the whole truth and had asked the American people for forgiveness, I believe he would have been forgiven.

Today there is a pall of doubt over the Presidency. Not being forthcoming with whatever the truth may be leaves doubt about the bond of trust between the President and the people and keeps open the question of fitness to serve in high office. The only way America can put this behind us once and for all is to be assured that when the President speaks, he is telling the truth. I hope this President can give this assurance. If President Clinton tells the American people the whole truth and needs forgiveness, I believe he will be forgiven.

But let us remember, all of us, all of us err and make mistakes, including me. No one, not one is perfect. But for forgiveness and healing to take place, there must first be confession and truth, and then we can move on.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Washington (Mrs. LINDA SMITH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. LINDA SMITH of Washington addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING KAREN SUE NOBUMOTO

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

Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate a remarkable woman from the 37th District of California: Karen Sue Nobumoto. Ms. Nobumoto is an exceptional leader in the field of law within the African American community and the Los Angeles area. She has inspired young lawyers and law students throughout her long history with the John M. Langston Bar Association, and has dedicated her life to giving back to her community. As she completes her one year term as President of the Langston Bar Association, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize her long list of achievements.

Ms. Nobumoto received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of Hartford in West Hartford, Connecticut in 1973. She continued her studies at Southwestern University School of Law in Los Angeles, where she obtained her Juris Doctorate degree in 1989. Throughout her years at Southwestern University, Ms. Nobumoto served as an active student leader. She was the President of the Black Law Students Association and Vice-Dean of the Delta Theta Phi Law Fraternity.

Ms. Nobumoto has served on the board of directors of the John M. Langston Bar Association continuously since 1987. In 1988, she received the President's Special Recognition Award and received the same award again in 1996. She served as the first student Section Chairperson and worked with the past president to institute the Langston Law Student Career Day and Mentor Program. She also managed the Law Student Scholarship Program in 1990 and succeeded in increasing the scholarship funds distributed to African American law students over the past seven years.

Perhaps more important than this long list of achievements, is Ms. Nobumoto's unyielding determination and strong commitment to leaving no stone unturned when it comes to planning the critical path to success. She has attended every Langston board meeting and monthly meeting and represented the Langston Bar Association at over sixty-five different events throughout this past year. In addition to her work for Langston, Ms. Nobumoto is a hardworking Trial Deputy in the Office of the District Attorney in Los Angeles. She has also served on the Ethnic Minority Relations Committee of the State Bar from 1987 to 1990 and was the Vice-Chair of the Committee from 1989 to 1990. In 1990, she was also elected to a District 7 seat on the California Young Lawyers Association Board of Directors.

Clearly, Karen Nobumoto's commitment to carrying forward the tradition of service and leadership that defines the Langston Bar Association has made her one of the greatest Presidents to serve Langston. I am honored to know Ms. Nobumoto and wish her the best of luck as she pursues a position on the State Bar Board of Governors. Karen Nobumoto is a shining example of what it means to lead, to educate and to truly make a difference for the generations of today and tomorrow.

A RESOLUTION TO PROTECT WINNIE THE POOH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. LOWEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce a resolution to protect Winnie the Pooh and his friends from being taken away from their safe and comfortable home at the New York Public Library. For 10 years Winnie the Pooh has held court in the New York Public Library, delighting millions of New Yorkers. But in recent days a member of the British Parliament has been expressing her intention to take them away from their home.

As a mother of three and a grandmother of two, I am determined to keep Winnie the Pooh right where he belongs in New York City. Quite frankly, the British have their heads in a honey jar, if they think they are taking Winnie the Pooh out of New York City.

Mr. Speaker, Christopher Milne, son of the creator of Winnie the Pooh and the real life model for Christopher Robin, gave his blessing to the New York Public Library's display of his childhood friends before his death 2 years ago. Winnie the Pooh, Tigger, Eeyore, Kanga and Piglet belong in New York, and this resolution will ensure that they stay there.

H. CON. RES. —

Whereas Winnie-the-Pooh, Tigger, Eeyore, Kanga, and Piglet have lived safely and comfortably in a climate-controlled, bulletproof case at the New York Public Library for ten years.

Whereas they bring happiness to the 750,000 people who visit them each year.

Whereas Christopher Milne, the model for Christopher Robin, gave his blessing to the New York Public Library's public display of his childhood friends before his death.

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress of the United States expresses its strong support for the residents of Pooh Corner to remain at the New York Public Library.

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

(Mr. FOLEY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extension of Remarks.)

THE FUTURE OPPORTUNITY AND WELL-BEING OF OUR CHILDREN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from California (Mr. RIGGS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to address the House under special orders on a topic that I think is of really paramount importance to our country, and that is the future opportunity and well-being of our children. I rise to talk today a little bit about our congressional, by that I mean House and Senate, Republican agenda for improvement of our schools, to ensure that every American child, especially those that come from disadvantaged backgrounds, socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, has access to a high quality education and the kind of skills training that can unlock the future for that young person.

