badly needed funding from our public schools and divert it into private and religious schools. Make no mistake about it, this is a direct attack on public schools in America. At a time when school enrollment is soaring and Federal education funding is more and more scarce, Republicans want to undermine the public education system in this country.

Mr. Speaker, the Republican leadership's school voucher plan is part of a grander scheme to privatize K through 12 education, which could shut down neighborhood schools across the country. From California to Missouri to my own State of Massachusetts, voters have spoken loud and clear. Experimenting with school vouchers at the expense of public education is the wrong path to real education reform.

Democrats believe that we need to be improving public education in America by repairing our crumbling schools, reducing overcrowding, training more qualified teachers, wiring classrooms to the Internet, raising standards, and providing a safe and drug-free learning environment. I urge my colleagues to vote against school vouchers and for improving public education in America.

BILL LANN LEE'S NOMINATION

(Mr. ROYCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to encourage the Senate to reject the nomination of Mr. Bill Lann Lee to head the Justice Department Office of Civil Rights.

Mr. Lee's career has shown him to be little more than an ideolog, intent on bending the words and meaning of the law to suit his purposes. In response to last year's California civil rights initiative barring racial preferences by government, Mr. Lee made the preposterous argument that it was unconstitutional to treat all individuals equally before the law. A Federal court swiftly rejected such reasoning on the ground that the 14th amendment does not require what it barely permits.

Similarly, with mind-bending reason, Mr. Lee argued that the decline in minority enrollment establishes that the use of grades and standardized tests as admissions criteria is discriminatory.

Radicals like Mr. Lee are swimming against the tide of court opinions and popular sentiment in standing up for race-based government preferences, and they know it. He must not be furnished with the power of the Federal Government to further pursue his out-of-touch agenda. I urge the Senate to block this nominee.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). Members are reminded that they are not to urge actions on confirmation proceedings pending in the other body.

SCHOOL VOUCHERS OFFER ILLUSORY PROMISE

(Mr. PRICE of North Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, our Republican friends would have us believe that school vouchers would level the playing field by providing low-income parents the same choice as wealthy parents to send their children to private and religious schools. Unfortunately, that is an illusory promise.

For one thing, the Republican proposals would provide vouchers to only a small proportion of low and moderate income families.

Second, the Republican plans would cover only a fraction of the fees that most private schools charge. Most working families would be unable to make up the difference, making the vouchers useless to them, providing the greatest benefit for the wealthy families who can already afford the cost of tuition.

Mr. Speaker, when we consider what these funds could do if applied to the improvement of public education for all of our children, raising standards, developing magnet schools, putting computers in every classroom, our choice is clear. The Republican voucher plan promises what it cannot deliver, and it would divert us from the challenge of making public education all that it can and must be.

GREATER LOCAL CONTROL IN EDUCATION

(Mr. TIAHRT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Speaker, why are the liberals against public schools? Everyone not in the pocket of special interests which protect the status quo knows that for public schools to improve, cosmetic changes will not be enough. No matter how many times we rearrange the chairs of the curriculum, real improvement will be nothing but another empty promise.

Let us just look at the places where public schools have improved. In Cleveland, Milwaukee, the State of Minnesota, truly bold initiatives are what forced change and brought about real improvement. The other side might stop for a moment and look at all three cases. Improvements did not come from Washington, DC. Improvements did not come from another Federal program with more bureaucrats. In every case, the improvement came from greater local control, more school choice and more power to make decisions in the hands of the parents.

Oh, yes, the special interests fought the very same changes that led to real improvement every step of the way. So why are the liberals against public schools?

PUBLIC EDUCATION FOR ALL, NOT A PRIVILEGED FEW

(Mr. LEWIS of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, just 2 weeks ago, the Republican leadership brought to this floor a so-called scholarship proposal, an experiment that would drain $45 million out of public schools in the District of Columbia and give it to just 3 percent of students to attend private and religious schools. But taking money out of schools in the District of Columbia was not enough for them. Now they are coming after all public schools in every city, town and village in the Nation, draining resources from public schools and giving vouchers for a few to attend private and religious schools.

□ 1030

That is the Republican HELP Scholarship scheme. HELP the few, deprive the many, that is the Republican plan.

This voucher scheme will do nothing to rebuild our crumbling public schools, some overcrowded, or train teachers. Our children need our help. This is why Democrats believe in investing in public education. Public education for all, opportunity for all, scholarships for all, not vouchers for a privileged few.

FORAGE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1997

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). The unfinished business is the question of agreeing to the resolution (House Resolution 284) on which the yeas and nays are ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 277, nays 139, not voting 16, as follows:

[Roll No. 545]

YEAS—277

Aderholt	Boyd	Crane
Archer	Brady	Crapo
Armey	Brown (FL)	Cunningham
Bachus	Bryant	Danner
Baesler	Bunning	Davis (VA)
Baker	Burr	Deal
Ballenger	Burton	DeLay
Barcia	Buyer	Diaz-Balart
Barr	Callahan	Dickey
Barrett (NE)	Calvert	Dooley
Bartlett	Camp	Doolittle
Barton	Campbell	Dreier
Bass	Canady	Duncan
Bateman	Cannon	Dunn
Bereuter	Castle	Ehlers
Berman	Chabot	Ehrlich
Berry	Chambliss	Emerson
Bilbray	Chenoweth	Engel
Bilirakis	Christensen	English
Bishop	Clement	Ensign
Bliley	Coble	Everett
Blunt	Coburn	Ewing
Boehlert	Collins	Fazio
Boehner	Combest	Foley
Bonilla	Condit	Forbes
Bono	Cook	Fowler
Borski	Cooksey	Fox
Boswell	Cox	Franks (NJ)
Boucher	Cramer	Frelinghuysen