

Yet, I know hundreds of teachers personally, and I know there are hundreds of thousands of dedicated teachers who want to see our children succeed.

The hundreds of Federal programs created to remedy the problems are not helping. We need local solutions. If we really want to help children learn, we need to send more dollars and decisions to the parents, the teachers, and the folks who run the schools. We need to cut Washington red tape.

To show the Nation our commitment to better schools, I will reserve the first House bill, H.R. 1, for President-elect Bush's education proposal. Together, let us pledge to improve education for all of our students.

Retirement security is another challenge that Congress must face. Let me begin about social security. Social security is a sacred trust. Our challenge is now to keep it working far into the future.

In the last session of Congress we put Americans' social security dollars in a lockbox so that government could no longer raid those funds and threaten the future of the program. That helped social security in the short term. Now we must look to the long term. The American people deserve better than a fraction of 1 percent return on their social security investment. If this program does not do better, it will not survive.

The new President and the Congress have both promised to save social security. Now is the time to make good on that promise. Together we must search for a solution to a long-term problem.

Retirement security also means health care. Medicare must be modernized, and that process must include prescription drug coverage for all of our senior citizens. No senior should be forced to choose between putting food on the table and having access to life-saving drugs. Together, we can work to modernize Medicare.

National security is another challenge that the 107th Congress must face. We have done a good job of providing for more resources for our men and women in uniform, but we can do better. It is still a dangerous world out there, and our defensive capabilities must improve to keep our citizens safe.

President-elect Bush pledged to work with the Congress to support our national missile defense program and provide our military with the funds they need to stay strong. This will be a top priority of the 107th Congress. Together we can work with the President to improve our Nation's security and to keep our citizens safe from international threats.

Finally, we have a duty to be fiscally responsible and to take steps to keep our economy strong. The last Congress paid off more debt than any other Congress in history. That is an amazing achievement. You helped make that happen. We are on the road to pay off

our public debt by the year 2013. By continuing to pay off debt, we keep our economy strong. We need to also have the responsibility to return surplus money back to the taxpayers with commonsense tax relief.

We need to restore fairness to our Tax Code. It is not fair to tax people for being married. It is not fair to tax people on every penny they earn while they are living, and then tax them on what they have left over when they die. In the last Congress we made progress on these two tax fairness initiatives. This year, let us get it done.

Also, there are troubling signs that our economy is slowing down. President-elect Bush has proposed a tax relief package that will stimulate economic growth. I believe we have a duty to our constituents and this country to consider this proposal. Together we can work with the new President to keep our economy strong and to give tax relief to all Americans.

More than 20 years ago, I stood as a high school teacher before the classes of my high school day in and day out. I taught them about the promises and the possibilities of this Nation, this country we call America. I taught them that in America, people work hard to achieve their dreams for their families, for their careers, and for their communities. I told each student they could fulfill almost even their wildest dreams if they were willing to sacrifice and to work for that dream.

Little did I know then how fate would bring me to this place and to this position, the Speaker of the House. But fate has also brought all of you here. You all have sacrificed your time and your effort, and your families have sacrificed with you, for a chance to serve in this body. You have done so because you believe that you can get good things done for your constituents and for all the American people, and that by your efforts, you can make this even a better Nation.

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Together we have a great opportunity to work for the American people as their representatives. There is no higher honor and there is no greater responsibility. As we promise in solemn ceremony to uphold the Constitution by taking the oath of office, let us do so with the conviction that we renew the American government with each new Congress; that we will renew our efforts by working together, fighting about principle and searching for truth through debate.

Today, we are sworn in to represent the people. We participate in the greatest ongoing democratic ritual in the world. Let us always be mindful of our duties to our constituents and respectful of the traditions of this institution. Let us pray that God guides us in all that we do in these halls; that he gives us the knowledge to do the people's

work, the strength to persevere, and the wisdom to know when to listen to what others say on this floor. May God bless this House.

Now, it is my time to do the people's business, and it is my great honor to recognize my good friend and colleague from the Committee on Commerce, whose legislative skills I admire so much.

I ask the Dean of the House of Representatives, the honorable gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL) to administer the oath.

Mr. DINGELL then administered the oath of office to Mr. HASTERT of Illinois, as follows:

Do you solemnly swear that you will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that you will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that you take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion, and that you will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which you are about to enter. So help you God.

Mr. DINGELL. Congratulations.

SWEARING IN OF MEMBERS

The SPEAKER. According to the precedents, the Chair will swear in all Members of the House at this time.

If the Members will rise, the Chair will now administer the oath of office.

The Members-elect and Delegates-elect and the Resident Commissioner-elect rose, and the Speaker administered the oath of office to them as follows:

Do you solemnly swear that you will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that you will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that you take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion, and that you will well and faithfully discharge the duties of office on which you are about to enter. So help you God.

The SPEAKER. Congratulations, you are now Members of the 107th Congress.

MAJORITY LEADER

Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, as chairman of the Republican Conference, I am directed by that conference to notify the House officially that the Republican Members have selected as their majority leader the gentleman from Texas, the Honorable RICHARD K. ARMEY.

MINORITY LEADER

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, as chairman of the Democratic Caucus, I have been directed to report to the House that the Democratic Members have selected as minority leader the gentleman from Missouri, the Honorable RICHARD A. GEPHARDT.