

CONSTITUENTS' CONCERNS

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

Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, first of all tonight, Wednesday night, is one of the nights that is a traditional night for the freshman class on the Republican side to take to the floor.

I, being the President of the class, reserve the hour for Members, so I would like to extend an invitation to anyone who might be monitoring tonight's proceedings, whether you are Republican freshman or any other member of the conference, to come on down if you have any items you would care to discuss tonight and any issues that you would care to raise this evening.

The invitation is open for at least another hour.

Let me say though tonight one of the things that I intend to speak about and some others who suggested they may be here to join us is the topic of obtaining constituent input from the people that we represent back home. Now many of us travel throughout our districts and hold a number of town meetings, and it was this topic that we were discussing just this afternoon at a freshman meeting.

□ 2145

A couple of my colleagues were discussing some of the comments that they had received at recent town hall meetings, and it kind of occurred to us that many people really do not believe that Members of Congress listen, that Members of Congress are willing to take the time to listen to constituents, to any of the messages that come up at town meetings and other public forums and so on, that they are acted upon. I thought it might be a good idea to discuss how many of those conversations are in fact discussed and carried on in other meetings that we have here, as was the case of the meeting this afternoon.

I hold a number of town meetings throughout my district in Colorado. My district is 21 counties large. It is the entire eastern half of the state, and generally all the Great Plains on the eastern side of Colorado. It is a district that is a little bit larger than the State of Indiana.

In order to cover a lot of territory in that district, we do hold a lot of town meetings. We do hold a lot of gatherings at coffee shops, at restaurants, at city hall meetings, at schools, all kinds much places. Recently I also conducted a wheat tour with the Colorado Association of Wheat Growers, and many of the wheat growers out on the Eastern Plains. The Colorado Wheat Administrative Committee was the other organization that helped organize that event. We went through three different towns on that wheat tour. We went through Kiowa County on the Eastern

Plains, we went through Cheyenne County and we also went through Kit Carson County, looking at wheat farms.

This is a very challenging time right now for wheat growers. One, many of these farms are dry land farms, and their wheat fields are not irrigated, so they are heavily reliant upon suitable weather conditions. It was a pretty good year so far to get the crop planted and to get a good start on this year's wheat crop. The wheat crop looked pretty good. But farmers were concerned about a number of issues.

One is getting enough moisture to put a good finish on the wheat harvest. Even though the crop is expected to be pretty suitable this year, the bigger issue is wheat prices. Right now farmers are looking at \$2.40, maybe as low as \$2.25, \$2.35 a bushel on wheat costs. There is an estimated 40 percent carry-over in wheat surpluses from last year. So the farmers that I spoke with were concerned about making sure that Congress put sufficient resources into efforts to expand export markets overseas.

I am delighted to say that as a result of those conversations and the message I was able to convey, along with many of my other colleagues from wheat producing states to the Committee on Agriculture and Committee on Appropriations, that earlier today we were successful in putting sufficient funding into the export enhancement program and other export-related programs that help our farmers expand markets overseas.

The real problem, however, has been that the Clinton Administration has not been aggressive, I should say, has not been aggressive at all in fighting hard for our farmers overseas and trying to expand markets where opportunities exist. In fact, because of many official policies of the administration, wheat producers are shut out of about 11 percent of the export markets in other countries, and they are thinking about that pretty frequently these days as they are looking at low wheat prices and willing purchasers throughout the world that we just need to reach.

What I want to share with those folks that I met on that particular tour and that particular series of town meetings is that I did listen, and there are many other of my colleagues here in Congress that have heard similar pleas from the other farmers and growers throughout the rest of the West and the rest of the country who have joined me and been fighting very hard here in Congress to expand export markets and trying to increase the prices of commodities, and to do this within the context of a thriving free market.

I also do a number of other types of visits. I do a number of radio call-in shows throughout my district. Again, being a rural district, many of the people on the Eastern Plains of Colorado listen routinely to talk radio shows. They get a lot of information over the

radio, spend a lot of time in their farm vehicles or traveling the great distances they have to go to get from one town to another, so call-in shows on radio stations is a great way to reach people, and I received several comments about that.

People have brought up the topics of Social Security. They wanted to see their Congress find some way to try to rescue the Social Security System, and particularly address the declining returns that we have realized in the Social Security Trust Fund.

They always seem to bring up the issue of tax policy and trying to find ways to reduce the effective tax rates on the American people.

One of the things I also do back home in my district is I publish my home phone number, and do that pretty frequently. A lot of people do call me at home, which is okay. I think when you run for office, that you should not give up your neighbor status by any means. So I take a lot of phone calls at home. A lot of times I am here in Washington, but I take those messages off of the answering service. When I am there, we get to answer the phone and talk to a lot of people at home. So I encourage anyone concerned about issues taking place in Washington and Congress, anyplace at the Federal level, or even at a state or local level, to get hold of those elected officials that you have in fact have hired to represent you in Washington.

