

March 11, 1998 into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

DISTRUST IN GOVERNMENT

One of the major changes in American politics over the years has been the erosion of public trust in government. In the mid-1960s, three-quarters of Americans said they trusted the federal government to do the right thing most of the time. In recent years, that number has generally been closer to one-fourth to one-third. Public trust in state and local governments is not much higher, and we have seen similar declines in confidence in other countries around the world.

This devaluation of government and politics is clearly worrisome, and it makes it all the more difficult for the federal government to carry out its important responsibilities as we enter the 21st century. Thus increased attention has been given lately to the question of why Americans have declining confidence in the federal government. The reasons for the decline are several.

Declining trust generally: Part of the decline reflects a broader drop in confidence in authority and institutions generally, as many see declining respect for authority a feature of current culture. Trust in all institutions took a big hit from Vietnam and Watergate, and the sharpest drops in public confidence in government occurred during that time.

Changing economy: Americans have less confidence in government as the U.S. economy has changed—as workers feel the threat of globalization and technology and as little progress is made on income inequality and wage growth for middle-class workers. People feel high anxiety and a loss of control over their own lives. To them government seems less relevant and not particularly helpful with their difficult work transitions and their burdensome education, health care, and retirement costs.

Too much corruption: People are concerned about corruption and low ethical standards among government officials. They believe that many are dishonest and controlled by special interests. In a recent poll, only 18% of Americans thought their own representative has not traded votes for campaign contributions. People will often say it takes new Members of Congress only a few months to become corrupted by the system.

Poor leadership: A common theme is that public officials are just looking out for themselves, pursuing their own agendas and advancing their own personal power rather than providing leadership and representing constituents. Americans think that one of the best ways to improve public confidence in government is to find more responsive political leaders.

Too political: There is widespread belief that the political system has become too political. By a sizeable margin people feel that politics prevents government from serving the people well.

Messy process: The public doesn't approve of the slow, often contentious nature of the legislative process. Studies have shown that public confidence in legislatures generally goes down after the proceedings are opened up through television and other means, even for legislatures that had greatly improved their operations and performance compared to when they operated behind closed doors. Institutions that are the most public are often the least liked.

Government waste: Another major complaint, and one that I hear all the time, is that the federal government has become too big, too wasteful, too inefficient. In recent polls, 80% of Americans stated they believe that government is inefficient and wastes tax dollars. Often in public meetings constituents will tell me that fifty cents of every dollar going to Washington is wasted.

Too intrusive: Many people believe that government tries to do too much and interferes with their lives. They often tell me to "Get government off my back." Almost half of Americans perceive government as an obstacle rather than a helping hand to achieving the American dream.

Weak performance: Large numbers of Americans don't think government has much of an impact on their daily lives. Recently when people were asked to name two or three of the most important successes of the federal government over the past thirty years, 42% of Americans couldn't volunteer even one.

Media: The more cynical, more adversarial approach of the media today is often cited as one of the biggest factors in the dramatic drop in Americans' trust in government. Since the 1960s, newspaper and television coverage has become much more negative and more focused on conflict than substance. That clearly has taken a toll.

Some of these factors can't be easily changed, such as the negative tone of the media or the broad decline in confidence in all institutions. Yet there is still reason for hope. The good news is that many of the factors that can be controlled by political leaders can go a long way toward helping to restore confidence in government. Most notably, as Congress in recent years has taken the tough steps to reduce the deficit in order to boost the U.S. economy and has balanced the federal budget—a problem that has plagued policymakers for decades—public confidence in the institution has risen significantly.

There are many things that politicians can do to bolster trust in government. Among them: First, we need to streamline the operations of government—making it more responsive, accessible, and workable. Second, we need to tackle the big issues and deal with things that really concern people, such as improving education and shoring up the long-term outlook for Social Security and Medicare. Third, we need to correct public misperceptions about government, explaining better how it works and what it does. For example, Americans frequently complain about the large amount of money going for foreign aid, which they think is around 20% of the total federal budget and say should be closer to 10%, but is actually only 1% of the federal budget. Fourth, we need to improve the public's understanding of the impact of government on their lives every day. Support for the federal government improves considerably when people are informed about the government's role in improving health care for seniors, ensuring food safety, discovering medical cures, and creating the Internet.

