(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) in paragraph (1), by striking ''loans to a borrower'' and inserting ''a loan or loan guarantee to a borrower''; and

(B) in paragraph (2)—

(i) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by striking ''Loans made'' and inserting ''Each loan or loan guarantee made'';

(ii) in subparagraph (A), by striking ''5 years'' and inserting ''7 years''; and

(iii) in subparagraph (B), by striking ''that is 2 percentage'' and all that follows through the end of the subparagraph and inserting ''that does not exceed a rate equal to the sum of—

''(I) the most recently published prime rate (as published in the newspapers of general circulation in the State of Hawaii before the date on which the loan is made); and

''(II) 3 percentage points.''; and

(3) in subsection (f)(1), by striking ''for each of the fiscal years 1992, 1993, and 1994, $1,000,000'' and inserting ''for the first full fiscal year, beginning after the date of enactment of the Native American Programs Act Amendments of 1997, such sums as may be necessary''.

AMENDMENTS OFFERED BY MR. GOODLING

Mr. GOODLING. Mr. Speaker, I offer several amendments.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendments offered by Mr. GOODLING:

On page 2, line 3, strike out ''1997'' and ''1998'' and insert after 1999, ''2000, 2001, and 2002''.

On page 2, line 7, strike out ''1997'' and ''1998'' and insert after 1999, ''2000, 2001, and 2002''.

On page 2, line 13, strike out ''1997'' and ''1998'' and insert after 1999, ''2000, 2001, and 2002''

On page 4, line 4, strike out ''for each of the fiscal years''.

On page 4, line 5, strike out ''$1,000,000''.

On page 4, line 6, strike out ''for the first fiscal year and all that follows through line 9.

On page 4, line 5, after ''inserting'', insert ''2000 and 2001.''

Mr. GOODLING (during the reading). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the amendments be considered as read and printed in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GOODLING) is recognized for 1 hour..

Mr. GOODLING. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, S. 459, the Native American Programs Act Amendments of 1997, would continue the important programs operated under the Native American Programs Act. This Act promotes social and economic self-sufficiency among Indian tribes.

Grants under the Act have been used to assist tribes, develop government infrastructure, establish tax, zoning and corporation codes, and provide the regulatory frameworks necessary to attract and retain outside capital investment. In addition to extending these programs through the years 2002, it amends provisions for a Native Hawaiian Revolving Loan Fund to make it self-sufficient and eliminate the need for further appropriations.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. MARTINEZ).

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. Speaker, I am in support of the amendment and find no problem with it

Mr. GOODLING. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Mrs. MINK).

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 459, the Native American Programs Act.

Authorization for this act expired in 1996, and we were unable to bring an authorization bill to the floor in the last Congress, so I am pleased that we have agreement today and can extend these programs for the next 4 fiscal years.

The Native American Programs Act provides funds to American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Native Hawaiians and other Native American Pacific Islanders for projects which help achieve social and economic self-sufficiency among these populations.

We provide about $34.8 million each year for the Native American Programs Act. This assistance provided since 1974 has been critical in helping tribes to establish their governmental and legal systems and develop environmental and land use policies. It has helped to address the social needs among Native American communities and has increased economic development, job creation and business expansion.

It has also funded projects to preserve the languages of our Native Americans that are in danger of being lost forever. The strength of this program is that each project funded by this act is a community-based effort in which the ideas for solutions of community problems comes from the people themselves.

One such project which is funded under this act is the Native Hawaiian Revolving Loan Fund, which provides low interest loans to native Hawaiians for business creation or expansion.

Originally a demonstration project, the loan fund was developed into an important source of capital for native Hawaiian-run businesses, most of which are small businesses. The loans have funded a wide variety of projects, including agribusiness, construction, retail, tourism, trucking, automotive shops, restaurants, and food outlets.

Access to capital is a real problem for native Hawaiian entrepreneurs. The loan fund has helped to develop viable businesses in our community, create jobs, and contribute to our economy. To date, $13.8 million has been given out in loans to 308 businesses.

Documentation provided by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, which administers the loan fund, shows that almost 1,000 jobs have been created as a direct result of businesses started and expanded through the loan fund.

S. 459 will authorize the revolving loan fund through the year 2001, and make important changes to the loan fund which will help the fund achieve self-sufficiency, so it will no longer need annual Federal funding to sustain itself.

I appreciate the work of the chairman, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GOODLING) and his staff in working out an agreement on this Native Hawaiian Revolving Loan Fund. This agreement will help assure that the loan fund will become self-sufficient and truly revolving in nature, without the need of further assistance from the Federal government.

I urge my colleagues to support S. 459 and these important programs that assist our Native American communities.

Mr. GOODLING. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the amendments offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GOODLING).

The amendments were agreed to.

The Senate bill was ordered to be read a third time, was read the third time, and passed, and a motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1430

COMMUNITY-DESIGNED CHARTER SCHOOL ACT

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and take from the Speaker's table the bill (H.R. 2616) to amend titles VI and X of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to improve and expand charter schools, with a Senate amendment thereto, and concur in the Senate amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Senate amendment:

Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Charter School Expansion Act of 1998''.

SEC. 2. INNOVATIVE CHARTER SCHOOLS.

Title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7301 et seq.) is amended—

(1) in section 6201(a) (20 U.S.C. 7331(a))—

(A) in paragraph (1)(C), by striking ''and'' after the semicolon;

(B) by redesignating paragraph (2) as paragraph (3); and

(C) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following:

''(2) support for planning, designing, and initial implementation of charter schools as described in part C of title X; and''; and

(2) in section 6301(b) (20 U.S.C. 7351(b))—

(A) in paragraph (7), by striking ''and'' after the semicolon;

(B) by redesignating paragraph (8) as paragraph (9); and

(C) by inserting after paragraph (7) the following:

''(8) planning, designing, and initial implementation of charter schools as described in part C of title X; and''.

SEC. 3. CHARTER SCHOOLS.

(a) PURPOSE.—Section 10301(b) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 8061(b)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) by inserting ''planning, program'' before ''design''; and

(B) by striking ''and'' after the semicolon;

(2) in paragraph (2), by striking the period and inserting ''; and''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

''(3) expanding the number of high-quality charter schools available to students across the Nation.''.