Well, one of the other things that I did, Mr. Speaker, just a few months ago, was sent out a public opinion survey with respect to the topic of education in the district. I received, oh, several thousand responses to that public opinion survey. I want to go through some of those today.

I am going to respect the anonymity of those who have written, because, with the exception of a few, these folks did not intend for their names to be mentioned before the whole Congress. But I do know that they feel very passionately about some of these topics that they have written about. I want to share those with the House tonight and with colleagues, and also suggest if others have constituent letters or constituent concerns that they have been hearing from back home, tonight would be a good night to join me on the floor and let folks know we are listening and responding and that we are letting people know back home that we are carrying their message forward for them.

Here is one, again, on this education survey. It says, "We live in Fort Collins and send our children to a private school in Fort Collins." It says, "Public school is not an option for us. I am an attorney here and my husband, a microbiologist. We moved here four years ago from Silver Spring, Maryland. Our children were in private school there as well. I think that it is appalling what the NEA," which is the National Education Association, "the Teachers Union and the Department of Education, have done to public schools.

I saw the article recently regarding the amount of money spent per capita on children in the District of Columbia school system. It absolutely amazing. I can still remember driving to my office at 13th and K," not too far from here, "when we lived there, and see the run-down schools and kids on the street. I appreciate your efforts and the efforts of your staff. We will continue to support you." These are folks from Fort Collins.

Here are some other comments. This one was a particularly interesting one. Again, all these first few are on the topic of education. "Dear Congressman SCHAFFER, I would like to comment on your opinion survey. I would like to see money spent on education concentrated in the following areas. One, classroom basics, especially reading programs at all levels and for all needed learning styles of the individual student. If a student cannot read, they will never be successful. If assistance dollars are continued, 75 percent should be targeted toward the average working poor. It is the middle income taxpayer who supplies the money. They seldom are able to help their own children."

This writer, a woman, goes on to say, the third priority, she strongly supports increases in vocational and technology programs in junior high school and in high school as well as in two year community colleges.

"We are forgetting the constant losses of skilled tradespersons, plumbers, educators, electricians, auto repair, carpenters, seamstresses, et cetera, chefs, appliance repair, et cetera." This person did not excel at penmanship here apparently.

A "good reasonably priced washer repairman is hard to find, but continued support of welfare moms is still in place. Thank you for your time and interest." That is another person from Fort Collins, Colorado.

Here is one individual who sent a ratings list of what tuition costs in private schools in the area, and just wrote a brief note. "Congressman Schaffer, this is what we are paying for our son's schooling. Vouchers would be a great help. For one child to spend an entire year in a private school costs \$2,375." This is in Loveland, Colorado, and this individual makes some other notations as to why it costs almost \$6,000 per pupil at a public school, and it seems reasonable to this writer that individuals ought to be able to have an opportunity to take an education voucher and purchase a high quality education service at a lower cost when it is certainly available.

Here is an interesting one. It says, let's see, "I am retired from the Poudre School District," a school district in my hometown of Fort Collins, the district that my children currently attend.

"I am retired from the Poudre School District with 33 years experience in the classroom. I am not impressed with what goes on in schools today. Of

course, kids can use a computer and do math with a calculator, but those I tutor are lacking in good old multiplication, facts and so on. They don't have the mechanics. Their geography and history is missing. They can fly to Hawaii, but they can't locate it on the globe. I am disturbed when a 9th grader can't write a paragraph, let alone spell the word he uses. The trouble as I, a 90-year-old see it, is teachers today are the generation that were cheated by the system in the first place. So now what can we expect when teachers do not have the old-fashioned foundation I had? It is true, I am a life member of the NEA," again, the National Education Association, or the teachers union.

"I thought the NEA would make me a better teacher. How naive I was. Their periodicals still arrive with little about better teaching methods, but much about teachers' rights, raises and salaries, more benefits, plus reports on cases of fired teachers and their legal problems. I am convinced NEA's money helped a great deal in electing Clinton in 1992. Teachers paid their union dues to elect that man. Thanks for listening. I hope the bill passes."

The bill she was speaking of was a piece of legislation that just came out of the Education Committee today that deals with trying to get more dollars to the classroom, and she makes a notation that too much of our education money is spent on administration.

I would like to let the woman know and others who are of a similar opinion that the House Committee on Education and the Workforce did in fact today act on that very issue, a measure designed to try to direct more of the money that is currently being spent to the classroom.

You see, today anywhere from 40 to 60 percent of the education dollars spent by the Federal Government is estimated to be soaked up by various administrative costs and other bureaucratic expenses associated with the United States Department of Education, sometimes the state administrations in various states, sometimes local communities as well. But we are making a very conscious and very bold effort here in Congress to try to direct those dollars to the classroom.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this has become a partisan issue. That bill passed primarily with Republican votes. In fact, I am not certain that there was a single Democrat vote for moving more dollars to the classroom. I am hopeful that by the time that measure comes to the floor, that we will see more folks on the left side of the aisle to join us on the Republican side in trying to make sure that the dollars that we spend actually help children and not help increase the comfort level of bureaucrats.