Despite their often low confidence in government, large numbers of Americans still say they want to see an effective government that helps them and their family, and they believe this is an achievable goal. And they want more information about how Congress works and how it connects to their lives. So the opportunity for improving the way Americans look at their government is clearly there.

GUS AND FRANCES STAVROS—GIVING BACK TO THEIR COMMUNITY

HON. C.W. BILL YOUNG

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 11, 1998

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, if any one knows that hard work leads to success it

is Gus Stavros, my dear friend and constituent from St. Petersburg, Florida.

The son of an immigrant from Crete, his success is grounded in a strong set of values which have guided him throughout his life, as a parent, a businessman, and generous philanthropist.

Among the shared beliefs of Gus and Frances Stavros is a commitment to improving educational opportunities for the children of Pinellas County, Florida. With a \$1 million gift in 1987, the couple spearheaded a county-wide effort to establish Enterprise Village, a state-of-the-art learning facility to teach fifth-graders about business and economics. Since its opening, more than 100,000 students have participated in programs at Enterprise Village. All fifth-graders in Pinellas County complete a business course that prepares them for spending a day at Enterprise Village, which is the key to their learning experience. There they have the opportunity to run one of a number of businesses such as a bank, drugstore, newspaper, fast-food establishment, hospital, or radio station. They are paid with special currency, with which they can open a checking account for the day, have lunch, and spend their money at businesses in the Village.

The experience has been such an unqualified success for students, parents, and teachers that the Stavros family recently announced a new campaign, spearheaded with another \$1 million gift, to establish Enterprise Village II to allow eighth-graders to have a hands-on experience in business and economics.

This is just one of many charitable endeavors to which Gus and Frances Stavros have given so much. They have given to local theaters, orchestras, museums, and colleges.

Mr. Speaker, Gus Stavros has lived the American Dream. He is the son of an immigrant, a decorated veteran of World War II, he is a proud father and husband, he is a successful businessman, and he and his wife have given back many times over to our community. And in just a few days, on March 20th, he and Frances will celebrate their golden 50th wedding anniversary.

Following my remarks, I will include for the benefit of my colleagues a story by Lennie Bennett from Sunday's St. Petersburg Times which tells the remarkable story of this very special, and most generous, couple—Gus and Frances Stavros.

Their story is one that I hope inspires others throughout our nation to lead by example and give back to their communities to make them a better place to live.

[From the St. Petersburg Times, Mar. 8, 1998]

COUPLE RELISH GIVING AWAY MILLIONS

(By Lennie Bennett)

ST. PETERSBURG.—Gus and Frances Stavros went out to lunch for a celebration the day they pledged \$1-million in matching funds to Enterprise Village II last month.

On the way home from Largo to their condominium in downtown St. Petersburg, they passed by a number of fine restaurants and private clubs.

Finally they found what they were looking for—hamburgers and french fries at Wendy's.

That lack of pretension is typical, friends and colleagues say of the couple, both 73, who made millions when he sold his company, Better Business Forms Inc., in 1984 and subsequently have given most of those millions away.

"I don't believe in saving it, and waiting to give it away after my demise," Stavros said

recently at their downtown St. Petersburg business office.

The couple declined to estimate just how much they have given to the community, saying only that it was "a considerable sum," but there are few cultural institutions in Pinellas County that haven't benefited from their generosity.

He is considered a driving force behind the development of Ruth Eckerd Hall in Clearwater, where he lived for many years, spending a decade raising funds to build the performing arts center.

They are major donors of the Florida Orchestra, American Stage Theatre Company and the Museum of Fine Arts, where halls, courtyards and galleries bear the Stavros name.

But talk to Gus Stavros for just a few minutes, and it's clear that even though his motto for giving is "church, culture and education," his abiding passion is education.

"Of all the ills of the world, the only solution is education," Stavros said.

He would know.

Gus Stavros' father, Anthony, was born on the island of Crete in 1898. When Anthony Stavros was 9, his family "sold" him to a wealthy Athenian businessman who employed him as a gardener, sending his wages back to Crete. He ran away after a beating and worked odd jobs, saving enough to immigrate to the United States in 1912.