(b) CRITERIA FOR PRIORITY TREATMENT.—Section 10302 of such Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 8062) is amended—

(1) in subsection (c)(2)—

(A) in subparagraph (A), by striking ''and'' after the semicolon;

(B) in subparagraph (B), by striking the period and inserting ''; and''; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

''(C) not more than 2 years to carry out dissemination activities described in section 10304(f)(6)(B).'';

(2) by amending subsection (d) to read as follows:

''(d) LIMITATION.—A charter school may not receive—

''(1) more than 1 grant for activities described in subparagraphs (A) and (B) of subsection (c)(2); or

''(2) more than 1 grant for activities under subparagraph (C) of subsection (c)(2).''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

''(e) PRIORITY TREATMENT.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—

''(A) FISCAL YEARS 1999, 2000, AND 2001.—In awarding grants under this part for any of the fiscal years 1999, 2000, and 2001 from funds appropriated under section 10311 that are in excess of $51,000,000 for the fiscal year, the Secretary shall give priority to States to the extent that the States meet the criteria described in paragraph (2) and 1 or more of the criteria described in subparagraph (A), (B), or (C) of paragraph (3).

''(B) SUCCEEDING FISCAL YEARS.—In awarding grants under this part for fiscal year 2002 or any succeeding fiscal year from any funds appropriated under section 10311, the Secretary shall give priority to States to the extent that the States meet the criteria described in paragraph (2) and 1 or more of the criteria described in subparagraph (A), (B), or (C) of paragraph (3).

''(2) REVIEW AND EVALUATION PRIORITY CRITERIA.—The criteria referred to in paragraph (1) is that the State provides for periodic review and evaluation by the authorized public chartering agency of each charter school, at least once every 5 years unless required more frequently by State law, to determine whether the charter school is meeting the terms of the school's charter, and is meeting or exceeding the academic performance requirements and goals for charter schools as set forth under State law or the school's charter.

''(3) PRIORITY CRITERIA.—The criteria referred to in paragraph (1) are the following:

''(A) The State has demonstrated progress, in increasing the number of high quality charter schools that are held accountable in the terms of the schools' charters for meeting clear and measurable objectives for the educational progress of the students attending the schools, in the period prior to the period for which a State educational agency or eligible applicant applies for a grant under this part.

''(B) The State—

''(i) provides for 1 authorized public chartering agency that is not a local educational agency, such as a State chartering board, for each individual or entity seeking to operate a charter school pursuant to such State law; or

''(ii) in the case of a State in which local educational agencies are the only authorized public chartering agencies, allows for an appeals process for the denial of an application for a charter school.

''(C) The State ensures that each charter school has a high degree of autonomy over the charter school's budgets and expenditures.

''(f) AMOUNT CRITERIA.—In determining the amount of a grant to be awarded under this part to a State educational agency, the Secretary shall take into consideration the number of charter schools that are operating, or are approved to open, in the State.''.

(c) APPLICATIONS.—Section 10303 of such Act (20 U.S.C. 8063) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b)—

(A) in paragraph (1), by inserting ''and'' after the semicolon;

(B) by redesignating paragraph (2) as paragraph (3);

(C) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following:

''(2) describe how the State educational agency—

''(A) will inform each charter school in the State regarding—

''(i) Federal funds that the charter school is eligible to receive; and

''(ii) Federal programs in which the charter school may participate;

''(B) will ensure that each charter school in the State receives the charter school's commensurate share of Federal education funds that are allocated by formula each year, including during the first year of operation of the charter school; and

''(C) will disseminate best or promising practices of charter schools to each local educational agency in the State; and''; and

(D) in paragraph (3) (as redesignated by subparagraph (B))—

(i) in subparagraph (E), insert ''planning, program'' before ''design'';

(ii) in subparagraph (K), by striking ''and'' after the semicolon;

(iii) by redesignating subparagraph (L) as subparagraph (N); and

(iv) by inserting after subparagraph (K) the following:

''(L) a description of how a charter school that is considered a local educational agency under State law, or a local educational agency in which a charter school is located, will comply with sections 613(a)(5) and 613(e)(1)(B) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;

''(M) if the eligible applicant desires to use subgrant funds for dissemination activities under section 10302(c)(2)(C), a description of those activities and how those activities will involve charter schools and other public schools, local educational agencies, developers, and potential developers; and''; and

(2) in subsection (c), by striking ''10302(e)(1) or''; and

(3) in subsection (d)(1)—

(A) by striking ''subparagraphs (A) through (L)'' and inserting ''subparagraphs (A) through (N)''; and

(B) by striking ''subparagraphs (I), (J), and (K)'' and inserting ''subparagraphs (J), (K), and (N)''.

(d) ADMINISTRATION.—Section 10304 of such Act (20 U.S.C. 8064) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in paragraph (4), by striking ''and'' after the semicolon;

(B) in paragraph (5), by striking the period and inserting a semicolon; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

''(6) the number of high quality charter schools created under this part in the State; and

''(7) in the case of State educational agencies that propose to use grant funds to support dissemination activities under section 10302(c)(2)(C), the quality of those activities and the likelihood that those activities will improve student achievement.'';

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) in paragraph (5), by striking ''and'' after the semicolon;

(B) in paragraph (6), by striking the period and inserting ''; and''; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

''(7) in the case of an eligible applicant that proposes to use grant funds to support dissemination activities under section 10302(c)(2)(C), the quality of those activities and the likelihood that those activities will improve student achievement.'';

(3) in subsection (f)—

(A) in paragraph (1), by inserting before the period the following: '', except that the State educational agency may reserve not more than 10 percent of the grant funds to support dissemination activities described in paragraph (6)'';

(B) in paragraph (2), by inserting '', or to disseminate information about the charter school and successful practices in the charter school,'' after ''charter school'';

(C) in paragraph (5), by striking ''20 percent'' and inserting ''10 percent''; and

(D) by adding at the end the following:

''(6) DISSEMINATION.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—A charter school may apply for funds under this part, whether or not the charter school has applied for or received funds under this part for planning, program design, or implementation, to carry out the activities described in subparagraph (B) if the charter school has been in operation for at least 3 consecutive years and has demonstrated overall success, including—

''(i) substantial progress in improving student achievement;

''(ii) high levels of parent satisfaction; and

''(iii) the management and leadership necessary to overcome initial start-up problems and establish a thriving, financially viable charter school.