I have had the opportunity on many occasions, as many of the Members of this House have, to have my children accompany me to work sort of a dad takes daughter to work day. I have had my young daughter Sarah Anne, who is 11, going on 21, I think, at times, with me here on the House floor. And it has been a wonderful experience. It has given her an opportunity to see firsthand what I do as an elected Member of Congress. It has helped her not only better understand what I do, but it has helped her, I think, become a more responsible young person in her upbringing.

I can harken back a few years ago, when I first was elected to Congress, and the Sarah who is now in the fifth grade back then was in the second grade. And on the first day of school as the boys and girls were going around the classroom, when it came her turn to say what mom and dad do for a living, she piped up very proudly, my dad is FRANK RIGGS. He runs for Congress. Well, as they say, out of the mouths of babes. Since then, as I mentioned, she has come to have a far better understanding of what I do and what the purpose is of the Congress as our National Legislature.

I think our primary purpose, our most important objective has got to be,

as I said before, the future of our children. They are all our children. They are, they represent our hopes, our dreams, our common mission. I am here today out of concern for, addressing the House under special orders out of concern for her future and the future of her generation, and for that matter a generation of children yet unborn.

I want to talk about how the children of tomorrow can receive a better education today and what we might do in the remaining months of this legislative session of Congress over the course of this year, between now and the targeted final adjournment of this Congress in early October.

But before I get into that, as I was talking about my daughter Sarah Anne, I also harken back to my days as a local Little League and school board president. I had the dubious distinction of serving in both capacities at the same time, and I like to tell my colleagues that if they really want to know what politics are all about, they should try being both a Little League president and a school board president at the same time.

There is an old saying that was, I believe, coined by a former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tip O'Neill, who said that all politics are local, and it does not get any more local than being Little League president and school board president at the same time.

So I sort of jokingly have made that statement, but quite seriously, if you want to know what politics are all about, forget about matters of war and peace and life and death, which we sometimes have to confront out on the House floor, and try dealing with the responsibilities of being Little League president and school board president at the same time and a constituency of many, many parents who do not at all times necessarily agree with the official positions of a little league or a school board.

I can say though that that experience has taught me that there is that shared concern about children. Everyone is concerned about their own children obviously, and there is a larger concern that many times extends to all children in the community, and while I personally do not agree with the philosophy that it takes a village to raise a child, because that seems to shift the responsibility for raising that child from the parents, the immediate family, to a larger and more amorphous institution known as a community or a village, and too often puts the trust and responsibility for raising children in government instead of where it properly belongs with those parents in that particular home, I can again say that we all have concerns about our children and want to create obviously a better future for our children. That is what brings us together as concerned citizens and as leaders in our respective communities, whether it be a position of elected leadership or whether it be some other position of leadership as perhaps through civic affairs or business involvement.

I am going to talk a little bit about our children. The first thing I want to address since there is some very real concern about the future of Social Security, the first thing I want to mention is that this Congress over the course of last year and the previous Congress, which represent about 3½ years to date of a Republican control of the Congress, this Congress and the past Congress have made some tremendous strides in creating a better future for our children and fulfilling our promises to the American people. We have adopted a balanced budget, and as the President told the country the other night in his State of the Union address, we are on the verge of realizing that goal, and we are really on the verge of seeing the Federal Government for the foreseeable future generating a budget surplus, not a budget deficit, a budget surplus here in Washington. In fact, the current trend line projections for the Federal budget indicate surpluses, not deficits, surpluses as far as the eye can see. That is very encouraging news, and we are going to have a debate that will commence this year and continue again for the foreseeable future in terms of how to best utilize that budget surplus.

We have lowered taxes, especially through a $500-per-child tax credit for hard-working, overburdened families, families, the median family income tax burden in America today being roughly 38 percent of that family's income, 38 percent going to taxing authorities at all levels, Federal, State and local. We have taken the first steps again to lower the tax burden on families, especially families with dependent children, under the theory that those families deserve to keep more of what they earn, and they are in a far better position to determine how to spend that money to benefit or to benefit their children and to create a better future for their children than any Federal Government bureaucracy back here in Washington.

We have also overhauled welfare. That reform is helping millions of our fellow Americans move from welfare to work. Many of those are single mothers that struggle against heroic odds, and by improving the quality of life for welfare recipients as they make that transition from welfare to work, we are also obviously creating a better future for the children of those households.

But we do have a long ways to go in terms of improving the future for our children. I mentioned briefly education reform. But we also are looking now at fundamental reform of the Tax Code. In my view, we have to have campaign finance reform at the Federal level because if we really want to change the way we govern, we have to change the way we campaign for office.

And we need entitlement reform or reform of the entitlement programs, the so-called old age entitlement programs of Social Security and Medicare, if we want to make sure that those programs are preserved and strengthened; that is to say, to make sure that they are financially solvent well into the 21st century.

□ 1500

Now, House and Senate Republicans do have a real plan for Social Security, and I make reference to a commentary that was written in the Washington Times by Senator TRENT LOTT, the Senate majority leader, and he points out in this article that we are attempting to bring about fundamental restructuring of the Social Security program. His commentary begins by saying the President says he wants to talk about Social Security.