Here is another person who wrote in their opinion survey, it says, "This opinion survey is a great idea." It says, "Get the Federal Government out of our local schools, do away with tenure,

give merit raises and give reviews for teachers regarding the ability to teach."

This person thinks it is important for us to go back to the basics and teach our children skills, not how to feel.

□ 2200

This woman wrote all over the place and in the margins. She said, "We need discipline back in the schools. We are pouring in more money now than ever, and we still have to fork over so much more money just to get kids registered. There is nothing provided, and the kids aren't learning anything. I am sick of the Federal Government running everything as we lose more and more of our freedom."

This is an individual who, just based on some of the other notations here in the column, it is very obvious she has some experience in education. She suggests that she cares very deeply about public education and want to see public schools thrive and succeed, and views the Federal regulations, the Federal mandates and the Federal red tape, as being a particularly burdensome impediment to educational progress.

These comments really do get at, I think, one of the dividing themes that separate the two prevailing camps of political thought with respect to the Federal involvement in public education. There is the side that believes that we ought to liberate schools and focus on the freedom to teach, to begin to treat teachers like real professionals in an environment where the truly great teachers are able to thrive and able to rise to the top, to be able to be paid on a professional basis, and with professional style contracts that reward success, that reward performance, and do away with this whole notion that the worst teacher in the district is paid the same as the best. That happens too often, and in fact is the case in most schools today.

What many of these writers have expressed is a real sense of trying to free up public education at the local level in a way that will guarantee excellence and guarantee success.

It is interesting, we really rally around many areas of our economy. There are many industries here in the United States that are the world's best, that are the world's best because they are competitive, because they define every day new heights with respect to quality. They are able to offer services and products at the lowest costs and with the greatest convenience.

In America we enjoy these attention routinely, and we expect those kinds of attributes because we live in a free market society, where competitiveness is, in the end, something that is of the greatest benefit to consumers. This is something that has been discovered throughout the world and has been proven throughout history, that free markets always work best. They work far better than a centrally controlled economy and a heavily regulated economy.

If we are willing to brag about our financial markets, if we are willing to brag about the goods and services and the manufactured products that are produced right here in the United States, if we are willing to brag about the professional services that exist, whether it is legal services, real estate services, insurance services, if we are willing to brag about these because of the level of competition, because of the high level of quality, the greatest advantages with respect to low costs, and the full amount of convenience, why is it that we are timid about applying these same characteristics to the public education system?

Why is it that we find so many here on the floor of the Congress, the floor of the House, who regard competitive models for education reform as somehow being negative when it comes to reforming public schools?

It does not make a lot of sense. If we cared as much about our schools as we do every other important industry in our country, every other industry that is a model of success, then we would begin to apply some of the most excellent characteristics of competition to education, as well.

We are beginning to see bits and pieces of that reform effort moving across the floor, and today's event in the Committee on Education and the WorkForce was another one of those milestones, being able to pass a bill to the floor that cuts out the education bureaucracy at the Federal level and moves real authority back to the States and to the local level.

Competition is another issue that the next writer writes about. This is on a different topic altogether. This is an individual that I have met down in Lamar, Colorado, a woman who runs a bus plant. There are only two original bus manufacturing facilities in the United States, one in Colorado and I think the other is in California.

From this woman, we extract her fuel taxes every time she hops in a motor vehicle and drives somewhere, take those fuel taxes, send them here to Washington, D.C., and many of those dollars are spent in mass transportation systems throughout the country.

Many of the cities and municipalities who purchase buses have an opportunity to, again, take advantage of the lowest cost, the greatest quality earnings, and the highest level of convenience. But unfortunately, there is an additional advantage to foreign competitors in the American market.

This woman simply wants a level playing field when it comes to competing right here within her own country, the ability to sell buses on fair and equitable terms. Laws apply to her that do not apply to some of other foreign competitors. They do not pay workers' compensation rates, unemployment insurance. They do not pay high taxes, have visits from the OSHA inspectors, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Her competitors do

not have the EPA kicking the doors down and coming in and doing spot inspections and driving up the costs of her product.

Yet, when those foreign competitors bring their product across the American line, the costs of that product is far lower than what she is able to provide. What she writes about is simply demanding a level playing field, making sure that American producers are able to do well in the United States and not be faced with unfair competitive advantages for foreigners.

I see the gentleman from Florida is here and joining me, and I am glad that he is here tonight. I yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WELDON).

Mr. WELDON of Florida. I thank the gentleman for yielding, Mr. Speaker. I was sitting in my office going through some mail, and as well, I was listening to the gentleman's comments about education. That, of course, is a very important issue for me and the people of my district.

Indeed, it is a personal issue for me, as well. My mother was a schoolteacher, and some of the sentiments the gentleman was were sharing in the letter that he was reading were sentiments that my mother had shared with me; that though she was a member of the NEA when she taught, she thought that the NEA had lost its focus and had moved away from quality education, and simply had become a labor union pursuing the traditional goals of most labor unions, which is higher wages and benefits for their members and job security, and that quality education for children is a side issue for the NEA.