''(B) ACTIVITIES.—A charter school described in subparagraph (A) may use funds reserved under paragraph (1) to assist other schools in adapting the charter school's program (or certain aspects of the charter school's program), or to disseminate information about the charter school, through such activities as—

''(i) assisting other individuals with the planning and start-up of 1 or more new public schools, including charter schools, that are independent of the assisting charter school and the assisting charter school's developers, and that agree to be held to at least as high a level of accountability as the assisting charter school;

''(ii) developing partnerships with other public schools, including charter schools, designed to improve student performance in each of the schools participating in the partnership;

''(iii) developing curriculum materials, assessments, and other materials that promote increased student achievement and are based on successful practices within the assisting charter school; and

''(iv) conducting evaluations and developing materials that document the successful practices of the assisting charter school and that are designed to improve student performance in other schools.''.

(f) NATIONAL ACTIVITIES.—Section 10305 of such Act (20 U.S.C. 8065) is amended to read as follows:

''SEC. 10305. NATIONAL ACTIVITIES.

''(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall reserve for each fiscal year the greater of 5 percent or $5,000,000 of the amount appropriated to carry out this part, except that in no fiscal year shall the total amount so reserved exceed $8,000,000, to carry out the following activities:

''(1) To provide charter schools, either directly or through State educational agencies, with—

''(A) information regarding—

''(i) Federal funds that charter schools are eligible to receive; and

''(ii) other Federal programs in which charter schools may participate; and

''(B) assistance in applying for Federal education funds that are allocated by formula, including assistance with filing deadlines and submission of applications.

''(2) To provide for the completion of the 4-year national study (which began in 1995) of charter schools.

''(3) To provide for other evaluations or studies that include the evaluation of the impact of charter schools on student achievement, including information regarding—

''(A) students attending charter schools reported on the basis of race, age, disability, gender, limited English proficiency, and previous enrollment in public school; and

''(B) the professional qualifications of teachers within a charter school and the turnover of the teaching force.

''(4) To provide—

''(A) information to applicants for assistance under this part;

''(B) assistance to applicants for assistance under this part with the preparation of applications under section 10303;

''(C) assistance in the planning and startup of charter schools;

''(D) training and technical assistance to existing charter schools; and

''(E) for the dissemination to other public schools of best or promising practices in charter schools.

''(5) To provide (including through the use of 1 or more contracts that use a competitive bidding process) for the collection of information regarding the financial resources available to charter schools, including access to private capital, and to widely disseminate to charter schools any such relevant information and model descriptions of successful programs.

''(b) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to require charter schools to collect any data described in subsection (a).''.

(g) COMMENSURATE TREATMENT; RECORDS TRANSFER; PAPERWORK REDUCTION.—Part C of title X of such Act (20 U.S.C. 8061 et seq.) is amended—

(1) by redesignating sections 10306 and 10307 as sections 10310 and 10311, respectively; and

(2) by inserting after section 10305 the following:

''SEC. 10306. FEDERAL FORMULA ALLOCATION DURING FIRST YEAR AND FOR SUCCESSIVE ENROLLMENT EXPANSIONS.

''(a) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of the allocation to schools by the States or their agencies of funds under part A of title I, and any other Federal funds which the Secretary allocates to States on a formula basis, the Secretary and each State educational agency shall take such measures not later than 6 months after the date of enactment of the Charter School Expansion Act of 1998 as are necessary to ensure that every charter school receives the Federal funding for which the charter school is eligible not later than 5 months after the charter school first opens, notwithstanding the fact that the identity and characteristics of the students enrolling in that charter school are not fully and completely determined until that charter school actually opens. The measures similarly shall ensure that every charter school expanding its enrollment in any subsequent year of operation receives the Federal funding for which the charter school is eligible not later than 5 months after such expansion.

''(b) ADJUSTMENT AND LATE OPENINGS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The measures described in subsection (a) shall include provision for appropriate adjustments, through recovery of funds or reduction of payments for the succeeding year, in cases where payments made to a charter school on the basis of estimated or projected enrollment data exceed the amounts that the school is eligible to receive on the basis of actual or final enrollment data.

''(2) RULE.—For charter schools that first open after November 1 of any academic year, the State, in accordance with guidance provided by the Secretary and applicable Federal statutes and regulations, shall ensure that such charter schools that are eligible for the funds described in subsection (a) for such academic year have a full and fair opportunity to receive those funds during the charter schools' first year of operation.

''SEC. 10307. SOLICITATION OF INPUT FROM CHARTER SCHOOL OPERATORS.

''To the extent practicable, the Secretary shall ensure that administrators, teachers, and other individuals directly involved in the operation of charter schools are consulted in the development of any rules or regulations required to implement this part, as well as in the development of any rules or regulations relevant to charter schools that are required to implement part A of title I, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.), or any other program administered by the Secretary that provides education funds to charter schools or regulates the activities of charter schools.

''SEC. 10308. RECORDS TRANSFER.

''State educational agencies and local educational agencies, to the extent practicable, shall ensure that a student's records and, if applicable, a student's individualized education program as defined in section 602(11) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1401(11)), are transferred to a charter school upon the transfer of the student to the charter school, and to another public school upon the transfer of the student from a charter school to another public school, in accordance with applicable State law.

''SEC. 10309. PAPERWORK REDUCTION.

''To the extent practicable, the Secretary and each authorized public chartering agency shall ensure that implementation of this part results in a minimum of paperwork for any eligible applicant or charter school.''.

(h) PART C DEFINITIONS.—Section 10310(1) of such Act (as redesignated by subsection (e)(1)) (20 U.S.C. 8066(1)) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (A), by striking ''an enabling statute'' and inserting ''a specific State statute authorizing the granting of charters to schools'';

(2) in subparagraph (H), by inserting ''is a school to which parents choose to send their children, and that'' before ''admits'';

(3) in subparagraph (J), by striking ''and'' after the semicolon;

(4) in subparagraph (K), by striking the period and inserting ''; and''; and

(5) by adding at the end the following:

''(L) has a written performance contract with the authorized public chartering agency in the State that includes a description of how student performance will be measured in charter schools pursuant to State assessments that are required of other schools and pursuant to any other assessments mutually agreeable to the authorized public chartering agency and the charter school.''.