Talking is the easy part. Doing the right thing is another matter. Let us review the Clinton record. For 5 years the President has talked about entitlement reform, but almost all progress has come from a congressional coalition of Republicans and centrist Democrats. True, the President passed incremental Medicare and Medicaid changes in 1993, but unlike our more recently enacted reforms, his bill made no attempt at structural spending changes; in other words, fundamental overhaul of these programs, and instead relied on raising taxes to temporarily shore up those programs.

In 1994, the President proposed, as I think we all now know, a Federal Government, a big government takeover of health care. Setting aside the obvious demerits of subjecting one-seventh of the economy to government price controls, his plan would have created massive new entitlements and accelerated government spending. At the same time, however, the bipartisan Entitlement Commission, chaired by Democratic Senator ROBERT KERREY, Senator KERREY of Nebraska, concluded that the present spending trends for the old age entitlement programs, Social Security and Medicare, are unsustainable.

The President ignored the Entitlement Commission and its chairman, but the newly elected Republican congressional majority did not. We passed structural Medicare and Medicaid reforms in 1995, only to have them be vetoed and demagogued by the President.

The White House's demagoguery was supplemented, as we now know, by tens of millions of dollars in union-funded attack ads that were targeted at incumbent Republicans around the country, including myself in the 1996 elections and, unfortunately, made Medicare a partisan campaign issue in 1996 and turned it into just another political football, another partisan ''he said, she said'' type of argument. However, 1 year later, in a nonelection year, last year, 1997, the President signed reforms that were very similar to the ones that he had vetoed and demagogued for over a year. He signed similar reforms into law.

Now, early last year both a Federal commission and Alan Greenspan concluded that the Consumer Price Index

overstates increases in the cost of living by about 1 percent. Senator LOTT then proposed appointing a panel of technical experts to correct these flaws. However, again, the President and many congressional Democrats, backed by the labor unions and some of their other special interest allies, refused to address this problem, reinforcing this impression out there, this stereotype, that entitlement reform continues to be the third rail of American politics; that if one goes anywhere near it as an elected official they just might get electrocuted, in a political sense that is.

Last year the other body, the Senate, passed historic Medicare reforms, including raising the Medicare eligibility age and means testing premiums for more wealthy beneficiaries. And, in my view, they deserve a lot of credit for those actions. They also demonstrated a bipartisan willingness to make politically difficult choices in the interest of our children and in the name of their future.

U.S. News and World Report called it the Senate's magic moment and wondered whether the President would get on board. Well, the news that I share with my colleagues and the American people today is the President never even got near the boat.

Now, we do have a newly created Medicare commission, which was originally supposed to report in early 1999 to the Congress. To avoid having to address Medicare in the State of the Union address, next year's State of the Union address, the White House has proposed that the commission postpone their report to March. That would mean, if that comes to pass, that the President has ducked yet another opportunity to really exert presidential leadership and make a difficult choice on this most vexing issue.

Medicare is the second largest entitlement, and it will grow $88 billion over the next 5 years, more than total Federal Government spending, more than total Federal taxpayer spending on crime, education and the environment combined. Yet the President proposes what we feel is a tremendously irresponsible expansion of the Medicare program for early retirees and refuses to allow seniors to use their own money to pay a doctor.

Of course, he knows in making that proposal, which he mentioned last Tuesday night, or a week ago Tuesday night in his State of the Union address, he knows that that expansion will be popular because he is offering a political goody, another entitlement, if you will, to a demographic group with a high voter turnout; upper income people in their 50s and 60s, who could afford to retire early and buy into the Medicare program.

His proposal, however, would benefit only the wealthiest beneficiaries and would encourage employers to dump older workers and early retirees into a government program.

So in the name of entitlement reform, the President raised tax employees to reduce the deficit, ignored the entitlement commission, he has demagogued both Medicare and Medicaid, he has refused to consider the Senate bipartisan proposal to fix the Consumer Price Index problem which overstates the annual rate of inflation, he has rejected the bipartisan Medicare beneficiaries reforms, and he has now delayed the Medicare commission. That is not true presidential leadership.

On top of all that, he now proposes to expand the second largest entitlement program, yet says he wants to reform the largest. He proposes to expand Medicare at the same time he is talking about reforming Social Security. Why should the American people believe him? And I am going to have more to say later on the President's trustworthiness.

So we have a tremendous challenge ahead in terms of entitlement reform. It is one of the chief pieces of unfinished business in this Congress and, in my view, will be probably confronting the next Congress, when we consider that just over the horizon, the challenge that lies just over the horizon, 75 million baby boomers will begin retiring around 2008.

That happens to be my generation. I admit it. I am one of the baby boomers. We have to address this problem and we have to adjust our programs for the aging, the graying of the American population. If we fail to do that, then these programs which constitute the social safety net in America are, in my view, in real jeopardy, especially for those who are most dependent upon these programs in their retirement, low income individuals, many of whom have to rely on a fixed income to make ends meet.

So the challenge for this Congress, and it is a bipartisan challenge, is how can we convince the President that we are willing to tackle Social Security and Medicare reform on a serious and, I would hope, nonpartisan basis. We have the proposals out on the table. And as Senator LOTT, Majority Leader in the Senate, points out, we really do need to have, and as Speaker GINGRICH has said, we really do need to have an adult conversation about reforming and preserving Social Security in this country.