I think some of the things that we have seen going on in Washington, particularly regarding issues like dollars to the classroom, I want to thank the gentleman for his leadership on that issue and the work that he does to promote that issue. I think the people in the gentleman's district should be proud of freshmen like the gentleman, and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. JOE PITTS), who have been really trying to push that legislation through.

We spent here in Washington, I think we spent over \$30 billion on education, but a disproportionately large amount of it does not end up in the classroom. It does not end up helping the kids. It gets sucked up by bureaucracy. This legislation I think is a piece of legislation that is long overdue, because it directs the dollars away from bureaucracy in Washington and in our State capitals and to the classrooms.

I do not know what the gentleman's experience has been in visiting his schools in his district or talking to his teachers, but my experience has been it is just very, very tight at the classroom level. We have a lot of classroom teachers in my district who use their personal monies, these are their post-tax dollars coming right out of their wallets, to buy things like supplies, papers, and special materials that are not offered by the school district. I really think that is a shame.

Let me furthermore add that the decline in education in the United States and the falloff in performance I think is a great tragedy. It is a testimony to the fact that Washington's involvement in education has not been helpful at all.

Specifically, SAT scores have declined over the past 30 years. Many colleges and universities have had to institute remedial courses, teaching their students the basics of composition and mathematics, arithmetic, because those subjects were not taught in school, and very often it is in the public school systems where the failures are the greatest.

Might I add also that I think one of the greatest tragedies is to see the National Education Association opposing any effort to implement school choice for parents. Specifically, we have tried repeatedly since I have been here in the Congress, and I know the gentleman has taken part in this debate, and I want to thank the gentleman for his help in this, to try to set up a school choice program in the District of Columbia.

There are many people who argue that we in the Federal Government have no role in setting up school choice programs out in the States and at the State level. I think those are legitimate arguments. I am from Florida, and I think what we are doing in Florida should be the responsibility primarily of parents and our county and local officials and the State officials, and the Federal Government should not be involved.

But we have jurisdiction over the District of Columbia. It is very clearly spelled out in the Constitution. To set up a school choice initiative in the District of Columbia to give parents, specifically low-income parents, I am talking about here, the ability to choose a school for their children I think is a very reasonable thing to do.

To see the NEA and to see so many of our colleagues on the Democrat side of the aisle opposing these initiatives year in and year out, I think the last proposal was 2,000 students. If the public school system in the District of Columbia was outstanding, you could perhaps make some legitimate arguments that this is not necessary. But in reality, it is one of the most expensive school districts, something like \$8,000 a student, and yet the dropout rate is sky high. There is an extremely high number of students who cannot perform on basic, remedial testing. The system is failing.

The thing that bothers me the most about this issue is rich people have school choice. I used to practice medicine before I came here to the House, and all my doctor friends exercised school choice. Yes, some of them enrolled their kids in the public system, but some did not. Some enrolled their kids in private and parochial schools.

But it is those very low-income families in the inner cities of many of our

cities in the United States, particularly here in Washington, those low-income families that have no choice, and those are the places where the schools are the worst; and to set up a pilot program, 2,000 students, give these low-income families the ability to choose an educational environment that will better serve their kids, and to see the NEA consistently opposing this, all I can conclude is that it is out of fear.

Because if school choice is not going to work, if the parents are not going to like it in the end and if it is not going to improve academic performance, why will they not let us find out? FDR said, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." If school choice, a pilot school choice program for the District of Columbia, is so bad, why do they not let us test the hypothesis and see if it will work?

I would assert to the gentleman, my good friend, that the reason they do not want us to test it, it gets right back to what the gentleman was talking about 10 minutes ago, which is, they know it will work. They know if it works, there will be demand for more of it in the city of Washington, and then the city of Milwaukee will be demanding more, where they already have it; and then they will be demanding it in L.A., New York, and Philadelphia. The NEA is afraid of that. They are afraid that it is going to work. That is why they oppose it year in and year out.

Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado. School choice and a competitive approach to school reform really does threaten the union mentality that the National Education Association has come to represent.

At one time the NEA was a legitimate professional organization that was designed to try to assist teachers and to help them become more professional at their job, to help them to become more proficient, and to provide kind of a continuing education agent for its members.

Over time it really has evolved into a full and complete union. They file taxes as a labor union. They act as a labor union when they get involved in the political process. They act upon this Congress and State legislatures throughout the country on a political basis. Their goal really has become to preserve the status quo to the greatest extent possible, to preserve these union wage scales, where the worst teacher in the district receives the same pay as the best teacher in a district.

Within that context, it is hard to imagine that there are too many teachers who are able to, year after year after year, just bring their own energy and their own enthusiasm to the classroom to rise above that kind of system. Yet, remarkably, many of them do. But it is through a sense of altruism, a sense of compassion for their profession, a sense of real zeal to educate youngsters and realize that these children are the future of the country.

But successful, thriving teachers are not there by design of the system, by

any means. They are only there because of the compassion that they carry with them in the door when they become new teachers.

