parents and the teachers and the principals and the administrators back home are in a better position to make those decisions than bureaucrats here in Washington. All they want to do is send billions more to fund those bureaucrats, to fund the big government, instead of sending the money back home.

We have tried to make progress over the years, but the defenders of the status quo who love more government and bigger government and more bureaucrats at the expense of the children and the families, all they can do is say ''no'' and divert attention.

Education savings accounts, empowering parents with the flexibility to make the decisions best for their children passed this House. Vetoed by the President. Opportunity scholarships for the students of the Washington, DC school system. To the chagrin of the people on the other side who say it is taking money away, no, in fact, it was not. That is not true. It was money over and above what we were sending to the Washington, DC school system to go to the poorest students who were trapped in the horror of the Washington, DC school system. An opportunity for 2,000 students. The President vetoed it.

More money to the classroom. Ninety-five percent of the Federal money that now finds its way too often in Washington, we were sending it back home to Staten Island and Brooklyn, to the classroom where it is needed most. What happened? A threatened veto. Killed by the President in the White House.

Who can argue with empowering parents, sending more money to the classroom, providing flexibility for local teachers and administrators and local school districts? I will tell you who can argue with that; the people who wanted to divert attention away from doing the people's business, divert attention away from the fact that all they want to do is make the government in Washington bigger and bigger, and take the freedom and liberty away from the people back home in Staten Island and across this country.

I believe strongly that the American people are tired of that record and want to see tax relief and better education options.

EDUCATION POLICY THAT MAKES SENSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, as we near the final days of the legislative session, I rise to express my real disappointment with the lack of attention that this Republican Congress has given to public education. Democrats have, month after month, put forth education initiatives to improve our public schools and to provide opportunities for all of our students. We offered an amendment to reduce class size in primary schools to 18 children per class. It was opposed by Republicans. On two occasions we put forth legislation to allow local school authorities to build new schools and to modernize classrooms. We were not talking about Federal authorities, but we were talking about local school authorities to be able to build and modernize these classrooms. These initiatives were rejected by the Republicans.

These are only two examples of the long list of important education initiatives that Republicans have defeated this year. Even worse, they continue to propose counterproductive policies, such as school vouchers and tax incentives for private and religious schools. These efforts undermine public education.

Now, we know that a strong educational system provides students with the necessary background, skills and training to survive and to be productive members of this society and the world community.

We have also learned that education is the best form of crime prevention. A California-based think tank recently released a study showing that crime prevention efforts are more cost effective than building prisons. Of all crime prevention methods, education is the most cost effective method of crime prevention. Yet, rather than invest in education, Republicans would have us funnel more money into prisons.

We see money flowing into sources such as constructing new prisons, as if we need to prepare for the inevitable incarceration of our children. There are now plans on the drawing board to construct prisons within the next 10 to 12 years counting on children who are now 10 years old to fill them.

This is wrong. In fact, the lack of investment in education actually contributes to the enormous incarceration rate. Nineteen percent of adult inmates are completely illiterate and 40 percent are functionally illiterate. Nationwide, over 70 percent of all people entering state correctional facilities have not completed high school. In our juvenile justice system, youth at a median age of 15 read on average at the same level as most nine-year-olds.

So it is imperative that we begin to refocus on education and building schools, instead of building prisons. With children attending classes in trailers, being subjected to unheated and sometimes unsafe buildings, or packed together 35 in a classroom, it is no wonder that too many students are not learning and receiving the healthy start they need to succeed in the competitive fast-paced working world.

Education is the key to our investment in the future. We should be constructing new classrooms, building after school facilities and strengthening important programs like preschool and after school programs, not concentrating on more centers for incarceration. By attending to students' academic, physical and emotional needs, we can prevent the experiences of neglect and abandonment that can lead to misbehavior and even criminal activity.

Investing in education makes sense. It makes sense for our national budget, it makes sense for the safety of our communities and it makes sense for the well-being of our children. It is my hope that in the final hours of negotiation and debate, that this Congress can pull together and give the remaining public education initiatives the priority they deserve. We owe at least this much to our students.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DAVIS of Virginia addressed the House His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time previously allotted to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. DAVIS).

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

There was no objection.

SCANDAL IN WASHINGTON CONCERNING PUBLIC EDUCATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about scandal in Washington. The scandal in Washington really is what the Democrats and the former majority party did to public education in 40 years.

In 40 years, when they controlled the House and the other body, they nearly destroyed public education. If you ask anyone, any teacher, any high school principal or elementary principal in our public schools what is wrong with our schools today, they will tell you, very simply, it is not just a need for more teachers and better teachers, it is a question of some fundamentals.

We have lost control of our classrooms, they will tell you. There is no discipline in the classroom. Why is there no discipline? Because the liberal policies of the other side for 40 years has eroded the principles of discipline, the power to the teacher, the power to the local school board, the power to the parent. That is one of the major problems facing our public schools today. So the scandal is what they have done to public education in the United States.

Let me tell you about the other scandal that they have committed in education. The scandal is they have created a bureaucracy that is unparalleled

in any civilization in education. Now, listen to this quote from Investor's Daily, just an observation they made: ''School funding in 40 years has quadrupled. Teachers' salaries have only increased during that same period 43 percent.''

Teachers only account now for barely half the personnel in public schools. That is because they have built an unparalleled bureaucracy. That bureaucracy starts right here in Washington, DC. There are 5,000, count them, full-time employees in the Department of Education; 3,600 of them are in Washington, DC.

Now, we may need a Department of Education, I do not want to get into that debate, but I do not have in my school district teachers who are making the $50,000 to $100,000 that these 5,000 bureaucrats are making in the Federal Department of Education.