We believe that Americans want more than talk; that they have a right to expect more than talk from their elected officials when it comes to entitlement reform, and that the onus is now on the President to close this enormous credibility gap that is created by the discrepancy between what he says on the one hand and what he has done on the other with respect to entitlement reform, because, as we all know, actions speak louder than words.

So entitlement reform is a critical issue facing this country. We also know that the time has come to make a commitment to fundamentally reforming the Tax Code. The current Federal income tax system is economically destructive. It is inconsistent with the principles of a free society, and many of us are joining together in this Congress to work towards the enactment of a new, simple and fairer system that would apply a single low rate of taxes to all Americans. We want to move from the present system of taxation to a simpler, flatter, fairer Tax Code and tax system and a single rate of taxation for all Americans.

We want to continue to provide tax relief for working Americans. And when we consider all the abuses that have come to light from recent hearings here in Washington and the hearings that many of us have had in our congressional districts around the country, we want to protect, do a better job of protecting the rights of taxpayers against tax collection abuses by the IRS.

I also believe, going back to the theme and the importance of creating a better future for our children, that we have to eliminate the bias in our present Tax Code against savings and investment. It is one of the perverse incentives that riddles American life when we consider that we have a Tax Code and a tax system that continues to promote consumption and spending over savings and investment. If we can eliminate that bias, if in fact we can emphasize savings and investment, we can reduce the tremendous strain that is going to be placed on those old age entitlement, the old age retirement programs, the Social Security and Medicare that I just mentioned a moment ago, when the baby boomer generation reaches retirement age.

So tax reform, entitlement reform, campaign finance reform, education reform are all critical in terms of the challenges facing this Congress and future Congresses as we look at the future and try to create more opportunity and more security for our young people.

I think it is safe to say that congressional Republicans want to take this country to a new level of freedom and opportunity through less taxes and more choices for families by improving our schools. And we are going to be looking at a number of educational proposals that are now pending before the Congress.

I happen to chair the education subcommittee in the House of Representatives, the so-called Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Youth and Families, and we are moving forward on a number of fronts right now. We had a very successful legislative year last year, a very ambitious year, where we passed legislation to improve the education of children with learning disabilities and special needs, to expanding vocational education and technical training opportunities for those young people who are not college bound or who, if they go to college, may not complete college, so that they actually have employable skills that they can market in the real world of business and private enterprise.

We have passed legislation that will encourage States and local school districts to create more independent public schools. These are called charter schools. And this is a very simple concept where local schools, and by local I mean that individual school is given a great deal of freedom and autonomy to experiment in education and to make improvements and innovations.

Charter schools are, to date, a very successful experiment in decentralization and deregulation in public education. And based on the early results, charter schools have led to an increase, an improvement in pupil performance at those charter schools. And that is really the bottom line.

Charter schools are also a step, a milestone, I guess we could say, on the road to creating full parental choice in public education today. I happen to believe that parents should be given the full range of choice among all competing institutions; that parents, as the consumers of education, the people who pay the majority of taxes for public education, should be empowered to select the school and the education that is most appropriate for their child, and that no one is better positioned, better able to make that decision regarding that child's welfare and the schooling that is appropriate for that child than, obviously, the parent or parents of that child.

I am encouraged that we are moving forward with charter school legislation. The Senate, the other body, has indicated that they are going to be taking up our charter school legislation in the context of their very comprehensive education plan, which they are calling the BOKS legislation, the Better Opportunities for our Kids and Schools Act, and the acronym, as I mentioned, is BOKS. So I am pleased that they are recognizing that Federal taxpayers and the Federal Government have a role in expanding charter schools.

□ 1515

I want to quote to my colleagues from an article in the Weekly Standard edition of December 8, 1997, in an article that was written by David Brooks, the senior editor of the Weekly Standard, where he says that,

> The early evidence suggests that these tax-supported independent schools, charter schools, run by their own boards, their own board of trustees, their own governing board, within the public system raised student achievement. Moreover, if the country is going to shift eventually to a voucher system,

this is the idea where parents would have tuition scholarships through taxpayer funding to select the school, the education that is appropriate for their children.

Moreover, if the country is going to shift eventually to a voucher system, it will first have to pass through a charter phase so that when choice prevails there will be a variety of independent schools to choose from. Charters can prove to the public that alternatives exist to a centralized system and so lay the intellectual groundwork for vouchers.

So I am pleased again that we are going to be moving forward on charter school legislation over the coming months in the Second Session of Congress.

However, charters are just one form of empowering parents through choice, just one way, if you will, of infusing competition and great accountability into the education system in America today.

There are several other forms of education choice, including tax credits, as have been implemented in certain States. Minnesota, under Governor Carlson, immediately comes to mind.

I mentioned tuition scholarships, or vouchers. We are going to be looking again at opportunity scholarships for underprivileged District of Columbia children here in the next few weeks, focusing specifically on those children who are attending unsafe and/or underperforming schools.

And, of course, Senator COVERDELL and Speaker GINGRICH have also proposed the ideas of education savings accounts where parents could contribute after-tax dollars to an IRA, an Individual Retirement Account, for education purposes and then make withdrawals tax-free for any education expense, including education expenses associated with their child attending a private primary or secondary, a private elementary or high school. So we are moving forward aggressively on expanding educational choice in this country and empowering parents.