"My father came here because he was told—and really believed—that the streets were lined with gold. When he got here, he realized that they were lined with opportunity."

The young man, who spoke no English, worked as a dishwasher in Greek restaurants, and eventually was able to buy diners in Elizabeth, N.J., and prospered as a small businessman. He married another Greek emigre, Elizabeth Kourasmenos, who helped in the business. When Gus Anthony Stavros, their only child, was old enough, he worked, too.

But that was after he went to a public school from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., then a Greek school from 4 to 7.

"My father taught himself to read and write in both languages. My mother never learned to read or write. But she knew how to count. She worked the cash register," Stavros recalled.

"My father had great marketing know-how. He put a big sign on the highway that read 'Free Soup with Meals. All the coffee you can drink, five cents.' This was during the Depression. Truck drivers lined up for miles to get in."

A good student, Stavros received a scholarship to Columbia University in New York City, and he attended for a year before enlisting in the Army in 1942.

For three years, he served under Gen. George Patton. During the final march on Berlin, he was wounded in the head by artillery fire. He returned home with a Purple Heart, the Bronze Star and an injury that left him partly paralyzed in his left arm and hand.

The first call he made from the stateside hospital was to Frances Shaw, a young woman he had met only twice.

"In high school, a bunch of us formed the Condor Athletic Club. We'd play basketball, go bowling together. One night at the bowling alley, a friend came in with Frances. I asked for an introduction. Later, I said to my best friend, 'That's the girl I'm going to marry.'"

Gus Stavros and Frances Shaw didn't see each other again for two years. When he looked her up during one of his Army leaves, she didn't remember him.

They began corresponding although, as Mrs. Stavros said, "I wrote to a lot of boys

overseas. We all did, so they wouldn't be so lonely."

In 1945, when Stavros was released from the hospital, he returned to Columbia University and graduated with a liberal arts degree in 1948.

Gus and Frances were married that same year.

Like her husband, Frances Stavros was a child of the Depression.

"My father worked for the railroad," she said, "and we never had a lot. But my family, like Gus', valued education."

"That is why we feel so strongly about the Pinellas County Education Foundation and Enterprise Village," Gus Stavros said.

MEANING BUSINESS

Stavros is chairman emeritus of the Pinellas County Education Foundation, which was formed 11 years ago by then-associate superintendent Dr. Howard Hinesley and members of the business community to develop enhancement programs that the school system could not pay for.

One of those programs is Enterprise Village. It is a testament to Stavros' unequivocal belief in the free enterprise system.

"I'm not an economist. I'm a businessman. Enterprise Village teaches students about our economic system, which is the greatest in the world."

He planned Enterprise Village with a businessman's savvy.

"In 1977, I was involved in an event called Expo '77 for 11th- and 12th-graders, with local business leaders at booths in the Bayfront Center to help students with career planning. It didn't work. We held it on a Friday, and the kids came in the front door and went right out the back, probably to the beach.

"Then we went into the schools with films to talk about the free enterprise system. It bored the kids, and they didn't pay any attention.

"So I sat down and thought, 'In the world of business, you do what the customer wants. Who's the customer here? The student.' That's how we started with Enterprise Village."

The facility was modeled after Hallmark Cards Learning City in Kansas City, Mo., which Hinesley visited in 1987. He called Stavros, excited.

"I asked him to spearhead it, and he said yes," recalled Hinesley, now superintendent of Pinellas County schools.

"He opened doors that we couldn't. He went with us on every call. Some people had said no to us, and he got them to change their minds. I, at first, was just thinking small, something for \$5,000. Then it kept growing because Gus wanted to do it the right way. I never thought we could raise that kind of money."

By the time Stavros finished the campaign, \$1-million had been raised to build the Largo facility.

Stavros secured commitments from local corporations to replicate smaller versions of their businesses in a mall-like building with a central meeting space, complete with gazebo, called Town Square.

Since opening in 1989, more than 100,000 students have participated.

All fifth-graders in Pinellas County complete a business course provided by Enterprise Village before their visit. Then they spend a day working at one of the businesses, supervised by staff and volunteers. A bank, drugstore, newspaper, fast-food restaurant and hospital "employ" them, pay them in pretend money and give them time to open checking accounts, go shopping, have lunch. They meet at the end of the day for a speech by an elected "mayor," one of the students.

