

our country and that State and local government is responsible for public education, making sure that all of our children have a high quality education that prepares them for a productive, successful adult life.

That said, some of the rhetoric that has been used on this floor in the last few days simply does not withstand scrutiny. I cite for you a case in point. On Saturday, the minority leader of this House, the leader of the House Democrat Party, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT) said, we have not spent one day, one minute, one second on our most important challenge, making sure every child is a productive citizen in a global economy.

The very next day the President said, in just the last two days Republicans and Democrats have worked together to pass strong charter school and vocational education measures.

Confused yet. I sure am. Which is it? Or do you insist on having it both ways and perpetuating these disingenuous tactics in a deliberate attempt to mislead the American people, hoping desperately to get some sort of political advantage going into the November election?

It really is bankrupt to kind of use these tactics over and over and over again. In fact, Mr. GEPHARDT made his comments the same day that he voted for the charter school bill. And the President made his comments the very next day at the conclusion of a meeting of Democrats at the White House on budget negotiations, and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT) was seated directly next to the President. It is funny. It is laughable that Members of this body, who I think are all honorable professional Members, engage in these kind of tactics.

The fact of the matter is, we have worked long and hard on education, beginning last year with the Federal special education bill, reforming that law called Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which is the only Federal education mandate imposed on State and local agencies by the Congress. And in that bill for the first time since that legislation became law we inserted a provision saying that once we reach a certain level of Federal funding, State and local governments could reduce the money that they spend, called the local share, that they spend on special education costs. And the net effect of that is that State and local government then has more ability, more flexibility to use their own money to meet a variety of educational needs. And that is as it should be.

State and local governments have the taxing authority for public education. We at the Federal level do not have the taxing authority for public education. There is a clear division between the responsibilities and the role of the Federal Government and that of State and local government.

But we have worked long and hard on education, achievement after achievement over the last 2 years. Just these

two bills, vocational education and charter schools, are going to help give our young people more technical training, more career skills to prepare them, particularly those that are not college bound, to prepare them for the job force, the job market, to help prepare them for the job market not just of tomorrow but of the 21st century.

The charter school bill is going to substantially increase Federal taxpayer funding for the start-up of more charter schools. These are public choice schools that are on the cutting edge of education reform and innovation and which I think are the best thing going today in terms of infusing competition and choice and therefore more accountability into the public education system.

These bills, which are about to become law, follow on the heels of the special education law, the two bills that came out of the Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education, Training and Life-Long Learning, the Work Force Investment Partnership Act and the Higher Education Act amendments, which provide the highest amount of Pell grants, the highest level of Pell grant funding and the lowest interest rates for student financial aid in the history of our country.

We have a great record of fighting for our children's future and improving education and America's schools. But our solutions are different than the Democrats. That is true. Because we emphasize local control and accountability, which is in keeping with the longstanding American tradition of local decentralized decisionmaking in public education, more parental involvement in choice, raising teacher competency and teaching accountability.

Despite the Democrats' delaying tactics, our record beats their rhetoric any day of the week.

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SUPPORT PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL ON SCHOOL MODERNIZATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I simply would like to say to my colleague who recently spoke to this House that I really do not want political advantage. That is not why I came to this body.

Frankly, I came here to be able to answer the call that I think so many have called on us to answer, and that is to assist the American children get the best equalizer they could get; and that is a quality education. I think for anyone to suggest that we are in this battle for political advantage, with all due respect to my esteemed colleague, misses the boat.

I would like to be able to stand up here today and to recount for my colleague a long litany of legislation

passed that deals with education in this 105th Congress. Frankly, I can honestly say that this Congress has passed a mere three bills that have actually been signed into law.

I would not want to take away from the excellence of this Congress if I had something more to say. That is why I am here this evening. Frankly, that is why we are here past the time we thought we could be out with our constituents.

There is not a one of us, I hope, that has not spent valuable time with our students in our school districts. Frankly, I would like to be able to tell my colleagues what is going on in the 18th Congressional District in Texas.

I would like not to say that Jefferson Davis High School has no library. I would rather not say that. For the longest time, we have been struggling to get the money so that these young people can go to a library and sit down with books and computers and learn. But we have no library.

But I also want to add that my constituents, people who live in that community, are struggling to do what is right. So we have several bond elections on line, if you will. This legislation that I am fighting for today and that I hope we will stay until we get it included will give tax relief to those constituents across America who are struggling to provide for their schools. They are not providing because they do not want to.

I would like to stand up here and tell my colleagues that I did not have a school roof collapse on an elementary school about a year ago. I would like to not have to say that.

Frankly, I would like to tell my colleagues that all of my schools have auditoriums and cafeterias, but simply they do not. They have one room where they do everything from their programs to their eating to moving people out to starting kids to eat at 10 a.m. in the morning for lunch because they do not have the space and the separate areas where they can eat and then have auditorium, where they can teach large classes of science and then have auditorium, where they have a library and then have a cafeteria.

We are facing this throughout the Nation. I think it disturbs me that we are looking now at legislation that wants to take \$17 million from the State of Texas, unlike what we were funded last year.

Modernization is key. I will be going home to support my school bond election. But I will tell my colleagues I want to ensure that we get those taxpayers the kind of relief. If we pass the President's program, let me share with my colleagues how it will work.

School district A needs funds to construct additional schools to educate its rapidly growing enrollment. Notice I did not say urban school centers, I did not say suburban, I did not say rural because there is need in every one of those. That is one of the reasons why I am supporting the President's proposal, because it goes on the basis of

need. It does not distinguish or discriminate. It says simply said what school district actually needs.