Now, I do have a couple other things to mention in the area of education.

I mentioned that House and Senate Republicans are working on a comprehensive measure to improve education that would allocate money to better train teachers and parents to teach reading.

We are also looking at another pilot program for vouchers for low-income students that would be patterned after our legislation for the District of Columbia but would potentially allow other school districts, primarily urban school districts, to pursue the idea of vouchers on a pilot basis to see if, in fact, those vouchers, those tuition scholarships, increase or improve pupil performance and give parents a way out of failing school districts.

And I just cannot stress how important that is. Because I personally believe that our country could not afford to lose another generation of urban schoolchildren.

So we are going to be pursuing a voucher pilot in school districts around the country.

We mentioned charter schools. We are also looking at legislation that would require that the great majority of Federal taxpayer spending for education go down to the classroom level, down to that local school district, and from there to that individual school, and from there into the classroom, hopefully, to pay someone who knows that child's name.

The idea is very simple. We want to get the most bang for the buck. We do not want the money continuing to be siphoned off for bureaucracy at the Federal or State or even, for that matter, local district school level. We want to drive it down locally into that classroom to pay someone who knows that child's name, under the theory that those dollars should follow the child. And, again, we are going to be looking at legislation that would test teachers' skills and provide them with merit pay raises.

I personally believe that the teaching profession is a missionary calling. It is one, quite honestly, where I think that if we are honest and admit that we cannot afford to pay the very best teachers what they are truly worth and, conversely, anything that we pay to a bad teacher is probably too much. But I think we have to understand how important the teaching profession truly is.

It has been said that a teacher can affect eternity because they never know where their influence on that child might end. So we are going to be looking at a way, again, where we can assist and enhance the teaching profession and where we can encourage more accountability and more incentive in the teaching profession.

So we are moving forward on a number of fronts in education aggressively, making it the top legislative priority for the Republican congressional Majority.

However, we are not going to do as the President has discussed, which is attempt to finance a bunch of new Federal education programs out of the future anticipated revenues resulting from a settlement of the tobacco class-action lawsuit against the States. It would be foolish. It would be unwise. It would be imprudent. It would be something that we would not do in our lives, in our homes or in our businesses, to spend money before we actually have it.

Our education proposal will be fully paid for. It will not involve new Federal spending. It will not involve raising taxes. It will not rely on the presumed revenues from the tobacco settlement.

We believe that one of the ways that we can pay for our education spending is to take all of these categorical programs that are housed back here in Washington, they are located primarily in the Department of Education, but they are spread, to be honest about it, spread about the whole Government bureaucracy, they are administered by a number of different Federal departments, agencies and commissions, and take those programs and consolidate them into a block grant to State and local school districts.

The savings that result by reducing bureaucracy here in Washington can go a long ways towards helping to pay for

education initiatives. So I want to make sure that I stress that our Federal education programs, as we prepare for a debate on the fiscal year 1999 Federal budget, we will be having a debate out here on the House floor in the coming weeks on a budget resolution, and once we adopt a budget resolution that sets the Federal spending limits for 1999 fiscal year, we will then be debating the 13 annual spending bills for the Federal Government that effectively implement the Federal Government.

But I want to emphasize that we are not going to go back to smoking mirrors budgeting. We are not going to rely on money that we do not have and may never

receive here in Washington.

In fact, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY), the Majority Leader, who has been a real leader in education reform both in the Congress and in the District of Columbia public schools and in other States and communities around the country, a catalyst, a change agent for fundamental reform and improvement of our schools, he has said as recently as just a couple days ago something that kind of laid out the parameters for what the Republican congressional Majority will accept with respect to tobacco legislation.

Majority Leader ARMEY said that the President wants to use the tobacco deal and about $65 billion in anticipated revenues that may not result from the tobacco deal, the tobacco class-action lawsuit settlement, as a cash cow, that is the Majority Leader's term, to pay for a sweeping array of domestic programs. And he made it very clear that we are not going to accept that position.

The Majority Leader also said that if there is congressional action on tobacco legislation that it will be action to use the money for the correct and primary purpose of preventing teen smoking; it will be focused on prevention and cessation initiatives and on health care research. Because, after all, we have to remember that the tobacco class-action lawsuit filed by the States against the tobacco companies is to recover the cost that taxpayers in those States that both State and Federal taxpayers have incurred through spending on the Medicaid program for tobacco-related illnesses.

So we want to put the money into teen smoking initiatives, anti-smoking initiatives, and in biomedical research. And our health care initiatives, I believe, have tremendous bipartisan support as we concentrate more money through the National Institutes of Health on research into the causes and prevention of cancer-related illnesses.

That is where we are going to spend the money. We are not going to go back into smoking mirrors budgeting and start making budgeting decisions over the coming year, over the coming months, that is predicated on the settlement of this lawsuit and the receipt of millions or billions of dollars to the Federal Treasury when, in fact, those funds may not materialize.