(i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—Section 10311 of such Act (as redesignated by subsection (e)(1)) (20 U.S.C. 8067) is amended by striking ''$15,000,000 for fiscal year 1995'' and inserting ''$100,000,000 for fiscal year 1999''.

(j) TITLE XIV DEFINITIONS.—Section 14101 of such Act (20 U.S.C. 8801) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (14), by inserting '', including a public elementary charter school,'' after ''residential school''; and

(2) in paragraph (25), by inserting '', including a public secondary charter school,'' after ''residential school''.

(k) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The matter preceding paragraph (1) of section 10304(e) of such Act (20 U.S.C. 8064(e)) is amended by striking ''10306(1)'' and inserting ''10310(1)''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. RIGGS) and the gentleman from California (Mr. MARTINEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The gentleman recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. RIGGS).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 2616.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, it is truly a pleasure to be here on the House floor today to vote on H.R. 2616, the Charter School Expansion Act of 1998. It represents the end of a rather lengthy and somewhat legislatively arduous journey, but I want my colleagues to know at the outset that the legislation before us represents as fine a bipartisan, bicameral effort as we have seen in this particular Congress.

It also represents, I think, a very important Federal education reform initiative, and I would hope that my colleagues will bear those words in mind, particularly as we enter or get closer to the November election.

We are clearly today in, and how do I put this politely, the election or political spin cycle, and I understand that it is part and parcel of our political process to say and do things for political advantage, but it is simply not true to represent that this Republican-led Congress is a ''do-nothing'' Congress that has produced no significant educational legislative achievements, and I cite this particular bill.

This bill represents the realization, the achievement, of one of the President's primary education proposals. It embodies a request that he made of the Congress at the State of the Union address last January where he called on us to put Federal taxpayer funding, start-up or seed money, if you will, for the creation of more charter schools, these are public schools of choice for parents and children, and he called on us to enact this legislation that we have before us today. So we have made good on the President's request in a bipartisan fashion, and at the same time, I want my colleagues to understand that this particular initiative represents a very key part of the Republican education legislative agenda.

We have worked hard over the last 2 years of this Congress on legislation raising teacher competence, requiring students to meet rigorous standards, and allowing more parental choice in education. We hope and believe that this will result in greater, higher student achievement, better pupil performance, and after all, those are the results that everybody wants for our young people and our education system.

I also believe that this legislation responds to a growing public demand on the part of our fellow Americans for more choice in education. I personally am very heartened by recent public opinion polls that show that for the first time in surveying history, a majority of Americans now favor allowing parents to send their children to any public, private or church-related school. They also favor allowing the government, that is to say we, the taxpayers, to pay all or part of the tuition at a private school, and that is according to a poll conducted in June by the Gallup organization for Phi Delta Kappa, a professional association of educators.

In that poll, 51 percent, so slightly more than a majority, now support the concept of expanded and greater parental choice in education. And that poll is not the only one that shows that growing public support for more choice in education; more choice for parents and guardians who, after all, are the consumers of education. And what we are trying to do here is fundamentally change the educational paradigm in this country by shifting the focus in our education system from the providers of education to the consumers of education.

I say that and then hasten to add that we have made great strides in the higher education bill and in our literacy legislation to strengthen the teaching profession, because as I and Speaker GINGRICH and many other people have said, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GOODLING), we believe that teaching is truly a missionary occupation. It is a calling. It is a high calling, a noble calling. Therefore, we want to do all that we can to strengthen America's teachers to prepare them for an exciting, challenging and rewarding career in the classroom.

I think we have done that, again, on a number of legislative fronts, bearing in mind that wonderful saying that a teacher can affect eternity because he or she never knows where their influence on our young people might end.

So I am very pleased to be on the floor to support this legislation, and as I go on to conclude my remarks, I also want to thank a number of people who were instrumental in working on this legislation. The principal author, as is referred to in the other body, the Senate Chamber, was Senator COATS. We were delighted to work closely with him and his staff in moving this bill through the Senate.

Denzel McGuire seated next to me, she is an extraordinarily capable member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce staff who has been supported by her colleagues on the staff in doing a great job on this legislation, and the rest of our very ambitious education legislative agenda in this particular Congress.

I was delighted to work very closely with my good friend, my classmate from the 102nd Congress, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. ROEMER), in crafting this bipartisan legislation; and we would not be on the floor today if it were not for the support of that legislation by my good friend, the gentleman from California (Mr. MARTINEZ). All of us, I believe, have found common ground by forwarding public education reform through charter schools, and as the result of the input and contribution of all of these different people, this legislation, this bipartisan bill, is even a stronger piece of legislation.

Now, I want to point out that the charter school movement is something that is occurring out there, across the land. We are beginning to see the first charter schools here in the District of Columbia chartered by the District of Columbia public school system, but that is something that started years ago in the heartland of America.

In 1991, Minnesota became the first State to authorize charter schools. And today, just 7 years later, we have 32 States with charter school laws on the books, along with, as I just mentioned, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. We also have now today some 700 charter schools serving approximately 170,000 children across the country, and that is more than the entire student population of Rhode Island.

Charter schools, as I mentioned, are on the cutting edge of education reform in public education. They are a fascinating experiment in educational innovation. They are deregulated, decentralized, public schools that are largely autonomous from any governing body. They are schools that I would argue are much closer than most public schools to the constituency that they are intended to serve; that is, parents and the children, the children who would attend or matriculate at those schools.

The early reports about charter schools are very encouraging. They indicate that administrators and teachers are delighted that they are being freed up from overregulation, burdensome regulation. The teachers are more free to innovate in the classroom.

Many charter schools have adopted longer school days, longer school years, so that they are going above and beyond what they are required in terms of the total number of instructional hours, what they are required to offer by State law.

The bottom line here, in terms of the real improvement to the education system, is that students are eager to learn at charter schools, and parents are thrilled about the results. We have seen a correlation in America, American public education, over the last few years, between increased parental involvement in education and a corresponding increase in the achievement of their children.

We think that is very, very encouraging, and it is something that we here in the Congress want to continue to strengthen and reinforce.

Since 1994, when Congress authorized the National Charter Schools as part of the authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and established a Federal taxpayer funding stream to assist charter schools with their start-up costs, and incidentally we have learned that those start-up costs are the greatest obstacle that charter school operators or charter school developers face in trying to start a charter school, we have learned a great deal about how the Federal Government can best support the charter school movement, and we hope that those lessons are incorporated into and represented by H.R. 2616, which responds to the concerns of students, parents, teachers, charter school operators, some of the educational experts that testified before our committee, and also represents the Department of Education's first-year report of their 4-year study on charter schools.

