

deteriorating, the inspectors recommended closing the north wing and beginning emergency repairs immediately.

This incident highlighted what has become a national problem, Mr. Speaker, the deterioration of our nation's schools. Many of our nation's public elementary and secondary schools are in substandard condition and need many repairs due to leaking roofs, plumbing problems, inadequate heating systems or other structural failures.

The General Accounting Office (GAO), on behalf of several Members, recently performed a comprehensive survey of the nation's elementary and secondary school facilities, and found severe levels of disrepair in all areas of the country. The GAO contacted 10,000 of the nation's 80,000 public schools, and conducted site visits to schools around the country. According to the GAO's report, of the over 6,000 elementary and secondary schools in Texas, 76 percent of them reported a need for necessary upgrades or repairs.

Currently, more than 14 million children attend schools in need of extensive repair or replacement, and nearly one-third of our public schools were built prior to the beginning of World War II in 1939. If we want to prepare our children to succeed in an economy where technical skills are increasingly important, we need modern schools, meaning everything from updated science laboratories to computers in classrooms.

That same GAO report found that nearly 60 percent of all schools have at least one major building feature in disrepair, such as leaky roofs or crumbling walls. These schools are distributed throughout our communities, with 38 percent of urban schools, 30 percent of rural schools and 29 percent of suburban schools needing repairs.

More than half of the schools reported deteriorating environmental conditions, such as poor ventilation, hearing or lighting problems, as well as poor physical security. And 46 percent of our schools lack even the basic electrical wiring necessary to support computers, modems and other modern communications technology.

As well, the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), in their 1998 Report Card for America's Infrastructure, gave America's schools an F, based on the urgent need for repairs. Schools were the only infrastructure category to receive a failing grade. ASCE has determined that it will cost about \$12 billion to repair, renovate and modernize our schools.

Of this amount, approximately \$5 billion is needed to fix or remove hazardous substances such as asbestos, lead and radon. Another \$60 billion in new construction is needed to accommodate the 3 million new students expected in the next decade. Total annual construction and renovation spending since 1991 has remained between \$10 and \$12 billion for K-12 schools.

In order to address this serious problem, the President has proposed, and I support, a bill to establish and expand tax incentives to help states and local school districts address the need for school modernization. This bill would help states and local schools districts pay for the cost of modernizing and building more than 5,000 schools by creating new School Modernization Bonds.

Under the bill, these zero-interest bonds would be available for the construction and renovation of public school facilities. The Department of the Treasury would allocate the

rights to offer these special 15-year bonds to States that have submitted school construction plans to the Secretary of Education. The federal government would subsidize a total of \$9.7 billion per year of these bonds in the years 1999 and 2000. Texas would receive \$1.6 billion of this new bond authority.

The federal government would pay the interest on the School Modernization Bonds through an annual tax credit to the holder. These credits are allocated to the states, which will determine how to divide the credits. The bonds can be issued by any state or local government, but they are still required to pay the principal.

Mr. Speaker, forty-two national groups, including the National Parent Teacher Association and the National School Boards Association support this bill, and support repairing our nation's schools. The students at Arlington High School will have their school repaired this summer thanks to the community. Congress, by passing a school modernization bill, can ensure that all of our neighborhood schools are given that same helping hand.

TRIBUTE TO JUDGE TOM PETERSEN ON HIS RETIREMENT FROM THE BENCH

**HON. CARRIE P. MEEK**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 24, 1998*

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a distinct honor to pay tribute to one of Miami-Dade's unsung heroes, Judge Tom Petersen. His retirement on Friday, March 27, 1998 from the Dade Circuit Court will leave a deep void in that bench.

Judge Petersen represented the best of our community. Having dedicated a major portion of his life to making the juvenile justice system work on behalf of our wayward youth, he was relentless in his development of many innovative programs that helped turn them around. His was a crusade that maximized understanding and compassion for many adolescents under the tutelage of the juvenile court system. His motto, "Hug a kid: that's where it starts" was one that bordered on a thorough understanding of many a youth's need to be understood and guided through their growing years.

He was virtually the lone voice in the wilderness in exposing his righteous indignation over many irrelevant programs that siphoned off funds from the public till instead of succinctly eradicating the symptoms of juvenile delinquency. At the same time, he has been forthright and forceful in advocating the tenets of equal treatment under the law for those juveniles who have been remanded to the juvenile court system. His sensitivity toward them knew no bounds, and he was untiring in seeking the appropriate guidance and counseling strategies for them so that they could pull themselves out of the gutter of juvenile delinquency. In a 1993 Miami Herald editorial, Judge Petersen was cited for his firm belief that ". . . the state's approach toward juvenile delinquency is antiquated." A little TLC, he said, and they'd stop stealing hub caps and start doing their algebra homework.

In his stint on the Dade Circuit bench, Judge Petersen truly represented an exem-

plary public servant who abided by the dictum that those who have less in life through no fault of their own should somehow be lifted by those who have been blessed with life's great amenities. As a gadfly on the Circuit Court, he was wont to prod both elected and appointed officials in redirecting many government-funded programs to focus their resources on reducing juvenile delinquency, and thereby provide youthful offenders with the tools to create a more meaningful life.

As one of those hardy spirits who chose to reach out to the at-risk youth living in public housing projects, Judge Petersen thoroughly understood the accouterments of power and leadership. He sagely exercised them alongside the mandate of his conviction and the wisdom of his knowledge, focusing his energies to enhance the well-being of our community he learned to love and care for so deeply.

His undaunted efforts in the juvenile court system shaped and formed the agenda of many community organizations. His word is his bond of honor to those who dealt with him, not only in moments of triumphal exuberance in helping many a wayward youth turn the corners around, but also in his resilient quest to transform Miami-Dade county into a veritable mosaic of vibrant cultures and diverse peoples converging together into the great experiment that is America.

For this he was awarded the much-coveted Miami Herald's Spirit of Excellence in 1988. Numerous accolades with which various organizations have honored him symbolize the unequivocal testimony of the utmost respect and admiration he enjoys from our community.

Judge Tom Petersen truly exemplified a one-of-a-kind leadership whose courage and wisdom appealed to our noblest character. It is his compassionate and resilient spirit that genuinely dignifies the role of a public servant. For this he will sorely be missed! I truly salute him on behalf of a grateful community.

TRIBUTE TO CARL STEPHENS—ALABAMA BROADCAST LEGEND

**HON. TERRY EVERETT**

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 24, 1998*

Mr. EVERETT. Mr. Speaker, I have been informed that one of Alabama broadcasting's best loved personalities will soon retire after 40 years behind the microphone and television camera.

A native Alabamian, Carl Stephens was practically born into his profession. A radio sportscaster at the age of ten in his native Gadsden and student manager of the college radio station while at the University of Alabama, Carl Stephens began his television career at the Alabama Educational Television Network before settling in as one of the states' best-known on-camera personalities at WSFA TV in Montgomery.

At WSFA, Carl Stephens forged a 38-year career witnessing and reporting some of Alabama's and the nation's most historic events during the 1960s. Despite his contribution to news reporting in Alabama, it is noteworthy that Carl is best known by many Alabamians for his other roles. As host of a popular children's cartoon show in the late 1950's and co-anchor of the Auburn Football Review for