Now, the other thing I want to say about the President's initiatives is, quite simply, that he seems well-intentioned. I do not doubt the President is sincere when he talks about trying to improve education, and I tend to agree with him that partisan politics ought to stop at the schoolhouse door when we talk about education and improving schools.

However, I also hasten to add that the President seems to want to concentrate, when he talks about education, wants to concentrate more and more power and authority, more of the dollars and the decision-making responsibility for education here in Washington. And I do not think that is the way to go; and I know that sentiment is shared by many, many of my fellow Republicans, my congressional colleagues, as well as many Republicans around the country.

I do not think it makes sense at a time when we are trying to bootstrap improvement of our schools, at a time when we are trying to encourage more responsibility and accountability in education, which, after all, has to occur at the local level, right at that individual school site level, which, again, is keeping with the long-standing American tradition of local control and decentralized decision-making education. Given that, I do not think it makes sense to try to create more and more programs here in Washington and invest more and more authority in the United States Congress and in the Federal Government bureaucracy.

It does not make sense to constantly nationalize and federalize these initiatives when, in fact, we ought to be working to reduce bureaucracy here in Washington in order to get more resources and more decision making authority out there to States and to the local school districts where it will do the most good.

I do not think, whether we are talking about national testing, as we were debating on the House floor earlier today, or any other of the President's new education proposals, to turn the Congress of the United States into some sort of national school board.

We want, again, to decentralize the funding and decision making in education. We respect the autonomy and the authority of that local school district.

I am a former school board member myself, served 5 years on my hometown school board including two terms as a school board president. I have the greatest respect for those people who were there sort of on the front lines of education, if you will, and who are making those sort of policy decisions on a daily basis in their local communities. They also are far more accountable to the people who elected them, their constituents, than we could ever be.

I go back to what I said earlier about serving as school board president and Little League president in the same year. I literally could not go anywhere in my home community, could not go into the corner grocery store without encountering a constituent. I was in the phone book. I was accessible.

It is that accessibility that I think is paramount to improving the quality of education in America today by increasing the accountability that local school districts have to the ultimate consumers of education, parents and guardians.

That is what we want to create here in Washington. We want a new education paradigm, a paradigm shift, if you will, where we shift the attention in education from the providers of education, the whole education establishment, to the consumers of education. Again, the best way to do that is to give those consumers the right to choose the education that is most appropriate and best suits their child.

So I wanted to kind of quickly touch a little bit about where I see the Congress going.

I mentioned the Social Security problem. That is a problem not just for the baby-boomers, as I mentioned in my remarks, but for the children of the baby-boomers, the so-called echo-boomers.

Because if we do not take steps, obviously, to reform Social Security structure now well into the next century so it is solvent when the baby-boomer generation reaches retirement age, it obviously will cease to exist in subsequent years when the children of those baby-boomers, the echo-boomers, reach retirement age.

So it is critically important we address education reform, tax reform, entitlement reform, and I would hope again entitlement reform.

But as critical as all those issues are, I want to talk about one other issue in my special order. That is the importance of moral leadership in America today. Because everything that we might say or do from a policy standpoint pales to the personal example that we set as elected decision makers, as elected office holders.

With the possible exception of the clergy, I do not think that there is a position of greater public trust than holding elective office. I am afraid that, too often, we have wandered away from that realization.

I am pondering this today because, earlier today, this morning, we had the National Prayer Breakfast. While it appears that our country is sailing along on a polite course and enjoying peace and prosperity in a booming economy, underneath that veneer is a struggle going on for the soul of America. There is a moral crisis occurring that underscores the importance of ethical and moral leadership in America today.

Again, I stress this because that leadership, that kind of ethical and moral leadership is what forms the bond, if you will, between elected officeholders and the people who really obviously have the true power in a representative democracy.

□ 1530

I am very distressed about the events that have been occurring back in Washington over the last few weeks, and I have to say, as I turn to this subject, I have to say at the beginning that I cannot find the explanations that have been coming out of the White House, all the political advisers with their spin, lawyers, the First Lady, and even the President, I cannot find that orchestrated and concerted effort credible. It is not credible to me.

When I look at the compelling, even overwhelming circumstantial evidence, with daily revelations, I have to conclude that the President has not leveled, has not been honest, with the American people, and I want to say quite sincerely that I think that deceit, that stonewalling, is jeopardizing the President's tenure, and I think really imperils his Presidency.

I cannot for the life of me understand why the—and I said this a week ago when matters first came to light—I cannot understand for the life of me why the President has not stepped forward and put this matter to rest, addressed head on the allegations that have been swirling around, particularly if he was sincere and honest when he looked at the camera, stared at the American people in the face and said there was nothing to these particular allegations.

In fact, I am looking at the President's quote from an article in Roll Call, which is the Capitol Hill newspaper from last Thursday, or Thursday, January 22, when he was asked by a reporter, you said in a statement today that you had no improper relationship with this intern. What exactly was the nature of your relationship with her?

This is the President's verbatim answer: Well, let me say the relationship was not improper, and I think that is important enough to say. But because the investigation is going on and because I don't know what is out—what is going to be asked of me, I think I need to cooperate and answer the questions.

Now, I couldn't agree more. Therefore, I cannot understand the deafening silence that is coming out of the White House.