If our proposal goes into effect in this omnibus bill, the State would allocate bond authority to school district A. When this community passes a bond initiative, which mine is doing right now, it would then enter into an agreement with the financial company to sell the bonds to bond holders in order to raise funds to build schools in the community. We voted on this.

The school district would use these funds to plan, design, and build additional schools, whatever district we are in. The community would repay the principal on the bonds to the bond holders, but it would not have to pay the interest on the school modernization bonds, an enormous savings for the taxpayers, taxpayer relief.

The bond holders would receive a tax credit equivalent to the amount of interest it would ordinarily have received on the loan. I do not know about my colleagues, but everyone that I speak to this about in my district views this as a positive collaboration, not a takeover of the school districts.

We are not here to suggest that whether it is the Department of Education or whether it is this Congress that we take over the local initiative, but we collaborate.

Mr. Speaker, I think that we know full well what we need to do. We need to vote for a proposal that supports the hundred thousand teachers in the classroom to bring down class size. Mr. Speaker, we frankly need to support the program by the President on school modernization.

DO NOT FORGET AGRICULTURE OR OIL BEFORE WE GO HOME

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

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, last night, I rose on a similar occasion to plead that, before we go home at this late hour, that we not forget our agricultural sector in this country, that we have many problems due to disease, due to weather, and most importantly due to the low price that we face in all commodities in the agriculture sector.

I am glad to learn, throughout the day, as we tried to negotiate agreements, not only with the Senate but also with the White House, that progress seems to be being made in the issue that we care about when it comes to preserving our family farms and protecting our farmers and ranchers across America.

Clearly we have lots of problems when we see the price of wheat, cattle, and corn, what they are today, what they have been in the past, and recognize that this Congress should not adjourn. The final gavel should not hit the table before we make certain that those issues are addressed.

Again, I ask just briefly tonight that our conferees and our negotiators with the White House continue to pursue tax assistance, reductions in taxes as they affect the family farmer, disaster relief due to the problems we face in price as well as natural disaster; that we clearly do something about the issues of embargoes and sanctions placed against many countries around the world.

Our inability to export agricultural products around the world has a dramatic impact upon the income of the farmers and ranchers across this country. This House has passed relief as regard to sanctions and embargoes, and I hope that the Senate and certainly our negotiators will insist that those provisions remain in the version of the final omnibus bill that I hope we pass before we go home.

Clearly, the farmers of Kansas, the ranchers of Kansas understand that trade is important, that exports matter, and our inability to export to all countries at a time when we have told agriculture to go out and farm the markets is an important factor in their ability to succeed in doing that.

Tonight, having really addressed the issue of agriculture last night and to again plead that it not be forgotten in these last hours, I also wish to point out the difficulties we face in the domestic oil industry.

We have significant production of oil in this country and particularly in my home district in Kansas. Forty million barrels annually is produced in our State, representing about 15,000 jobs, very important jobs to the economy.

Again, when agricultural prices are what they are, usually something is good in Kansas. But wheat, cattle, and corn are all low. On top of that, the price of oil is the same. It is low, and there is little hope for the future.

As that happens in Kansas, our small producers, those wells that produce less than 10 barrels a day, are being shut down and abandoned. When we lose them, we lose our ability to have production in the future. We became more reliant upon foreign sources of oil.

So, again, as I asked last night with regards to agriculture, I ask that our negotiators continue to pursue relief for a beleaguered oil and gas industry in this country, particularly for the small producer and for those producers that produce marginal wells whose costs of production are very high to maintain.

I said on the House floor not too many months ago that it is disturbing when we learn how much money we spend trying to protect foreign supplies of oil but virtually nothing to protect a domestic oil and gas industry, a fact that we will pay a huge price for, I am afraid, someday.

So tonight let me remind our negotiators that we have a marginal tax well credit that matters, that it would allow a tax credit for our producers who have lost money year after year to

go back and receive a tax credit for the years in which they actually had an income.

Several months ago, we were successful in defeating the effort by the Department of Energy on a crazy idea to actually sell oil out of the strategic petroleum reserve at a time when prices were so low we bought oil at a high price and we were willing to sell it at a low price and dump more oil on the domestic market.

Tonight I hope we do not forget about the provision that is included in the Senate bill that allows for the purchase of oil at a low price for the strategic petroleum reserve which can be a security matter for us as well as a benefit to the very depressed domestic oil and gas industry.

This matters to the communities and to the families across Kansas and across the country. It is important that we do not forget what the domestic oil and gas industry represents. Again, before we adjourn and go home to our constituents, something I desperately want to do is to return to Kansas and to my family, but let us make sure that the oil and gas industry as well as agriculture is not forgotten.

MENTAL ILLNESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to bring recognition to the important topic of mental illness. In fact, during this month of October, our Nation is disposed to do our best to raise awareness about the tragic lack of proper care for those among us who are suffering daily from the most severe mental illnesses.

More than 5 million of our fellow citizens suffer from these debilitating, severe mental illnesses. Unfortunately, far too many people are not receiving the proper diagnosis, treatment, or strong community care they need to lead quality and stable lives in our country.

The current practice of psychiatric care in our country has spawned growing homelessness, neglect, as well as violence since deinstitutionalization of patients occurred over two decades ago with no community follow-up.

I am working with several women members, the gentlewoman from New Jersey (Mrs. ROUKEMA), the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. CAPPS) of California, such a leader in this effort, who is here with us this evening, and the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. JOHNSON).

All of us are trying very hard to establish a House working group on serious mental illness. This House working group would be responsible for examining the State of our mental health system, especially those who are not being adequately treated with resulting neglect and even violence.