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This is about control, this is about bureaucracy. What do 5,000 Federal bureaucrats and 10,000 more contract bureaucrats that they have hired to hide, what do they do with education, public education today? They regulate. It is unbelievable. Talk to a teacher, talk to a principal, I beg the Members. They will tell us the scandal that has been committed by the other side of the aisle. They have passed so many rules, so much red tape, so many regulations that our teachers cannot teach.

We see here that most of our school budgets now are going for bureaucracy, administrators, regulators, and all the myriad obligations that have been mandated from Washington, because they control and they want to maintain power. They have created 788 Federal education programs, dozens and dozens, and bureaucrats. They all have their programs, so a teacher cannot have control of the classroom. Ask any teacher. A teacher is inundated with paperwork, and school boards and even State agencies are mandated to create this huge bureaucracy.

What we need is 100,000 less bureaucrats in education. That is what this battle is about. That is why we are here. That is why I am almost hoarse, because I got up the other night and tried to explain this to my colleagues and the American people.

They want to pass regulations. They want to make certain that teachers do not teach. They want to have the most expensive approach to education. They have ruined public education. We are trying to take that back. It is simple: We want the money to go to the classrooms. We voted 95 percent, that it should go to the classrooms, to the teachers, for basic education, not for the bureaucracy that has been created.

We said that we want the teacher and the parent to have control. That was the foundation of public education. My wife was an elementary teacher. I have a degree in education. I did not want to teach because of the conditions in our classrooms. That is the same reason that we have this. We need to keep control with the parents and we need to stop the control of Washington. That is what this is all about.

INTRODUCING THE REPETITIVE FLOOD LOSS REDUCTION ACT OF 1998

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HANSEN). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BENTSEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

CRUMBLING AND INADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE ARE THE TRUE PROBLEMS FACING PUBLIC EDUCATION, NOT FEDERAL CONTROL OR OVERREGULATION

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, I am speaking today on a bill I am introducing, but before I do, let me just say something. A lot of Members come to the floor and say things, and get a little carried away. I just have to make a couple of comments.

For the last 40 years, while the Democrats may have controlled the House, the history I learned showed that the Republicans controlled the other body, off and on on a number of occasions, and there are two bodies in our system. That is how legislation is done.

Second of all, let me say that at least in my State of Texas, and I cannot speak for the other States, I only represent part of Texas, I find that it is the State legislature that sets the regulations, along with the school boards.

I was in a school in my district not long ago. The teachers I talked to did not say one thing about Federal regulations. What they talked about was the fact that they had an air conditioning system that was 35 years old, and that the school was crumbling, that the foundation was cracked. If they had any gripes, it was not even with the State legislature, it was with the local school board. So every State is different and everybody's situation is different.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation, the Repetitive Flood Loss Reduction Act of 1998, to reform the National Flood Insurance Program by improving pre-disaster mitigation and facilitating voluntary buyouts of repetitively flooded properties.

I am hopeful that an effective pre-disaster mitigation and buy-out program will both reduce costs to taxpayers and better protect residents of flood-prone areas.

I have drafted this legislation in consultation with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Harris County, Texas, Flood Control District, one of the Nation's most experienced and innovative flood control districts. However, I want to emphasize that I consider this legislation to be a starting point to begin the debate, and I look forward to input from my colleagues, my constituents, and other interested parties, so an improved version of this legislation can be introduced in the 106th Congress.

Some ideas in this bill will be considered controversial and may need to be changed. By introducing this bill, I am not endorsing each provision, but rather, the idea that some action needs to be taken to reform the National Flood Insurance Program. In fact, it is my hope that the public will review the contents of the bill and make their specific support and objections known, so we can develop consensus legislation.

The need for this legislation was underscored by a recent report by the National Wildlife Federation, that the National Flood Insurance Program has made flood insurance payments exceeding the values of the properties involved to thousands of repetitively flooded properties around the Nation.

This report, entitled Higher Ground, found that from 1978 to 1995, 5,629 repetitively flooded homes had received $416 million in payments, far in excess of their market value of $307 million.

My State of Texas led the Nation in volume of such payments, with more than $144 million, or $44 million more than the market value, paid to 1,305 repetitively flooded homes. The Houston/Harris County area, which I represent, had 132 of the 200 properties that generated the largest flood insurance payments beyond their actual value.

This included one property in South Houston that received a total of $929,680 in flood insurance payments from 17 flooding incidents, and another property near the San Jacinto river that received $806,591 for 16 flooding incidents, about 7 times the actual value of the home.

Other areas around the country have also had the same incidents occur. Altogether, according to the National Wildlife Federation report, although repetitive flood loss properties represent only 2 percent of all properties insured by the National Flood Insurance Program, they claim 40 percent of all NFIP payments during the period studied.

Since its creation in 1968, the NFIP has filled an essential need in offering low-cost flood insurance to homeowners who live inside 100-year flood plains. The program has helped to limit the exposure of taxpayers to disaster costs associated with flooding. However, the recent report clearly points out the need to improve the NFIP to address the problem of repetitive loss property.

Furthermore continued losses to the NFIP has increased the call by some of my colleagues to increase premiums and reduce the Federal subsidy for all Federal homeowners in the flood plain, not just those who suffer from repetitive flooding loss, in order to reduce Federal budget outlays.

Without long-term comprehensive reform of the NFIP, I am concerned that in the future, Congress may follow through with proposals to double or triple flood insurance premiums for all flood-prone homeowners, as was proposed in 1995 and 1996. Many of us, myself included, fought vigorously to oppose these increases, but our victory will be short-lived if we do not make changes in the program.