitment to special-needs kids. Yet, this bill provides just \$6.6 billion in funding for special education, \$514 million over last year's funding but far short of the \$16 billion-plus we need to fulfill this longstanding commitment to our most vulnerable children.

Mr. Chairman, I have a school in my district where exposed wires dangle from the ceiling, and rainwater seeps over those wires, but this bill provides no funds to repair collapsing schools. Never mind that more than 200 of my colleagues have heeded the call of their school districts, who are begging for assistance repairing schools.

53.2 million kids—a national enrollment record—started school in 1999 and 2.2 million teachers will be needed in the coming years to teach them what they need to know. The teacher shortage is an imminent national crisis, yet this bill includes no funds to continue the class size reduction initiative that is putting 100,000 new teachers in our schools.

Mr. Chairman, we know that quality early childhood programs for low-income children can increase the likelihood that children will be literate, employed, and educated, and less likely to be school dropouts, dependent on welfare, or arrested for criminal activity. This bill, however, cuts the President's request for Head Start by \$600 million, which denies 53,000 low-income children the opportunity to benefit from this comprehensive child development program.

Tragically, our country has become desensitized to school violence, accustomed to reports of shootings in schools. School shootings are no longer front page news. Yet, this bill eliminates assistance for elementary school counselors that serve more than 100,000 children in 60 high-need school districts that could intervene and identify troubled kids before they harm themselves, their classmates or their teachers.

Earlier this week, I supported a bill to relieve the estate tax with great reservation. I have long been a supporter of responsible estate tax relief that maintains our national commitments—paying down the national debt, protecting Social Security and Medicare, and supporting important domestic priorities such as the ones I have listed here. The leadership of this House, however, gave us one vehicle for estate tax relief, and I supported it with the hope that the Senate and the conference committee will craft a fiscally responsible compromise.

Today, however, I am faced with this bill that turns its back on our Nation's number one priority—our kids. The leadership of this House expects a veto of this irresponsible bill. I am voting against this bill today and I ask my colleagues to do the same. We then can return to the drawing board and craft a fiscally

responsible bill that reflects our priorities as a nation.

TRIBUTE TO DEBBIE WILDE—
ATHENA AWARD RECIPIENT

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 26, 2000

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker. It is at this moment that I would like to congratulate Debbie Wilde for receiving the ATHENA Award, in recognition of her commitment to helping women reach their full leadership potential. Mary is currently the director of Garfield Youth Services and her professional accomplishments, community efforts and youth activities deserve the recognition of this body.

Mary has played an important role in Garfield Youth Services' road to success. During her time with the organization, GYS has seen a tremendous growth in their staff and their membership. Currently, the youth organization provides more than 10 programs in which area youth and parents play an active role. One of Mary's most notable undertakings is the "Kiss-A-Pig" Contest, a contest that has seen an increase in proceeds for the organization from \$3,000 to \$100,000.

Mary has not only been instrumental in developing the Garfield Youth Services into a renowned organization, but she has also been very active in other facets of her community. As a resident of Glenwood Springs, Colorado, Mary involves herself in church, school, and various recreational activities. She believes it is important to "be a servant" and credits her devotion and faith as the backbone to her public service.

It is with this, Mr. Speaker, that I congratulate Mary for receiving the ATHENA Award and I commend her on her public involvement. It is a real pleasure to honor people of Mary's character. We are all very proud of you, Mary. Congratulations!

GEORGE PALKO

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 26, 2000

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Mr. George Palko upon receiving the Alumni Emerging Leadership Award from Cleveland State University. Mr. Palko is being recognized for his great engineering work and for his dedication as an educator at the Cleveland State University.

Mr. George Palko earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the Fenn College of Engineering in 1988 and a master's of business administration from the College of Business Administration in 1993. Mr. George Palko is currently a resident of North Royalton.

Mr. George Palko has been engaged in the Cleveland State University's cooperative education program through which he has received training at the Great Lakes Construction Company. Upon graduating from college, Mr. Palko

continued working for the Great Lakes Construction Company. As an in-house engineer and project engineer, Mr. Palko worked on many projects in the city of Cleveland. He has been superintendent of many ODOT projects, including the construction of interstate 90. In August 1997, Mr. Palko became president of the Great Lakes Construction Company.

Since Mr. Palko became president of the Great Lakes Construction Company the number of co-op students that the firm employs has quadrupled. In addition, Mr. Palko is teaching Construction Planning and Estimating at the Cleveland State University's Civil Engineering Department and he is a member of the College of Engineering's Visiting Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleagues will join me in honoring Mr. Palko's impressive career and wish him all the best as he continues his work.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 26, 2000

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Speaker, due to a family health emergency, I was unable to be present for rollcall votes 292 through 321. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall votes 292, 293, 294, 296, 297, 298, 300, 301, 304, 307, 313, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320 and "nay" on rollcall votes 295, 299, 302, 303, 305, 306, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 314, and 321.

CHURCH PLAN PARITY

HON. J.C. WATTS, JR.

OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 26, 2000

Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, today I support S. 1309, the Church Plan Parity and Entanglement Prevention Act. The purpose of this legislation is to clarify the status of church plans under state law and the status of a church welfare plan as a plan sponsored by a single employer. It also addresses the problem of health insurance issuers refusing to do business with church plans because of concern that church plans could be classified as unlicensed entities.

Most major religious denominations in the United States have established health, disability and pension plans for the employees of churches and church-controlled institutions. These church plans provide benefits that are critical to the welfare of the clergy and lay workers of each denomination. All Americans should have access to a viable health insurance plan. Just as the clergy plays a vital role in maintaining the spiritual health and well-being of our nation, it is equally important for us to give churches the tools they need in order to maintain the physical health and well-being of their clergy.

It is imperative that we pass this much needed piece of legislation. Therefore, I urge