The highlights of our bill are as follows: We, first of all, meet the President's funding level request that he made in his State of the Union and in his subsequent budget proposal to Congress by increasing the authorization for Federal taxpayer funding for charter school start-ups from $15 million to $100 million, and we articulate a goal of trying to move the Congress and the country in the direction of 3,000 charter schools by the start of the new millennium; again, a goal that President Clinton has proposed for the country.

We drive over 90 percent of the Federal charter school money down to the State and local levels to establish more charter schools in those States that have strong charter school laws on the books.

We direct this money. We give priority to those States that provide a high degree of fiscal autonomy for charter schools, that can demonstrate progress in increasing the number of high-quality charter schools that provide for strong academic accountability, and the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. ROEMER) was a stickler on the accountability provisions of the bill, and that provide for more than one chartering agency in the State.

We also try to ensure that charter schools will be treated on an equal basis, that they will be on an equal footing with other public schools when qualifying and competing for Federal categorical aid for the various federally-authorized and federally-funded categorical education programs.

Lastly, we direct the Secretary to help by disseminating information on how charter schools can access private capital to supplement their taxpayer funding.

We permit States to reserve 10 percent of their Federal grant money to provide assistance to established charter schools with a history of improving student performance so that those charter schools can help other fledgling charter schools in that State replicate their academic programs.

We ensure that individuals directly involved with the operation of charter schools are consulted in the development of any new Federal rules or regulations pertaining to charter schools.

We improve upon existing law by sending more money, as I mentioned earlier, directly to charter schools to ensure that parents and teachers have the maximum amount of Federal resources and flexibility available to them to start up high-quality charter schools.

This really is an outstanding bill with strong bipartisan support across the aisle, and I urge my colleagues to vote for H.R. 2616.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1445

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this morning, as the gentleman from California (Mr. RIGGS) has outlined, we are considering H.R. 2616, the Charter School Expansion Act of 1998, and from his talk Members probably see the enthusiasm that he has for this particular bill, and maybe it should have been named the Frank Riggs Charter School Expansion Act of 1998.

But I continue to have reservations about charter schools. I do support this bill, however. I wholeheartedly believe in the need for innovation, for consideration of new approaches to education. But I am concerned about efforts to provide an unfettered growth in the number of charter schools. I really believe that we have to take a step back and evaluate whether charter schools are fulfilling the goals of using the flexibility and creativity that we have provided to provide high quality education.

Charter schools are relatively new. The oldest are only 6 years old. Much of the information we have about these schools is anecdotal. We lack concrete, objective data on their success or failure. However, I am glad to see that in H.R. 2616 it has been significantly scaled back from the version that originally passed the House, and that the language that I was able to incorporate in the legislation has been championed by the Senate in the bill before us today.

One of those provisions requires a description of how local educational agencies, that is a charter school or that has a charter school in its district will comply the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

There have been reports, including information provided at our hearings, on several serious problems regarding the admission and provision of services to children with disabilities. This language would reaffirm a charter school's responsibility under IDEA, and compel it to plan for compliance with that statute.

The other provision requires that in the evaluation of the impact of charter schools on students' achievement, the information provided on students attending those schools be reported on the race, age, disability, gender, limited English proficiency, and previous enrollment in public schools. I believe that will go a long way towards providing the specific information about the children being served by charter schools and the successes they are experiencing.

As many know, I am cautious yet supportive of the concept of charter schools and their possible impacts on the larger public school system as a whole. I therefore support this legislation before us and its passage, but I do have a question I would like to ask the chairman, if he would indulge me.

Mr. Chairman, this is the last piece of legislation that is scheduled to come from our subcommittee. I was wondering, there is another bill that we worked on very hard in a bipartisan manner, the Reading Excellence Act, that came out of our subcommittee.

I understand that legislation is at the desk now. I was wondering why we are not taking it up, and if there is any possibility to take that up now. I imagine, since we did the Native Americans under a unanimous consent agreement, that we might ask unanimous consent to take that bill up.

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

Mr. MARTINEZ. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, as the gentleman well knows, I need to defer to the chairman of the full committee, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GOODLING), on any question involving unanimous consent.

I can tell the gentleman that it is my understanding that we hope that the literacy bill, otherwise known as the Reading Excellence Act, will be incorporated into the omnibus funding measure, the continuing resolution, that should be before this body either later today or tomorrow, over the weekend, but will certainly be, obviously, for purposes of funding the Federal Government, it will be enacted and passed through the House and will be enacted into law in the near future.

Mr. MARTINEZ. I am very glad to hear that. As the gentleman knows, the Senate passed it overwhelmingly. It would be a shame if we adjourned without taking that piece of legislation up, since it is an identical bill, and that is all we have to do is take it up and pass it for it to be signed into law. The President has already indicated he would sign it.

Mr. RIGGS. Yes.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. ROEMER).

(Mr. ROEMER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROEMER. Mr. Speaker, first of all, I just want to say that oftentimes this institution is targeted for high criticism because we engage in too much finger-pointing, not enough cooperation, and not enough bipartisanship.

That certainly can be true on occasion, but I think today the success of this charter school legislation points toward another side of the story, and points to one where, for a bold, new, exciting idea that can influence maybe the single most important issue in our Nation today, education, this bill typifies bipartisan support and cooperation, bicameral support and cooperation, bold and innovative ideas that have come from the local and the State level, and from some of our think tanks to this institution here.

I think it really reaffirms what we can get done on the most important problem in America when we join hands and work together.

I want to give high praise and credit to a number of people. First of all, I want to give credit to my friend, the gentleman from California (Mr. RIGGS), when we started working with Denzel McGuire and on my staff Gina Mahony back in April of 1997 to formulate how to work together, the Republicans and Democrats, to get this charter school bill crafted and get it through our committee.

I want to thank the gentleman from California (Mr. MARTINEZ), who had some hesitations and initial concerns about this legislation, where now I think, with some caveats and cautionary remarks, he is supportive.