□ 2215

Hopefully they will be able to hang on to it and sustain it for 4 or 5 or 6 years. Some manage to sustain it longer. But year after year after year, I have heard from teachers. They write letters. When I go to schools, I visit them and they speak to me and they tell me that after 10 or 15 years in a system, it becomes very clear that there are no greater rewards financially, professionally, or organizationally for those teachers who truly thrive.

And, again, my heart goes out and my hat goes off to those teachers who are truly great teachers, because we can find them throughout the country. We can find them in my school district and the school district of the gentleman from Florida, I presume. But I submit they are not there by design. They are there out of the passion for teaching that they bring with them.

We ought to reform schools so that we reward good teachers and treat them like professionals. I love the response I get back home when I say that I think teachers ought to be treated like physicians. They ought to be treated like basketball players and football players, the things that we care about, so that the truly great teachers can become wealthy if they are the best in their industry and craft. They have a huge line of potential customers outside their door who want to get in and receive their services. That teacher ought to be paid a heck of a lot more than the teacher who runs the classroom where people are trying to escape because they are not learning anything or because they are in a dangerous environment.

Yet in today's model, that kind of comparison does not exist. The worst teacher in the district under the NEA's union contract rules are treated exactly the same as the best teacher. That is not a model for success. That is what school choice allows us to get around, treating parents like customers to reform a system that looks more like every other great industry and every other great delivery system in our country.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield, I wanted to comment on the point, which is an excellent one, which is making education more of a free marketplace.

It is amazing that we here in the United States, the Nation that has championed the value of the free market and how the free market has the ability to do a better job than the government, and how the free market has the ability to provide better services than in a socialized system, indeed that was the great battle of the Cold War which was whether a market system built on freedom was better for the

common man, or a command and control, government-run economic system which, of course, was the Soviet, Marxist Leninist model. Yet in the United States, we have relegated education to the government sector exclusively.

Now, as I said earlier, that is not true in that wealthy people can exercise choice and, therefore, there is a limited market. But I am talking about the common working man.

Might I digress to say that I have met a lot of working class families in my district, families that are struggling to make ends meet, who specifically sacrifice personally to send their kids to private or parochial schools.

But one of the big arguments that the NEA and the left has made against school choice, which I think is an argument totally without merit, is that it will destroy public schools. We hear that over and over and over again that Republicans, because we want school choice, want to destroy the public school system.

They are the champions of the public school system and, therefore, their position is right; that school choice should not be allowed.

Well, first of all, I think this is about educating our kids and what is the best educational environment for our kids. I thought the debate was not about preserving a socialized public system run by the government, but about making sure our kids get the best education they need so that they can go on to make sure that the United States continues to be the greatest country in the world and continues to lead the world in science and technology and medicine. It is not preserving this institution because we have gotten used to it.

Now, I would assert that if we have school choice in the United States, that our public schools will survive. Indeed, I think our public schools will get better, because we will have a real competitive marketplace at that point and the public schools will have to compete with the private sector more effectively. They will no longer have a monopoly.

I think that some of the public schools in my district will succeed fabulously. One of the towns in my congressional district, Sebastian, has a brand-new high school with all the latest high-tech facilities and the greatest teachers we could ever find anywhere in the United States are in that high school.

I would wager that if we implemented school choice more broadly across the United States, and if it were implemented in my district, that Sebastian High School, Sebastian River High School would succeed fabulously. A public school. Why? Because I think they will be able to compete.

So let us not argue that implementing school choice is going to destroy public schools. Public schools are not that bad. I mean, to make that argument is almost to admit they are bad.

Now there will be some public schools that will not survive. But those

are the public schools that should not survive. I am reminded of a speech NEWT GINGRICH gave this morning about New York City, about how last year in New York City there were 500 restaurants that closed and went out of business. Sounds ominous. Sounds bad. But there were 1,300 new restaurants that opened.

Now, I would wager that some of those 500 restaurants that closed, closed because they did not serve very good food. Most people would probably say if they should have closed.

So if we institute school choice in America, yes, we will have some public schools that will close. But I would argue that those are the public schools that should close and those are the public schools that should close because they are not educating our kids. That is the core of the argument.

Most public schools in my district, and I would wager that most public schools in the gentleman from Colorado's district, will succeed and thrive and they will be able to be competitive and the people who will benefit from this will not be the people who occupy the NEA headquarters in Washington, D.C. And that is because that is not what this argument is about. It is about our kids and making sure our kids gets the best education.

Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, the failures that are exposed through choice, whether it is school choice or the choice of restaurants as in the case of the New York example, does not mean that the opportunity leaves, that there is not an eating establishment at that old restaurant or that the opportunity to learn will leave the neighborhood.

What we mean when we talk about bad schools being exposed and sometimes closing usually means that we have a changeover of management. That the old management is fired and a new team is brought in to try to meet the need of a neighborhood or a community. The need for education certainly does not go away.

As we know in the United States, whenever there is a high need for some service or some commodity, there is an entrepreneur waiting in the wings to fill it and to meet that need or provide that service. I believe that the same is true in education.

