

me this was the setting that was most meaningful and most purposeful.

This was the setting under Father Putka where we learned quite a lot about character and character education. We learned quite a lot about our history as a great Nation, a nation where, as our Founders observed in our Declaration of Independence, is a nation where we are organized around certain God-given unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness and that our Founders appealed to the Almighty for the rectitude of their intentions, and in fact they pledged to each other their lives and their fortunes and their sacred honor with a firm reliance upon the protection of that same divine providence.

Now those are lessons that I would submit one does not learn everywhere. They are lessons that frighten some people when it comes right down to it because there are many people in government schools and in government settings and centralized bureaucracies who are afraid of the lessons that people like Father Putka teach their students. They are afraid that individuals might take his lessons seriously about not being conformed to this world, about renewal of the mind, that we may recognize what is good, what is bad, what is perfect, what is imperfect, what is proper and improper. Those are lessons that more and more students need to learn and need to hear, especially here in America.

Father Putka keeps in touch with his students; I can assure my colleagues of that. He kept in touch with me when I was a State senator back in Colorado. For 9 years I would hear from him frequently on issues that we were dealing with in the State legislature, issues dealing with family, issues dealing with life and death, euthanasia, all kinds of topics of those sorts. I spoke with him often about the relevance of our Constitution and the decisions that we make every day. A constitutional scholar, he has reminded me every single day, recalling from those lessons at More High School in his classroom about how we organize ourselves as Americans and how we are, in fact, governed by that Constitution.

Teachers like Father Putka understand full well that the students that they teach are in fact messengers that we send off to a distant time, and what message will they carry? They will be future leaders perhaps, they will be business leaders and government leaders and perhaps even spiritual leaders or maybe teachers themselves. What message will they convey?

Mr. Speaker, I can tell my colleagues that the message I am here to convey is that we have to move away from a centralized bureaucratic structure of public schooling. The Republican Party is committed to the freedom to teach and the liberty to learn. We believe full well that every student in America ought to have the same choices I did to choose the educational setting of their choice, the same kind of choices that

occurred to our President here in Washington, DC.

Mr. Speaker, congratulations to all the teachers throughout the country today on this commemoration of their profession.

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REVITALIZE PELL GRANT PROGRAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. MCGOVERN] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to express my strongest support for increased funding for the Pell Grant Program. In developing a national education strategy and in constructing an economic vision for the future, we must strive to ensure that every American who wants to go to college can, in fact, afford to go to college.

The tax system is one way of providing relief to families attempting to put a child through college, but tax credits and deductions alone will not make higher education more affordable for every working family.

As the Boston-based Education Resources Institute has reported, low-income students need grant aid to help cover tuition costs. Otherwise, an entire community could effectively be shut out of the American dream.

As I have met with the presidents of universities, community colleges, and vocational and technical schools throughout my congressional district in Massachusetts, I hear everyone saying the same thing: We need more grant aid and we need increased funding for Pell grants.

These educators understand that students are struggling to meet rising college costs. The average tuition in a 4-year public college in Massachusetts is over \$4,000. The average private school costs nearly 4 times that amount. In 1980 through 1981, the average Pell grant award paid for 26 percent of the total annual cost of attending a 4-year public institution. Today the average award covers only 16 percent of that cost.

What happened? The problem with Pell grant funding comes not from institutions of higher learning, Mr. Speaker, but rather from a Congress that has neglected to keep financial aid awards consistent with the rising cost of living. In announcing the recent budget agreement, the White House noted that the President's mere \$300 increase for Pell grant is the largest such increase in the past two decades.

This sad reality is an indictment of Congress' failure to truly commit itself to expanding educational opportunity for all of our young people. While congressional appropriations for Pell grants have increased modestly over the last 17 years, the real dollar

amount for the grant when adjusted for inflation has actually decreased by 13 percent during this period.

The Pell Grant Program is the heart of Federal grant aid for families in need. It targets those students most likely not to attend college because of a lack of funds. These are the children of modest income working families and those of middle income families who are struggling to send several children to college at the same time.

Mr. Speaker, President Clinton has proposed raising the maximum Pell grant award from its present level of \$2,700 to \$3,000. But to be frank, this modest increase, while welcome, simply will not cut it. If education is truly at the top of our national agenda, our Federal investment must reflect this fact.

That is why Senator PAUL WELLSTONE and I have introduced legislation to increase the maximum Pell grant to \$5,000, bringing the award to the level at which it was created, adjusted for inflation. This legislation is supported by respected groups like the American Jewish Committee, the National Urban League, the Education Trust, the National Association of La Raza, the National Association of Social Workers, the NAACP, and the U.S. Student Association.

The cost of increased funding for Pell grants is not prohibitive. Last year, the Pell Grant Program totaled \$6.4 billion and benefited about 3.4 million students in this country. My bill requires about \$7 billion more per year, less than three-tenths of 1 percent of the Federal budget. And we should remember that Pell grants pay a huge dividend in the form of a more productive, highly educated work force.

I am committed to balancing the budget, Mr. Speaker, and I believe every dollar that the Government spends must be viewed in this framework. But balancing the budget is all about making choices. And when it comes to investing in our children's education, I am absolutely convinced that America's future hangs in the balance.

On this issue then, we simply cannot pinch pennies. Every American child deserves the opportunity to become a productive member of our society. As we move into the 21st century, we must guarantee that no student who aspires to a college education is left behind simply because she or he cannot afford it. An ever adjusting Pell grant fund for inflation is one way to avert such a tragedy.

NATIONAL TEACHER APPRECIATION DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from South Dakota [Mr. THUNE] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. Speaker, today I also want to pay tribute to the many