The President goes on to say, I think it is important for me to make it clear what it is not. And then at the appropriate time, I will try to answer what it is. But let me answer, it is not an improper relationship, and I know what the word means.

I don't know when the appropriate time would be, but I don't think that the President and the country are well-served by continuing to stonewall and deny on this issue. I think the appropriate time for the President to address these allegations would have been at the outset of this whole controversy, when the allegations came to light. I can only conclude that by failing to address the allegations, which the President promised the American people he would do, that that then suggests that there is far more to this whole controversy than what the President has told the American people.

Now, let me also make clear that this is not about some sort of sexual relations, in my view. This is all about lying and obstruction of justice. This is all about the fundamental responsibility, going back to that bond, if you will, that covenant, between the elected officeholder and the people that he or she represents, and in the case obviously of the President, that is all the American citizens, all American people. This is about, again, moral leadership and setting the right example and teaching our children and future generations through that example.

I have to be honest and say again that I am really dismayed by this controversy and concerned that with every passing day there is a real problem, a real potential, rather, that this country may become paralyzed by this particular scandal or controversy, and that it could then potentially impede the ability of this body, the United States Congress, to carry out its very important work in facing the challenges that confront us as a country as we try again to create that better future with more opportunity for our children.

Now, this is another Capitol Hill publication called The Hill, dated January 28th, and I want to share these words, because I think it underscores the magnitude of what we are talking about here.

It goes on to say, ''Even if the,'' and they use the term ''Arkansas Houdini,'' ''Even if the President escapes from his latest crisis and serves out his second term, the Clinton presidency as we have known it is over. His undeniable character flaws, which his family and friends and the voters have been willing to turn a blind eye to in the past, are now glaringly obvious, and have cost him dearly in terms of the moral leadership and public trust that are a President's greatest asset.

''Americans are willing to forgive their elected officials almost any sin as long as they tell the truth.''

We cannot countenance not telling the truth. We cannot countenance lying and deceit and stonewalling and covering up. We cannot do that, because if we do that, we destroy the fundamental trust between the elected office holders and the American people, and we contribute to this widespread cynicism and apathy in American society when it comes to political participation and making your voice heard and your vote count.

It contributes to this alienation and distance that too many American people feel from their government, their representative government, and their elected representation.

The Hill goes on to say, ''We do not believe that President Clinton has done that in the present case, and we don't know if he will or is enable to, without exposing himself to charges of perjury. As a result, he must explain and justify the all too human failings that he managed to conceal from the American people, even as he has persuaded them to entrust him with the highest office in the land.

''Until he does that, it will be impossible for him to exert the kind of moral leadership that is the true mark of Presidential character. As it is, he has forfeited the right to expect the American people to cut him any more slack. He has,'' and these are The Hill's words now, this publication, ''He has disgraced and degraded the Presidency and betrayed his family and friends, his party and his country. His legacy is now uncertain and his journey across that bridge to the 21st Century is fraught with peril.''

And it is fraught with peril, because I also harken to the words of a very respected political commentator and widely syndicated columnist, David Broder, who wrote in the Washington Post on January 21, ''The controversy surrounding the President is especially disturbing and potentially dangerous, because international affairs are slipping from his control. Saddam Hussein's defiance of U.S. policy and UN weapons inspection teams is becoming more brazen,'' although I do believe since Mr. Broder wrote these words that in large part, because of the Republican leadership of the Congress rallying to the President's side, we have been able to bring Hussein more into check.

Broder goes on to write, ''After the rebuff Congress handed President Clinton last year by denying him Fast Track trade authority, he faces a difficult struggle for approval of the funds he wants to commit to stabilizing troubled Asian economist, and Bosnia looks more and more like a place that will keep U.S. and NATO forces he enmeshed for years.''

I do not necessarily agree with his take on world events, but I think his primary point is that we have a number of potential flash points around the globe, we have these brush fires that could really heat up and become a conflagration in different parts of the world, and we need a President who can exert his Presidency and use his bully pulpit to the fullest. To do that, again, he has to have, as The Hill suggested, the moral leadership and the public trust.

So I am profoundly disturbed by what has been going on and the fact that, from all appearances, this is going to become a typical Washington scandal, where the President is going to try to hang on as long as possible, attempting to basically divert public attention from this particular issue, rather than, again, confront the truth and level with the American people, because I just do not find him, again, believable or credible when he looked at the American people, looked that camera in the eye, and denied any relations with this young 21 year old intern.

The other fundamental question here is, really, doesn't America deserve better? I really believe the American people deserves better leadership than what we have had from the President, and the only way we can get that particular leadership is, again, for the President to level and tell the truth.

The truth is really paramount. This is an article that was in the San Diego Union Tribune back in December, and it was a column that says, ''Give a child integrity for Christmas.'' And it talks about the sense of integrity is the most important gift that we can give our children. So how do we teach them?

Then it goes on to quote a Professor of Ethics at the University of San Diego by the name of Larry Hinman who says that he thinks about this question a lot, and certainly it has been on my mind constantly in recent days.

