

no law, no court can save it." Only with a eminent desire to right what is wrong, to make just what is unjust, to equalize what is unequal, and to improve what is imperfect can man truly make a difference. Citizens must passionately believe in a cause and do their best to make sure that their dream is fulfilled. If, and only if, the hearts of man bubble with painstaking ability to fight for the liberty ingrained in the stars and stripes of America, then we can exclaim that no barrier is unbreakable, no problem is unsolvable, no aspect of moral degradation is unstopplable.

INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION
TO ALLOW EMPLOYERS OPPOR-
TUNITY TO PROVIDE ALTER-
NATIVE MEANS OF PROTECTION
IN MEETING SAFETY AND
HEALTH RULES

HON. CASS BALLENGER

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 7, 1997

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, 2 years ago, when President Clinton promised to "reinvent" OSHA, he promised "to make sure that worker safety rules [would be] as simple and sensible and flexible as they can be." I think we all appreciate the President's goal. Certainly anyone who has had to deal with OSHA's rules would not describe them as simple, sensible, or flexible.

Unfortunately, OSHA has made little progress in addressing this aspect of reinvention. The Subcommittee on Workforce Protections recently completed hearings on the progress made in reinventing OSHA. It was apparent that little progress has been made in changing the regulatory progress. Even OSHA's Director of Regulatory Affairs was recently quoted as saying that "regulatory reinvention is not a subject that has gotten much attention."

The legislation which I am introducing will go a long way to make OSHA's rules "simple, sensible, and flexible"—without any diminishing of employee's safety. This legislation simply allows an employer to meet the same level of protection of employees that is mandated by OSHA's rules, but allows employers the flexibility to do so through means, methods, processes, or operations that are different than those which may be mandated by OSHA.

It may be argued that the Occupational Safety and Health Act already provides flexibility to employers in meeting occupational safety and health standards, by providing that employers may apply for a variance from any standard. In reality, OSHA's variance process is unwieldy, lengthy, and expensive. But the test for granting a variance—that the employer's alternative method of protection will provide protection of employees equal to or greater than that provided by the standard—is the same test as would apply under my legislation. What my legislation in effect does, is make the variance process more useable and useful for employers.

In short, this legislation gives employers precisely what the President promised: flexibility in worker safety rules without diminishing worker protection. I invite my colleagues to join me in supporting this step forward in reinventing OSHA.

REBUILDING AMERICAN SCHOOLS
ACT OF 1997

HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 7, 1997

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, we simply cannot ignore the needs of our students any longer when it comes to the poor physical condition of our schools. We can see that many schools throughout America need assistance in continuing to educate our children.

We cannot allow our schools to continue with inadequate buildings, inadequate building features, and unsatisfactory building conditions. We can't sit by and watch our schools crumble. Congress needs to recognize that the quality of their learning environment affects the education children receive.

Our children need a strong foundation—better physical conditions—in the schools they attend. In some parts of the country the problems facing our schools' infrastructure have reached crisis proportions. Poor infrastructure is often a barrier to schools being wired to the Internet among other things.

We need the proper school facilities to deal with the surge of enrollment that is occurring right now. In the next 10 years, many school districts will have to cope with the need for more space to accommodate 55.9 million students, a jump of 9.4 million since 1990. New Jersey public elementary and secondary schools will see an increase of 109,000 students in the next 10 years, requiring 4,360 additional classrooms.

For all these reasons, I have introduced the Rebuilding American Schools Act of 1997, with Representative ROB ANDREWS. This legislation will assist local school districts finance the repair, renovation, alteration, and construction of public elementary and secondary school facilities.

A General Accounting Office report last year drew alarms in Congress about the need to repair and upgrade school facilities across the country. The GAO study stated that one-third of schools, serving over 14 million students nationwide, reported needing extensive repair or replacement of at least one building and 60 percent of schools, many in otherwise decent condition, reported at least one major building feature, such as plumbing, in disrepair. In addition, about half the schools reported at least one unsatisfactory environmental condition, such as lighting problems or poor ventilation.

According to the GAO, 19 percent of New Jersey schools reported one inadequate building, 53 percent reported at least one inadequate building feature, and 69 percent reported at least one unsatisfactory environmental factor. In total, 87 percent of New Jersey schools reported a need to upgrade or repair buildings to good overall condition.

Local schools rely on property taxes to support our country's public elementary and secondary schools. But communities everywhere are finding it increasingly difficult to support their academic programs much less their school facilities with local property taxes. The Rebuilding American Schools Act of 1997 would help communities support the repair, renovation, alteration, and construction of our Nation's public elementary and secondary school facilities. States and local governments would continue to maintain full responsibility

for determining their school construction needs and administering their infrastructure programs.

This legislation authorizes \$200 million in fiscal year 1999 to help States increase school construction and renovation targeting school districts that enroll the greatest numbers of children living in poverty. The loans and bond guarantees in the bill will apply to a wide range of improvement projects.

It leverages additional spending on school construction and renovation. And it applies to a wide range of improvement projects, including construction of elementary and secondary facilities, renovation to ensure health and safety of students, improvements of the basic infrastructure, increases in energy efficiency, and construction that prepares facilities for installation of modern educational technology.

This bill goes a long way to providing the proper infrastructural our children need to enter the 21st century. While many of the most desperate repairs and needed improvements are being met, these funds could help our schools meet additional needs. I look forward to the day when I can see the physical manifestation of this bill in better facilities for our children to learn and grow.

HONORING THE BRAVERY AND
SERVICE OF THE U.S. NAVY ASI-
ATIC FLEET

HON. SHERROD BROWN

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 7, 1997

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, as we approach Veterans Day, I am proud to introduce legislation honoring the bravery and dedication of the sailors and marines who served with the U.S. Navy Asiatic Fleet.

Formed in 1910, the Asiatic Fleet patrolled the waters of the Far East for 32 years, defending the interests of the United States and ensuring the safety of our citizens abroad during various regional conflicts and natural disasters.

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the personnel of the Asiatic Fleet courageously opposed Japan's continued aggression in the South Pacific. Outnumbered and outgunned by a modern Japanese armada, the aging ships and submarines of the fleet fought valiantly, relying on wits, courage, and sheer determination.

Despite incredible valor and the help of our Australian, British, and Dutch allies, the sailors and marines of the Asiatic Fleet ultimately succumbed to the Japanese on March 1, 1942, when the flagship U.S.S. *Houston* was sunk near Indonesia. The total losses suffered by the fleet were staggering: 22 ships sunk, 1,826 men killed or missing in action, and 518 men captured, many of whom did not survive their internment.

Yet, the spirit displayed by those who served with the Asiatic Fleet was equally stunning. Charged with a near-impossible task from the very start, the Fleet "fought like hell," as one survivor recently put it. That these particular veterans have received little commendation is especially disappointing, for their cunning and fortitude in the face of such overwhelming odds is one of the finer moments in defense of democracy. We can begin to rectify