Students, teachers and parents laud the experience.

"We receive comments from them, and from visitors from all over the world who want to copy the program, about the importance of it, and of the importance of continuing this kind of education," said Frances Neu, executive director of the foundation.

In fact, it has been so successful, it has spawned Enterprise Village II for eighth-graders.

"It's important that we go beyond an introduction to entrepreneurship. At Enterprise Village II, we're going to teach students fiscal responsibility, ethics and career planning. Ethics, most importantly. We've got to teach young people that to be truly successful, you must live an ethical life," Stavros said.

LIFE LESSONS

Even though he is a decorated war veteran and graduate of a prestigious university, Stavros could not get a job because of his partial paralysis. He was advised to stay home and collect his disability pension. He finally found a job with Simmons Mattress Co. in New Jersey and worked his way up through the management ranks, eventually transferring to Ohio.

But in his entrepreneurial heart, what he really wanted was his own business. With two partners he started a small company that printed business forms.

Better Business Forms began with three employees working out of a Quonset hut.

Stavros, who had moved his family to Pinellas County continued to work his day job, spending weekends and nights at Better Business Forms. When the company was sold in 1989, it employed 550 people and posted sales close to \$90-million.

He managed the company's explosive growth with innovative business practices and a belief that no matter how big the business got, the individual employee always counted.

"It was the most satisfying thing I've done in my life, building a company with 550 employees, 550 families," he said.

He speaks of his own family with pride.

"I'm very proud that my son Paul has gotten involved with the Palladium project."

Palladium is a private effort to convert the First Church of Christ, Scientist, in downtown St. Petersburg into a mid-size performing arts hall.

"Paul was also the one who got us involved with American Stage. Our other son, Mark, is a sportsman who races greyhounds. Our daughter, Ellen, got us involved with the Museum of Fine Arts when she was a docent. Now she is executive director of Florida House in Washington, D.C. It's like state embassy, the only one."

The Stavroses have attended St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Clearwater for 40 years, teaching Sunday School, and coaching basketball and softball.

MOVING ON

A self-described workaholic and a hands-on volunteer who rarely relaxed during his adult life, Stavros seems happy to slow down a little now, though he said he believes that "the condition of standing still is the beginning of the end."

Gus and Frances Stavros, who will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary March 20, spend summers in North Carolina, and they have traveled a bit with family.

He claims to serve on fewer boards. Even so, his plate remains full of meaty fund-raising commitments such as the \$500,000 still needed to pay for Enterprise Village II (he's already raised \$3-million). He is chairman of the Florida State University Foundation, and co-chairman of the University of South Florida's capital campaign, with a goal of raising \$220-million. Not surprisingly, he's met half of that goal.

He loves speaking to students. "I tell them the story of the Pilgrims and the Mayflower Compact, a great document, which had one defect, that everyone should work for the good of all and pool their work product. They were starving to death. Gov. (William) Bradford then gave each man his own parcel of land for a year. At the end of that year, we had two great institutions, Thanksgiving and free enterprise."

He leans forward in a chair in his modest office as he gives this history lesson.

Surrounding him are hundreds of plaques, resolutions, statuettes and photographs, tokens of his life in service to the community.

There on the walls are the Florida Chamber Economic Education Leadership Award, Commissioner's Award for Excellence, Liberty Bell Award, National Conference of Christians and Jews Silver Medallion Award, United Way Award for Leadership, Friends of the Arts Award, and on and on.

There he is as Mr. Sun, the most prestigious civic award in St. Petersburg, and as Mr. Clearwater; he is the only person ever awarded both honors. There he is at the dedication of the Gus A. Stavros Center for the Advancement of Free Enterprise and Economic Education at Florida State University in 1988, and a year later at USF to dedicate a second center.

But he doesn't want to talk about any of those on this day. He wants to return to the story of his lunch at Wendy's.

"We had the program for the Enterprise Village II ground-breaking in our hands as we pick up our food," he said. "And our server saw it and said, 'Do you know about Enterprise Village? I want you to know I took off work so I could volunteer there for both of my children. It's one of the most wonderful things that ever happened to my kids.'"