We really have not even broken the surface on unleashing the entrepreneurial instincts of teachers in America. They really have been suppressed by this mechanized union mentality that says if a student grows up in neighborhood or lives in neighborhood, that they are assigned to attend school which is in the neighborhood. Or if they move to another neighborhood, that they go to the school that is associated with that neighborhood. That is the model that we have today where nobody chooses, where nobody selects the curriculum they want, the management style they would prefer, or even some of the other ancillary benefits of a particular school site.

But I believe that if we are able to get beyond that, if we are able to allow teachers to compete on a professional basis, that we will see education in this country turn around and thrive like we can not even imagine today.

Again, we have a tremendous need in our Nation for a strong system of quality public education. Appealing to the entrepreneurial instincts of education professionals in my mind is the way to meet that demand. Those demands exist especially in inner city areas and poor neighborhoods where some believe that school choice will leave those children abandoned. I say that is nonsense. I think those are the areas where we will see the greatest challenge and I think we will see some of the best teachers moving into those particular opportunities to serve communities and to teacher.

So I am like the gentleman from Florida, I think those of us who I believe truly have a passion for improving public education, we do not look to the free market as a way to suppress educational growth and educational excellence. We look to free markets as a way to help schools thrive.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would again yield, I just wanted to add one more point. In talking to a lot of parents in my congressional district who have serious concerns about the quality of education in the United States, one of the big issues that I find comes up more and more is an area where I think a lot of our schools are failing, and that is it is not just in the academics. It is not just in the ABCs, but in the basic fundamentals of character development.

As many people know, we threw that issue out the school house door 30 years ago and we are reaping a lot of the benefits of that, or the negative benefits of that.

There is more to educating a kid than just teaching them how to read and write and to do arithmetic. There is more to being a good citizen. And that is really what it is about. We want to raise up people to be good citizens. We want them to be involved in their communities. We want them to be good parents. We want them to grow up to be hard-working people, people who will succeed in the marketplace.

Our schools, particularly many of our public schools, are failing in that element of education in the area of teaching character and virtue. And at least what I hear from a lot of parents, particularly some of our inner-city communities, is that they want school choice for that reason. They not only want to find a school that will better teach their kids academically, but they also want an educational environment where their kids will be positively influenced as citizens, as individuals, in areas of character and virtue.

That is one of the other big, big reasons why I would like to see a real marketplace. Now, how we go about doing that, we can debate this issue, whether it is through a tax credit or

school voucher or something along those lines. But after all, is not it the people's money anyway?

We tax them, we take their money, property taxes, income taxes, and then we create this government-run system. And in many communities, that government-run system, we take the money from them, we set it up, but it is failing their kids. And the parents are saying I would like to take my money and go elsewhere. The way it works out is only the wealthy people who have the money to go elsewhere can go elsewhere. But many of the working families, poor families, they are locked into schools that are failing their kids.

So I am really happy the gentleman brought up this issue tonight. I think it is a critical issue. I think it is an issue that we as Republicans need to continue to push. Education in my opinion is going to be a more and more critical issue in the years ahead. We are moving from this industrial-based society to this information-based society which is very, very computer dependent. Where knowledge and ideas are going to be critical for success. And how we educate our kids in the areas of science and technology is going to be critical. We need an educational system for the 21st century.

A new age is dawning. We are leaving the 20th century and moving into the 21st century. Do we want to keep this educational system that has served us well up until now, and is not serving us well now, at least in many of our communities? Are we willing to be bold and to be brave and to move ahead and try something new?

So, I thank the gentleman for bringing this issue up and I have been very pleased to be able to join with the gentleman this evening to discuss this issue.

Mr. Speaker, being the son of a schoolteacher, it has always been an issue that has been very dear to me. My mom taught school and, indeed, we were talking about public schools for a while. I am a product of public school education, not only for elementary and secondary school, but as well for college. I went to a public college.

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I think what we are talking about is improving education in America, helping our kids to be smarter, but, as well, helping our schools to be better. The best way to do that, the best way to do that is to create a real bona fide marketplace where we have competition.

Whenever anybody talks about competition in an environment where there is no competition, those who have the monopoly will always scream and yell and say no, no, no, we do not want that competition. It is going to hurt the system. It is going to make things worse.

I would assert that the fear of change is all we are seeing there. We need to harken back to the words of FDR: "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." If

we are willing to make the changes necessary, we can see that we have an educational system that will carry our Nation boldly into the 21st Century so that we can continue to lead the world in the future.

I want to thank the gentleman for joining him in this special order. It has really been a pleasure for me to be here with him.

Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for joining me. My parents are teachers as well, retired. My father spent his whole career teaching in the Cincinnati public school system. My mother, as well, finished her career working in the Cincinnati public school system.

This issue tonight was raised because of the volume of letters. I just grabbed the six or seven that were on the top of the pile before I headed over here today. I did not really check to see what was in them. It was remarkable how similar they are in their criticism. But these letters are also long on suggestions as well, opportunities for improvement, commendations, too.

