

REVITALIZING AMERICAN  
EDUCATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas [Ms. GRANGER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. GRANGER. Mr. Speaker, the poet Maya Angelo once said a cynical child is one who has made the transition from knowing nothing to believing nothing.

Mr. Speaker, the goal of education is not just to grant knowledge to our students, it is also to give them hope. Sadly, many of our schools today fail on both counts. Yes, it is true that many of our young people today are not able to write words or calculate numbers as they should, but perhaps more profoundly, many of our young people are discouraged and disillusioned. They have lost hope in themselves and they have lost hope in America. That is an American tragedy.

The effects of this tragedy are felt everywhere. We can sense it in our inner cities where crime is rampant and violence is a way of life. We can see it in the eyes of an 18-year-old dropout who has aged far beyond his years and lives life knowing his best years are already over. We can hear it in the voices of thousands of young people, people for whom the promise of America has long since been lost.

These precious young people are the ones who ultimately pay the price when our schools fail. These young people are the victims of schools that have failed them and communities that have given up on them. This is a situation we must and we can do something about.

I believe that no first-class nation can have second-class citizens. But being an optimist, I believe there are also answers. To those parents and students who have been failed by our schools, I say yes, you have lost much but you have not lost everything. To those teachers and principals who are trying to make a difference, I say yes, you are doing many good things, you are building their futures and you are building ours.

Tonight I rise not to condemn American education but to challenge it. I want to challenge teachers to work harder and students to study longer. I want to encourage school administrators, school board members and school principals to create safe environments, better schools, and more creative classrooms. I want to urge moms and dads not just to be parents at home but also partners in the schools.

We can revitalize American education. We have all the necessary ingredients. We have the best teachers in the world and the brightest young minds, if only we can create a climate where teachers and students can do what they do best, teach and learn. I believe we can do that and I know we should. Today more than ever our schools and our children need our help.

When our children head off to college, they need our help even more. To-

night I think help has arrived. Tonight, I am pleased to introduce, along with the gentleman from Washington [Ms. DUNN], the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. PITTS], the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DELAY], the majority whip, and others, the HELP Act, the Higher Education and Learning Promotion Act.

This legislation is designed to give families an additional option for their \$500-per-child tax credit which both the President and the Congress are pledged to support. This historic legislation would allow our families to begin financing higher education through savings instead of debt.

As an incentive to encourage families to save and invest for their children's college education, this legislation would allow parents to invest this child tax credit in an education savings account. These accounts will earn interest tax free and can be withdrawn tax free for their child's education, and families will be able to double the amount of the tax credit if they choose to invest in an education savings account.

This would give families the option of using this tax credit and other savings to help plan for their children's future. A family with two children will be able to invest \$1,500 each year for each of their children in an education savings account. That is \$3,000 for their children's education.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the HELP Act is an important part of revitalizing American education, and I urge my colleagues to include this important proposal in the upcoming tax relief package for families.

Mr. Speaker, with the help of parents and teachers and the hope of our young people, we can build schools which will train fertile minds, prepare young lives and foster dreams. Our vision is a glorious one, an America where our children are not only well educated but, more importantly, an America where our children believe in themselves and they believe in their country. Mr. Speaker, the future is theirs but the responsibility is ours.

TRIBUTE TO SMALL BUSINESS  
ENTREPRENEURS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from South Dakota [Mr. THUNE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege this evening as well to pay tribute as we are this week to the small business entrepreneurs in our country, those who continue to drive the economic engine that makes this the greatest economy in the world. I have some personal history with that. My grandfather came to this country from Norway back around the turn of the century to pursue his American dream, and he and my great uncle, who did not speak a word of English, came through Ellis Island, ended up in the middle of South Dakota, and went into

the hardware business and had the opportunity like so many people at that time who came here, the freedom to succeed and the freedom as well to fail. But they came here because the opportunity existed in America. The South Dakota landscape just abounds with wonderful stories of entrepreneurial success, people who have taken risks. Some have succeeded, some have failed.

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But many out there have been willing to move forward in a way that will continue to advance the American dream in this country, and I look at countless examples of those, and particularly in my State of South Dakota most of the businesses in our State are small businesses. We are a State which consists of many small towns and many main streets, and without those small businesses our State would not have the economic life that it does. It is our life blood.

So this evening and this week we have paid tribute to those many people.

I had the opportunity to have lunch 2 days ago with Richard and Janet Cone of Cone Ag Service, Inc., in Pierre, which is this year's small business award winner in South Dakota. They were here to celebrate and to be recognized, and they are just one of many who have taken again advantage of the opportunity that is afforded us in this country and then part of the American dream.

As you look at those that have succeeded in South Dakota I harken back to, and for those who have traveled in my State you will know as you drive down Interstate 90 you will see countless signs for a place called Wall Drug. Wall Drug is a wonderful story about someone who started with an idea of free ice water and 5-cent coffee, and to this day those continue to be their trademarks, free ice water and 5-cent coffee, and they have turned that into a wonderful marketing masterpiece. It has been incredibly successful and provides jobs and opportunities in that small community.

I think of Mike's Jack and Jill in Webster, SD, a good friend of mine. The mayor of that community is someone who is very involved in the community. And one of the things that I think you witness when you see small businesses that have success in this country is the commitment that they have to corporate and to civic responsibility and citizenship. They have enjoyed the freedoms that we have in America, and they have also taken very seriously the responsibility to contribute and to give back, and most of the people in those small towns are those who are consistently involved in their municipal governments and their civic organizations and their service organizations and the Little League baseball teams, and I can give you many, many examples of that.