Gus and Frances Stavros turned to each other and smiled.

They can't remember having a better meal.

NOT ENOUGH LIFEBOATS

HON. NEWT GINGRICH

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 11, 1998

Mr. GINGRICH. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to submit into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD this editorial by William Raspberry from the Washington Post of March 9, 1998. Parents should have the ability to rescue their children from the schools in which they are trapped

when those schools fail to meet minimum standards of performance and safety. If you cannot save every child from these schools, should you refuse to save a few? I don't think so, and neither does Mr. Raspberry.

[From the Washington Post, March 9, 1998]

NOT ENOUGH LIFEBOATS

(By William Raspberry)

Before you dismiss his voucher proposal for D.C. schools as too conservative, too insensitive to the poor or too destructive of public education, House Majority Leader Dick Armeo wants to remind you of this fact:

When Ted Forstmann and John Walton put up \$6 million of their own money to provide 1,000 scholarships for low-income parents who wanted their children out of D.C. public schools, there were 7,573 applications—about a tenth of the total public school enrollment. These parents, Armeo told me in a recent interview, constitute 7,573 rebuttals to whatever anti-voucher case you care to make. They believe that choice—represented in this case by privately funded vouchers—offers their children a better chance, and they want it.

The Texas Republican has been joined by Rep. William Lipinski (D-Ill.), Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.) and Sen. Dan Coats (R-Ind.) in introducing a bill to fund tuition scholarships for some 2,000 additional poor children here.

The D.C. Student Opportunity Scholarship Act would provide means-tested tuition supplements that could be used in public or private schools, either in the District or in neighboring counties in Maryland and Virginia. Students whose family incomes fall below the official poverty line would be eligible for the maximum yearly grant of \$3,200. Those whose family incomes are above, but less than 185 percent of, the poverty line would get three-quarter scholarships of \$2,400.

Question: Does the scheme represent a noble rescue effort, or does it amount to the abandonment of a sinking school system?

As far as Armeo is concerned, it's like asking whether no one aboard the Titanic should have been permitted to use lifeboats because there weren't enough lifeboats for everybody.

Armeo, who has been involved in a few local schools through a program he started called Tools for Tomorrow, says he has "seen the lights go on in their eyes" when children get additional tutorial help or scholarships to better schools. "They start telling you about how their favorite classes are math and science. And I wonder why we can't provide this sort of opportunity—in private or

parochial schools or in public schools—for more children whose parents can't afford it."

The most frequently offered answer is that such schemes—almost always too limited to serve all the children who need help—amount to a turning away from public education. The parents most likely to seize the opportunities offered are those who have the means to supplement the vouchers and those who already take an active interest in their children's education. The result is a sort of skimming—of children and their parents—that can leave the public schools significantly worse off.

It's undeniable. But look at it from the viewpoint of parents who grab at the chance to get their children into better schools: Should they be required to keep their children in bad schools to keep those schools from growing worse? Should they be made to wait until we get around to improving *all* the public schools?

"The District of Columbia is interesting, in the sense that it has some really outstanding public schools, and one of the highest per-pupil outlays in the country," Armeo said. "But, in candor, it also has some truly awful schools. How can this be? In our visits [with Tools for Tomorrow] the parents keep coming back to one word: discipline. They are talking about discipline in the sense of expecting a certain standard of behavior and discipline in the sense of the rigor with which [private and parochial schools] teach the curriculum.

"I don't know if you can make all the schools exercise that kind of discipline. But if it's possible, maybe the best way to make it happen is to put them on notice that they may be about to lose their children."

That notion that competition will force the worst schools to improve drives much of the advocacy for vouchers. Does it make sense? I don't know. When New York philanthropist Virginia Gilder offered \$2,000 scholarships to every child in Albany's worst-performing school, a sixth of the parents grabbed the offer and took their kids elsewhere. The school board fired the principal, brought in new teachers and undertook a range of improvements. But to expect most poor-performing schools to improve with the introduction of vouchers is to believe their poor performance is willful. I'm not sure even the voucher advocates believe that. But surely opponents cannot believe the logic of their counter-argument: that if you can't save everybody—whether from a burning apartment house, a sinking ship or a dreadful school system—it's better not to save anybody.