There are plenty of teachers who view themselves as professionals, who communicate with me, with the gentleman, and with other Members of the Congress; and I encourage them to continue to do more of the same. I am confident in saying that they are not well represented, professional teachers, that is, not well represented by this teachers union that we mentioned earlier.

The interests of the union are very, very different than the motivations of real professional teachers who care about children. This union is a large insurance conglomerate, for example. They profit handsomely from selling professional liability insurance policies to teachers. That is the reason many teachers joined the national union in the first place.

This particular union has the ability to offer a product that is lower in cost because of the volume in which they deal. So they offer low-cost professional liability insurance. Many teachers believe that they need to purchase that insurance from the union in order to teach in a classroom. That is not really the case.

I find that, just walking classroom to classroom in public schools in my district, as I frequently do, or when teachers show up at my town meetings, or there are several that live in my neighborhood as well, when they stop by, their attitudes and opinions and beliefs about where we need to go with education reform is very different than the union.

I ask them, well, why are you sending your money to Washington, D.C.? It is something like \$400 a year or something along those lines just for the Federal dues. That is not even the local regiment of this national union that exists at the State and local level. You pay additional dues for those folks.

I ask them why they pay, why they keep forking over all the hundreds of dollars every year, which amounts to

billions of dollars on a national level. Why do they keep sending their cash that way? They frequently say it is because of the professional liability insurance, but they do not really believe all that nonsense the union perpetuates out of Washington and tries to move forward.

But it really does matter, because this union is very powerful and persuasive here in the halls of Congress. They hand out millions of dollars in cash at campaign time for elected officials and candidates who wish to preserve the status quo and maintain that union model on the union's terms.

The unions do not like people like the gentleman and I who speak about free market approaches to public schooling, because it really does show the difference in fundamental beliefs on what education ought to be about nationally.

There are those on the union side that believe that we measure fairness by the relationship between one school building and another school building or maybe one school district and another school district or maybe even one State school system and another State school system.

But the gentleman and I and those who gravitate toward the free market have a very different belief, and that is that we measure fairness and education on the relationship between individual children.

We believe that wealthy children in America ought to have full opportunity to a great education. But poor children ought to also have that same opportunity. That is what school choice is all about. Whether it is vouchers or charter schools or tuition tax credits or school choice or all of the different mechanisms that we have explored and proposed and discussed are about is moving us in that direction of trying to provide broader opportunity, more liberal opportunity with respect to choice to all children, whether they are wealthy, whether they are poor, whether they live in a nice neighborhood, whether they live in a poor neighborhood. No matter what part of the country they happen to live in, we fundamentally believe that we, that they will have greater opportunity at a lower cost and higher quality by eliminating the waste when we move to a free market approach to education.

When we do that, we have a provider, a professional teacher who provides a service to a legitimate purchaser, somebody with purchasing power that is empowered by cutting bureaucracy and red tape.

When we can restore that relationship between provider and recipient and make that bond stronger, that is the way that we can allow educational services to be delivered more succinctly, more directly, with fewer impediments and intrusions from bureaucracies and so on.

This really is a debate about fairness and a debate about whether we want to see all children in America thrive and

enjoy a higher quality education at the same right.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado. I yield to the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with everything the gentleman is saying. It is also a debate about empowering parents. I believe and I trust the gentleman believes the same way, that the person who is most concerned about the child and the child's education is the mom and dad.

It is not necessarily the bureaucracy here in Washington or the Members of this body or the National Education Association president located in Washington, D.C., but it is actually the mom and dad.

When you empower parents to be able to select an educational environment that is best for their kids, they will do that. I trust moms and dads to select the best education for their kids.

I think a certain amount of the opposition that comes from the left on this issue, this critical issue of school choice, is a lack of trust of parents. Do we trust the moms and dads of America to select the best educational environment for their children or do we not.

I would assert that, if we could overcome the obstacles of the education bureaucrats and the National Education Association and the left wing elements within the Congress of the United States and we could just learn to trust parents and give parents the power, the ability to select an educational environment for their kids that is best for them, they will do so. Academic performance will improve. SAT scores will go up because kids will be in a better academic environment.

As I said earlier, the place where this is most critical is in our poor communities. The place where it is most critical is in many of our minority communities. The place where it is most critical is in many of our inner city communities.

I dare say that, many of the communities that people like the gentleman and I represent, the public schools are good. But there are many communities in the United States where the public schools are failing, and they are failing miserably.

There are some people who would argue that they need more money. We have been hearing that for many years. But one of the most amazing facts is that the amount of money that goes into these schools correlates poorly with the quality of educational performance of the students.

Indeed, there is a considerable amount of data that some of the most poorly funded schools in the United States frequently have some of the best academic performance. Specifically what I am talking about is I have seen data out of places like South Dakota where I think they are one of the lowest levels of the Nation, but academic performance is extremely high.

Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado. Utah is another State.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Utah as well. So it is not money. Of course, then, we can always just point to Washington, D.C. and the simple fact that it is one of the highest in the Nation, \$8,000 a student. It has some of the worst schools with some of the worst academic performance that we can find anywhere in the United States.