I want to thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GOODLING) and some people on the Senate side, Mr. Speaker. Senator COATS, a colleague of mine from the great State of Indiana, who is retiring, has worked and championed this legislation on the Senate side, along with Senator LIEBERMAN, Senator LANDRIEU, and Senator BOB KERREY. It probably could not have found its way through the mazes of the United States Senate had it not been for that bipartisan cooperation, so there is a lot of credit that needs to go around to bring this truly historic legislation through this body.

Also, Mr. Speaker, the President of the United States, President Clinton, has been an advocate of charter schools, and has talked about these for a long, long time through his legislative career.

I also need to give credit to the Democratic Leadership Council, run by Al Fromm and Will Marshall, who have talked about schools in our Democratic Party for a decade. We have had a great deal of debate in our Caucus over how to move this idea in a positive way, with promise for our educational system, forward, investing in our public school system, investing in our teachers, and thereby helping our children and helping our economy and our businesses compete.

That is what this bill help us accomplish. That is the overriding goal with this legislation today, to move this public education system boldly forward, and help our businesses compete by getting students that can compete in a global economy today through high school and college.

Mr. Speaker, as we have worked on this legislation from April, 1997, onward, I want to tell the Members why I am a supporter of charter schools. First of all, they provide an alternative to the traditional public school system. I am a very strong supporter of public school education in America.

Yet, some of it is not working well enough today. We have too many savage inequalities between some of our inner city schools and some of our suburban schools. We need to work on discipline and safety in our schools. We need to reward and help teachers with professional development and resources, so they can continue to be the heroes in our classes today.

Yes, we need charter schools. We need charter schools so we have bold experiments to look at ways to get

some of these schools away from some of the regulations and burdens of Federal regulations handed down to the local governments and our local schools, and free them up with some new ideas to experiment with the curriculum, to experiment with the length of the school year, to experiment with the length of the school day; to really drive reform and drive change into some of our public schools. That is one of the reasons.

Secondly, I am for strengthening accountability for academic achievement. Certainly some of our schools, many of our schools, most of our schools in America today are performing very well. Some of them are not, and we need to increase the accountability on these schools. We need to make sure that when a school is not performing that there are consequences. That consequence will happen to charter schools. They can and will be shut down. That is not a bad thing. That can be a very good thing.

Mr. Speaker, thirdly, we need to inject innovation and reform into the public school system. When we see charter schools, and even used in the right fashion, they are not the silver bullet. No Democrat is going to claim, or Republican, I hope, is going to claim that there is a single silver bullet and a panacea to solve the hard work of fixing and reforming and boldly moving forward our education system in America today. There are a host of things we need to do, from more parental involvement to increased safety and discipline to, yes, charter schools.

But when we try charter schools with a host of these other things, such as they are doing in Chicago, Illinois, we see test scores go up, we see absenteeism go down, we see parents get more and more involved in the system. We see hopefully less threat from outside the schoolroom and in the neighborhoods. It takes work to make our public school system work. That is what we all need to do today as Americans.

Mr. Speaker, I think most people know that charter schools have been out there for 6 or 7 years. We now have in this academic year 1,129 charter schools serving 250,000 students in America today. Thirty-four States, Mr. Speaker, have passed charter school legislation, and I hope, and I think we all hope, that all 50 States will move towards embracing charter schools.

This legislation increases the authorization level for charter schools, and I want to commend the appropriators for increasing the appropriation this year to $100 million for charter schools throughout the country.

□ 1500

This legislation also provides assistance to charter schools in ensuring that they receive information about their eligibility for Federal education programs, as well as their commensurate share of title I and IDEA funding. Many charter schools have not known that they were even eligible for these funds and have had some kind of difficulty obtaining these funds. I am pleased, I am proud to say that this bill provides assistance in those areas.

This bill also contains funding for high-performing charter schools so they can disseminate, they can share these worthwhile practices with other schools.

One of the reasons I support charter schools is because I think they will have a ripple effect into the traditional public school system. And, yes, we are seeing results of that too, Mr. Speaker. The charter schools office at Central Michigan University is already saying they are seeing a secondary ripple effect into the public school system from public charter schools. So, we are seeing progress, we are seeing hope, we are seeing reform through this bold innovation.

Again, I want to close by quoting Will Rogers, Mr. Speaker. He once said, ''You can be on the right track, but if you are not moving fast enough, you are going to get run over.'' I think the American people want us to move down the right track on reforming public education, to invest in it, to care passionately about our children in these schools, to work together, Democrats and Republicans, and to make sure that we are working with our business community investing in better vocational and technical skills.

But I think today, instead of the finger-pointing and the jeering, instead of the critiques that we see about this institution not getting enough done, today with charter school legislation we are accomplishing a lot for America.

Mr. Speaker, I salute the institution in a bipartisan, bicameral way for this success.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. VENTO).

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. MARTINEZ) for yielding me this time.

For most who know me, some 20 years ago, for 10 years I taught, and I consider it one of the most important roles that any of us in our society can aspire to. But I am concerned about this bill, the amendments to the Community Design Charter School Act.

Make no mistake about it, I support charter schools. In fact, I call my colleagues' attention to the fact that the City Academy, the first charter school in the Nation, existed and was developed in my neighborhood community on the east side of Saint Paul where I hail from. We opened our doors there in 1992 to 35 students.

The State of Minnesota, of course, has been a center for this under Governor Rudy Perpich, governor at that time. He instituted a Statewide program that, in fact, capitalized on this. But this legislation, which I voted against when it was considered in the House initially, had some fundamental flaws, all of which I think have not been cured.

This is, of course, a case I think of symbolism over substance. This measure authorizes the use of funds for planning, design, and initial implementation of the charter schools. In other words, the funds allocated in this legislation are intended to help with start-up of the schools. This ignores, of course, the needs of districts such as mine and States such as mine which already have strong charter school systems in place.

When the Academy opened in 1992, the first charter school in our Nation, they were setting up folding chairs and tables to conduct classes. The school has worked hard since then to acquire the necessary supplies and equipment needed for fully functioning classrooms. But, nevertheless, they are struggling.

As a supporter of charter schools, I understand the importance of appropriating funds to innovative schools to assist them in covering initial expenses, but also in terms of maintaining their operations. States like Minnesota are struggling their best to support rational innovation; however, equitable funding for up-and-running schools are shortchanged in this particular program. We tried an amendment on the floor and we were not able to change that.