Professor Hinman says he struggles every day to teach integrity to his 5 year old daughter. Then it quotes him as saying, ''If I talk about integrity with my child and don't practice it, I will actually undermine her sense of integrity, so I try to practice what I preach. If I tell her no shouting, I try my best to follow my own mandate, and I don't shout. Keeping promises to her is also a part of integrity. She always remembers if I make a promise, and if I don't deliver, she is quick to point it out.''

So I really believe that, again, particularly to those of us who hold a position of public trust, that we should be held to a higher standard, and the only way that we can meet or even exceed that standard, is to try to demonstrate integrity and honesty in our every deed and in all our words.

Again, I hope that this somehow this particular matter can be resolved, but I worry that we are, by perhaps turning a blind eye, by going along with the political spin, we are sending exactly, precisely, the wrong message to our young people about the importance of honesty, integrity and moral leadership. We have got to, as a Nation, if we want to I think really rediscover, or recover, our greatness and fulfill our destiny as the greatest Nation in the history of the world, as the leader of the world as we enter the 21st Century, we have got to rediscover basic American values like honesty, integrity and morality, and we have to regain really a sense of moral outrage when people play fast and loose with the truth.

So, again, this morning we had the National Prayer Breakfast back here in Washington, and this is actually a sermon that was published in the paper earlier this week by an Episcopalian priest or minister in Falls Church, in Northern Virginia, just across the Potomac River.

In this sermon he said, ''Let us pray this week that at the National Prayer Breakfast, that our leaders would experience a spiritual and moral renewal, whereby they aspire to the stature of a monarch whose highest concern is obedience to God and the well-being of our Nation; that they would be men and women who would have the courage to refuse to speak anything other than the truth.''

He goes on to say, and I think this is really the most important lesson we can teach our children as they develop character, as they begin to realize the importance of personal integrity and honesty in all of their words and actions, he goes on to say, ''Truth matters. Truth matters, and character matters. It matters for the well-being of our Nation. One day all truth will be revealed when we stand at the final judgment of God, and those who have the courage to walk in and speak the truth now will not be ashamed at that final day. Whatever is true, St. Paul says, think on that. The truth, Jesus said, will free us. The truth matters in the lives of our children, our homes, at church, and in Washington.''

I submit to my colleagues if it matters in your house, it certainly ought to matter in the White House.

□ 1545

EDUCATION AND SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

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

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, education, education, education. I sit on the Committee on Education and the Workforce. Now, Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear so many people this year talk about education. In particular, when I see some of them were the ones who were cutting the school lunch program for our children just a few years ago. And I remember that, because I sat on the other side of the television watching and hearing what was being debated. Today, when we were talking about national standards, something we had already resolved last year, I thought, this is not doing any good for our children. So let us talk about issues that really matter to our children.

For example, school construction. Now, this past couple of months, every weekend when I have gone back to Anaheim and Santa Ana and Garden Grove, the areas and cities that I represent, I have been visiting schools. In fact, I have probably visited almost 60 elementary and secondary schools in my district. And since I went through the public school system in Anaheim, I have gone back to many of the same schools that I graduated from. Indeed, one of the biggest reasons that I ran for Congress was because I wanted the children in Anaheim to receive the same type of education that I had received 25 years earlier.

Well, the biggest problem we have right now back home is that our children have no classrooms in which to study. In fact, I visited an elementary school patterned exactly the way my elementary school was patterned. The same floor plan, where a teacher was holding class in what used to be the broom closet for the janitor of our school or, for example, I took a look at the classroom that was made from the breezeway because we used to walk through a silent tunnel to get from one set of classes to the other when I went to school, and now, doors have been slapped on the sides and this too has been turned into a classroom. And I held a forum just a few weeks ago in my district with minority leader GEPHARDT and JUANITA MILLENDER-MCDONALD, a former public school teacher in California, and we listened to parents and to children and to school administrators talk about what it feels like to be in an elementary school built for 500 with 1,100 children attending; with 23 permanent classrooms and 27 portable classrooms on the playground, on what used to be basketball courts, on the grass areas, and our children are going year-round to school. Even in Anaheim, we are contemplating such a shortage of classrooms that we will now be considering in July double sessions, which means our children could go to school early in the morning and be late getting out in the dark, for example.

So it becomes even more important to address the issue of school construction, and we are trying to do that. I have introduced a Rebuild America's Schools Act, which would require local parents, teachers, taxpayers, to take the responsibility of building new classrooms, and we would help them by giving them tax credits for the interest paid on bonds they would have to pay, they would have to pass in order to build new schools.

Individuals would have to take local responsibility to ensure that children have a place to study, but we need to help them. And in California where we are growing by 5, 6, 10 percent a year in the number of children who attend schools, we must find a solution. I hope that the bill that I have here in Congress now will become law. It is patterned after a program we already have on the books, one which we passed in August. Mr. Speaker, it is not just urban city children who need help. It is children in suburbs who also have many attendees in their school districts, it is children that I represent. It is not just at-risk kids who we must talk about, because all of our children are at risk right now. They are at risk when one child is hungry in the classroom and bothering those who are fed. They are at risk when there is no band program in the school. They are at risk when PE has been taken away because there is no gymnasium and no money to build those facilities, and they are at risk when our children have no playgrounds because there are portable classrooms sitting there.

Let us really talk about what matters to our children.