It is not an issue of money. I reiterate, I come back to this essential point that we are debating or discussing here tonight, we are both on the same side of this debate, which is that if we can give parents that ability, and if the opposition will stop fighting this and it will allow us to try to test this hypothesis, I believe it will work very successfully.

Again, I want to thank the gentleman for bringing this issue up tonight. It is a critical issue. It is a very, very important issue.

There are lots of indicators out there that, in the United States, our kids are not able to compete as well as they should. We used to lead the world in education. Our kids were coming out of school the best educated in the world.

One of the interesting facts in all of this is that, at the college level, we continue to lead the world. At the university level, we are leading the world. But at the college and university level, we have a marketplace. We have choice. Everybody knows that.

Once you get to that stage in life, you select the environment you want and the place where you want your kids to go to school. But up until that point, for many parents, they are locked into a public system frequently because of financial issues.

So lo and behold where you have the marketplace in a higher education, we lead the world. I say if we can get a marketplace at the K through 12 level, we will again lead the world in education, and all of America will benefit for that. I believe the world will benefit for that because, when America leads, the whole world prospers.

Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado. Very well said. I appreciate the gentleman from Florida joining me tonight.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. DINGELL (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for Wednesday, June 24 and Thursday, June 25, 1998, on account of official business.

Mr. DOYLE (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for Wednesday, June 24 until 5:00 p.m. on account of a death in the family.

Ms. SLAUGHTER (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today before 6:30 p.m. on account of district business.

Mr. YATES (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for after 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 24, 1998, on account of medical reasons.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. MCGOVERN) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. CONYERS, for 5 minutes, today.
Ms. NORTON, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. RUSH, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. UNDERWOOD, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.
Ms. HOOLEY OF OREGON, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. MCINNIS) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. GUTKNECHT, for 5 minutes, today and on June 25.
Mr. MORAN OF KANSAS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. MYRICK, for 5 minutes, on June 25.

Mr. PITTS, for 5 minutes, on June 25.
Mr. MCINNIS, for 5 minutes, today.
Mr. SANFORD, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Member (at his own request) to revise and extend his remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania, for 5 minutes, today.

EXTENSION OF REMARKS

By unanimous consent, permission to revise and extend remarks was granted to:

Mr. CONYERS, and to include therein extraneous material, notwithstanding the fact that it exceeds two pages of the RECORD and is estimated by the Public Printer to cost \$2,380.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. MCGOVERN) and to include extraneous material:)

Mr. TOWNS.
Mr. KIND.
Ms. NORTON.
Mr. KLINK.
Mr. TIERNEY.
Mr. HAMILTON.
Mr. KANJORSKI.
Mr. HOYER.
Mr. KLECZKA.
Mr. SERRANO.
Mr. VISCLOSKY.
Ms. LOFGREN.
Mr. STOKES.
Mr. BAESLER.
Mr. FARR of California.
Mr. PAYNE.
Mr. STARK.
Mr. BENTSEN.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. MCINNIS) and to include extraneous material:)

Mr. SOUDER.
Mr. BUNNING.
Mr. LEWIS of California.
Mr. PAUL.
Mr. OXLEY.
Mr. SMITH of Michigan.
Mr. RIGGS.

Mr. GALLEGLY.
Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina.
Ms. DUNN.
Mr. CAMP.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado) and to include extraneous material:)

Mr. POMEROY.
Mr. MCINNIS.
Mr. BARCIA.
Mr. CONYERS.
Mr. GILLMOR.
Mr. WHITFIELD.
Mr. REDMOND.
Mr. GUTIERREZ.
Mr. MCGOVERN.
Mr. GOODLATTE.
Mr. WELDON of Florida.
Mr. ENGEL.
Ms. VELÁZQUEZ.
Mr. PACKARD.
Mr. COOK.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 41 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, June 25, 1998, at 10 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XXIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

9804. A letter from the Deputy Executive Director, Commodity Futures Trading Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule—Minimum Financial Requirements for Futures Commission Merchants [17 CFR Part 1] received June 19, 1998, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

9805. A letter from the Deputy Executive Director, Commodity Futures Trading Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule—Final Rulemaking Permitting Futures-Style Margining of Commodity Options [17 CFR Parts 1 and 33] received June 19, 1998, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

9806. A letter from the Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule—Apricots Grown in Designated Counties in Washington; Revision in Container Regulations [Docket No. FV98-922-1 IFR] received June 19, 1998, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

9807. A letter from the Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule—Onions Grown in Certain Designated Counties in Idaho, and Malheur County, Oregon; Decreased Assessment Rate [Docket No. FV98-958-1 FR] received June 19, 1998, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

9808. A letter from the Director, Office of Regulatory Management and Information, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule—Fludioxonil; Pesticide Tolerances for Emergency Exemptions [OPP-300676; FRL-5797-5] (RIN: 2070-AB78) received June 18, 1998, pursuant to 5