The proponents of this legislation claim they are going to give school districts more autonomy. But the bill appears to shift the fiscal control from local entities to a State authority. That is the language of the amendments. Local schools have too little to say in how grant money for charter schools is distributed in this program. Rather, the State education agency or its equivalent is given the power of being the fiscal agency or funding source. This clearly fragments local control. This is contrary to Minnesota's success, where greater support comes from the local school district than from the State and Federal government combined!

Additionally, this legislation directs the Department of Education to fund one or more contracts to help charter schools obtain access to private capital. This is, clear and simple, I understand, something that the administration favored. But I am hesitant myself to advocate using Federal dollars as seed money and turning a school entity into a fund-raising operation. Are the Federal dollars, U.S. taxpayer funds going to pay for the bingo prizes?

If there is not enough nonprofit initiative to fund schools or charter schools, or enough gumption to obtain the funds, should this be a Federal role? I do not think so. Charter schools are still experimental in nature. Promoting funding specifically for schools that have a high degree of autonomy over their budgets and expenditures without sound accountability is a real problem.

Funding should be awarded on the school's ability to demonstrate they are indeed are able to achieve success

in educating our students in terms of educational measurement, or testing which demonstrates accountability.

Mr. Speaker, let me reiterate that I am not against charter schools. On the contrary, I want to be sure that the local authorities that we elect to provide most of the funding for local education, that such ideas are models, and that equitable and efficient means to assure their success are available and reject detours on the way to such innovation.

Let us reward those who are already fighting the fight, those that have earned the right for Federal support rather than promoting a measure which superimposes some Washington, D.C. idea of what a charter school is. That is what this legislation does. Minnesota has shown us how to do it and the Federal policy-makers still cannot seem to get it right.

No doubt this legislation will pass today. It's certainly improved over the House passed version, and the bill authorizes more appropriation over the 1994 original charter school Federal law that I optimistically supported. Hopefully, as this new policy is implemented, we will note the concerns I've voiced and they may be corrected in the administrative implementation. I reluctantly support this measure today and am hopeful that proper oversight will persist regarding the changes and policy to accomplish the good intentions I've heard voiced today.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, just to respond to the concerns of the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. VENTO), we have tried to be responsive to that particular issue by adopting Senate language that will allow the States to reserve up to 10 percent of their allocation to help fund existing successful charter schools, so they can continue and expand their operations.

They can also act, potentially, as a template for other charter schools in that community and in that State, so that those new charter school startups can hopefully replicate the success of that existing charter school. So, we have tried to be responsive to that.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. FORBES).

(Mr. FORBES asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2616, the Charter Schools Amendments Act of 1998. There is no more compelling issue in my mind than the future of our children, and I think most of us would surely agree. But our efforts to improve K through 12 education can and must be an important contribution to this Nation's future and the Federal Government needs to pay more close attention to this important need.

Sadly, American students by any measure are ranking much lower than their peers around the world in math and science performance. It is critical that we pay attention to much-needed reforms and help the school boards and the States improve K through 12 education, and the Federal Government should play a much larger role in this priority.

I want to take a moment though and also commend the chairman of the subcommittee, the gentleman from California (Mr. RIGGS), for has leadership on these issues. I am sad to say that he will be moving on to other challenges at the conclusion of this year, but his leadership on this important issue is to be commended and I thank him.

The Charter Schools Amendments Act strengthens our public charter school programs, without a doubt. I for one am a product of the Long Island Public School system, one of the finest in the country, and the New York State Public University system. So, I understand and appreciate the dedicated professionals who have defined the success of our public school systems.

But we must also recognize that public schools are not always meeting the grade. They are not always getting the job done. And this charter schools legislation is critical. It allows, frankly, parents the freedom to choose the schools based on the best educational environment for their children.

The bill is about giving parents educational choices and putting them at the top of the list when it comes to making decisions about what is best for their children's future and their children's education.

But we must also allow other approaches to improving K through 12 education. Our children need a safe and clean learning environment, and I support providing Federal funds to finance the repair and modernization of public schools, for instance.

I support proposals to hire the 100,000 qualified new teachers to reduce class size and eliminate overcrowding. And I support voluntary national testing so our students' performance can be measured against other students across the regions from different parts of the country.

Recently, we made further progress by passing the Dollars to the Classroom Act, again another important tool in this effort to improve K through 12 education. The Classroom Act would pump $2.74 billion directly into our classrooms, another important part of this effort.

We must make this commitment. Congress and the Federal Government have an obligation to help improve K through 12 education and to allow our children to be competitive in the global economy and in the competitive 21st century.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. CUNNINGHAM) my immediate predecessor as the chairman of the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Youth and Families.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to say what a fantastic job that the gentleman from California (Mr. RIGGS) has done. He will be leaving this Congress at the end of the year, and so I do not have to say nice things about him because he is going to be back as chairman. But I will say it because of what a good job he has done.

California has taken the lead in charter schools, and has over the last 5, 6 years. I would like to also say what we have done, with my colleagues' support on the other side, with the charter schools in the D.C. bill, the Washington, D.C. bill.

The schools here are dismal in this particular district that we are sitting in. The new school superintendent came out in support of charter schools and we fully funded them. One of the problems was some of the money was taken out of public schools. Our position was, with the gentleman from California (Mr. RIGGS) and myself and the chairman of the committee, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. TAYLOR), that the schools are doing so well, let us not penalize them. Let us reward them for the good work that they are starting to do in the City of Washington, D.C.

So, we were able to fully fund the public schools to, add the money for the charter schools. We had 20,000 students to beg for summer school. First time. And it is not because they had to go to summer school; it is because they wanted to go to summer school. They wanted to learn.

I would like to thank the gentleman from California (Mr. RIGGS) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Chairman GOODLING) and the committee for that good work, not only in charter schools themselves but in Washington, D.C. They are starting to turn the corner. We have a long way to go. And I beg my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, let us stay focused on it.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume for the purposes of closing debate.

One thing I want to say that follows on what the gentleman from California (Mr. CUNNINGHAM) just said and that is that we are seeing a tremendous and I believe pent-up demand for more choice, more selection, if you will, in public education. We are beginning to see waiting lists created in charter schools around the country.

Our legislation stipulates that children must be served on a first come, first served basis with a lottery system, if there are more students desiring to get into a particular school than there are classroom spaces. And that first come, first served system includes children with learning disabilities.

In fact, we have seen charter schools started in many communities around the country for the express and sole purpose of serving children with learning disabilities and special education needs.

□ 1515

So the charter school movement, again, is very exciting.

In closing, I want to recognize and thank Gina Mahony from the staff of the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. ROEMER), who was a very able counterpart to Denzel McGuire, and we like that Irish-American connection.

Again, I urge my colleagues to support this bill. It will infuse more competition and more choice into the public education system and make that system less monolithic and more responsive to parents and the needs of their children. I urge passage of the legislation.

Mr. GOODLING. Mr. Speaker, today we consider H.R. 2616 is amended by the Senate, the ''Charter Schools Expansion Act of 1998''. H.R. 2616 is a result of extensive efforts by Mr. RIGGS and Mr. ROEMER to craft a charter school bill that enjoys broad bipartisan support.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize Mr. RIGGS for his fine leadership as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Youth, and Families. Mr. RIGGS has had an enormously successful tenure as Subcommittee Chairman.

He has successfully crafted numerous education bills, including but by no means limited to the charter school bill we are considering today. I regret that Mr. RIGGS has decided to retire this year as his tireless energy and dedication have been a wonderful asset to the Committee. I am sure that I speak for all the Members of the Committee in saying that we will miss his leadership and devotion in crafting innovative legislation and bettering the lives of children all across this country. We wish him well in his future endeavors.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Senator COATS for successfully spearheading efforts to get a charter school bill passed in senate.

We passed H.R. 2616 last October with an overwhelming bipartisan vote. The Senate recently amended H.R. 2616 and sent it back to us for a final vote. I am pleased to say that when the House votes for H.R. 2616 today, we will be able to send the bill to the President for signature.

As we stand here on the House floor today, about 170,000 children are being educated in 700 charter schools across the nation. Clearly, charter schools are no longer a fringe idea, rather they represent an integral component of public education reform.

H.R. 2616 builds upon what we have learned about charter schools, since 1994 when Congress established a Federal funding stream to assist charter schools with start-up costs—the planning, design and initial operation costs involved with starting-up a charter school.

This bill responds to lessons we have learned over the last four years, the concerns expressed in five hearings we have held on charter schools and the findings of various public and private studies on charter schools. It represents a well-thought-out approach to improving the existing charter school statute and to spurring the creation of more charter schools.

By all accounts, the number one concern of charter school operators is a lack of start-up funds. H.R. 2616 addresses that concern on several fronts: it increases the authorization level, it drives more Federal dollars directly down to locals to establish high quality charter schools, it ensures that charter schools receive their fair share of the Federal dollar and it directs the Secretary to disseminate information on how charter schools can access financial resources, including private capital.

Charter schools have made great strides in just a few short years. The strengths of charter schools lie in their academic performance, parental involvement and teacher satisfaction. This bill ensures that these innovative schools will have the maximum amount of assistance to help them keep up the good work.

In addition, this bill not only allows charter schools to keep up the good work but also encourages charter schools to share their knowledge on best practices with other public schools. Under the bill, States may provide assistance to established charter schools, with a proven record of improving student performance, who wish to replicate their successful academic programs so that more children may benefit from their innovative curriculums and teaching techniques.

In closing, I would like to emphasize that we have before us today a bipartisan bill that contributes greatly to the charter school movement and urge my Colleagues to vote for H.R. 2616.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. RIGGS) that the House suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendment to the bill, H.R. 2616.

The question was taken.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5 of rule I and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF INTENTION TO OFFER RESOLUTION RAISING QUESTION OF PRIVILEGES OF THE HOUSE

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House rule IX, clause 1, I rise to give notice of my intent to present a question of personal privilege of the House.

The form of the resolution is as follows:

A resolution, in accordance with House rule IX, clause 1, expressing the sense of the House that its integrity has been impugned because the anti-dumping provisions of the Trade and Tariff Act of 1930, (Subtitle B of Title VII) have not been expeditiously enforced;

Whereas the current financial crisis in Asia, Russia, and other regions have involved massive depreciation in the currencies of several key steel-producing and steel-consuming countries, along with a collapse in the domestic demand for steel in these countries;

Whereas the crises have generated and will continue to generate surges in United States imports of steel, both from the countries whose currencies have depreciated in the crisis and from steel-producing countries that are no longer able to export steel to the countries in economic crisis;

Whereas United States imports of finished steel mill products from Asian steel-producing countries, the People's Republic of China, Japan, Korea, India, Taiwan, Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia, have increased by 79 percent in the first 5 months of 1998 compared to the same period in 1997;

Whereas year-to-date imports of steel from Russia now exceed the record import levels of 1997, and steel imports from Russia and Ukraine now approach 2,500,000 net tons;

Whereas foreign government trade restrictions and private restraints of trade distort international trade and investment patterns and result in burdens on United States commerce, including absorption of a disproportionate share of diverted steel trade;

Whereas the European Union, for example, despite also being a major economy, in 1997 imported only one-tenth as much finished steel products from Asian steel-producing countries as the United States did and has restricted imports of steel from the Commonwealth of Independent States, including Russia;

Whereas the United States is simultaneously facing a substantial increase in steel imports from countries within the Commonwealth of Independent States, including Russia, caused in part by the closure of Asian markets;

Whereas there is a well-recognized need for improvements in the enforcement of United States trade laws to provide an effective response to such situations:

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the House of Representatives that the House of Representatives calls upon the President of the United States to:

Number 1, take all necessary measures to respond to the surge of steel imports resulting from the financial crises in Asia, Russia, and other regions, and for other purposes;

Number 2, to pursue enhanced enforcement of United States trade laws with respect to the surge of steel imports into the United States, using all remedies available under those laws including offsetting duties, quantitative restraints, and other authorized remedial measures as appropriate;

Number 3, pursue with all tools at his disposal a more equitable sharing of the burden of accepting imports of finished steel products from Asia and the countries within the Commonwealth of Independent States;

Number 4, establish a task force within the executive branch with responsibility for closely monitoring United States imports of steel; and

Number 5, report to the Congress by no later than January 5, of the coming year, 1999, with a comprehensive plan for responding to this import surge, including ways of limiting its deleterious effects on employment, prices, and investment in the United States steel industry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SUNUNU). Under rule IX, a resolution offered from the floor by a Member