

We had an example of that here in our own Capitol with the tragic slaying of two of our officers, Gibson and Chestnut, less than 2 months ago.

This group would hold hearings and gather testimony about what America can do. This week, we are also introducing a sense of Congress resolution regarding the seriousness of mental illness and the need for Congress to establish this working group.

We intend to reintroduce this resolution in the next Congress and ask the Women's Caucus of this House to help us spearhead our efforts.

I urge all Members to support the establishment of this House working group on mental illness as well as our sense of Congress resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I am more than pleased to yield to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. CAPPs), our very capable and caring colleague.

Mrs. CAPPs. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR), for yielding to me.

As she mentioned, just 2 months ago, this Nation and this Congress were stunned by the tragic shootings of Officers Chestnut and Gibson. We still grieve their deaths today.

Out of that tragedy, an opportunity has presented itself to us to finally acknowledge the sad realities of mental illness, which for so long have been swept under the national rug.

Health professionals agree that chronic conditions such as schizophrenia are best addressed through community-based treatment. Such programs provide outreach to people who are in danger of falling through the cracks of our mental health system.

Last week, I was able to attend a briefing by the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, and I heard about a program of asserting community treatment called PACT.

PACT involves individualized services, psychiatric, social, nursing, and vocation rehabilitation. It has been tremendously successful for those who have not responded to traditional methods of treatment. But only six States offer PACT statewide. This is simply not enough. These are wonderful, proven programs just waiting to be replicated.

It is time for our whole country to face the challenges of mental illness, including treatment, housing, and employment. We must educate ourselves and take the steps to respond. Out of tragedy can come hope. I am pleased to be working with my colleagues, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) and others to bring this to our attention and to work on it.

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Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. CAPPs) for taking time to join us this evening and also to say if we could put some of the partisanship aside, and we intend to do that in this working group, we can do so much for America.

It seems to me that too much effort is wasted here in Washington in trying to find out why we are different from one another rather than what we can do to work together on important issues like this that affect millions and millions and millions of our fellow citizens.

I would also note that the energy for this comes largely from the women in this body. It would be so easy for the leadership of this institution to make this happen with merely a snap of the fingers and yet it has not. That says a lot about this institution, but it also says a lot about the women here who on a bipartisan basis are trying to do what is right for this country.

We know that with persistence and with goodwill and with bipartisanship, we can achieve real, lasting changes for the better for people in our country who suffer every day under these extremely difficult diseases; their families, their communities. We know, we understand what needs to be done.

I also want to acknowledge the leadership in past years, First Lady Rosalyn Carter who came to this Congress and testified when it was not so popular to do so over 20 years ago, and also Tipper Gore, the wife of the vice president, who has also been supportive of our efforts.

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

(Mr. TIAHRT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. THUNE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. TIAHRT).

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SESSIONS). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from South Dakota?

There was no objection.

THE DO-NOTHING LIBERAL CONGRESS

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

Mr. THUNE. Mr. Speaker, this evening I would like to associate myself with the remarks of my friend and colleague, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) earlier about the crisis that we are facing in agriculture. It would certainly be my hope as well that as we conclude the waning days of this Congressional session that we will be able to fashion a disaster relief package that will bring some much needed relief and immediate assistance to those who are trying to make a living by producing food and fiber in this country.

I would certainly hope that we can reach an agreement on that, on a number of issues that are still outstanding. Before we go home, we have to act, we have to act now.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to answer this evening some of the accusations, the partisan accusations that have been filling this chamber from our friends on the other side. There is the accusation that somehow since we have not moved their liberal agenda, that we are a do-nothing Congress. I suppose by their definition, that is true.

We have not raised taxes. I know that drives them crazy. We have not created new programs or built new Federal bureaucracies here in Washington. In other words, we have not done anything liberal. We are a do-nothing liberal Congress.

Now, that probably should not come as any surprise to the American people who elected a conservative Congress because they have grown weary of having their pockets picked for a liberal agenda that flatly was not working.

The American people need to ignore a lot of the partisan rhetoric that is filling this chamber and coming from our friends on the left. It is more smoke, it is more mirrors, and it is an effort on their part to distract attention from the significant and historic accomplishments of this 105th Congress.

I would like to just note a couple of those, if I might, this evening. The first is the balanced budget agreement. For the first time since 1969, for the first time since I was 8 years old, we actually are operating this Federal Government in the black. I think that is a historic accomplishment. We did it at the same time that we lowered taxes on working families, on farmers and ranchers and small businesses in this country for the first time since 1981.

We made reforms that saved Medicare for another generation, reformed the IRS to make it more user friendly and responsive to the taxpayers of this country.

Let us talk about the surplus. In 1994 it was projected, as far as the eye could see, \$3 trillion in deficits way out into the future. Just last July, the Congressional Budget Office revised that estimate. It is now projecting a \$1.6 trillion surplus for the next 10 years.

How did that happen? Well, maybe part of it is because there are 3.3 million more Americans working today as a result of welfare reform. That was something that our liberal friends did not want to see happen.

Maybe it is really hard for them to acknowledge that when we cut taxes last year, it is actually generating more revenue for the government. We are seeing more realizations. People actually are paying more in taxes as a result of having cut taxes last year, and it has gotten us to a point where we have to make a decision about how to use a \$1.6 trillion surplus.

There are a lot of us on our side who want to make sure that that money

gets back home to the folks in our home communities before it stays here in Washington, because if it stays here very long it is going to get spent. We are committed to seeing that it goes back to the people of this country.

We have also accomplished with the Higher Education Reauthorization Act the lowest student loan rate in 17 years. We have increased to historically high levels the Pell grant to make college more affordable.

Let us talk about secondary education. We have increased, by the President's request, on special ed, funding by about half a billion dollars. Think of all the schools that could be rebuilt in this country if we would fully fund special ed and free up those dollars that they can use for school construction.

How about dollars to the classroom? We passed that because we believe that we ought to get more dollars back to the classroom, back to our children, back to our teachers. Maybe we could afford to pay our teachers higher salaries. Maybe we could invest in technology and buy more computers, get those dollars back to the classroom and out of the Washington bureaucracy.

That is a fundamental difference. It is an honest difference with our friends on the left, but when they talk about the things that have not been done here I think the American people need to know about the things that have been done; things that are historic, things that are changing the way that this city operates.

There are a lot of challenges ahead of us. As we look down the road, we want to continue on the path. We have to win the war on drugs to make sure that our schools are safe and drug free, and that our children's minds and ambitions are not ruined by the scourge of illegal drugs.

We need to continue to improve our schools by getting more of that Federal money back home, back into the classroom, and seeing that those dollars are spent in the way that the local communities determine.

We need to save Social Security. We have made a commitment to spend 90 percent of the surplus, any surplus projected, to save Social Security not only for those who are receiving benefits today but for those who are paying in and expecting benefits in the future.

We are going to continue our fight to make government smaller and more efficient and improve the take-home pay of every working American.

These are honest differences that we have with our friends on the left, and they can get up and they can rant and rave about a do-nothing Congress but I want the American people to know, this may be a do-nothing liberal Congress but this is a Congress which has done a lot for the future of the American people.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from California (Mr. BECERRA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BECERRA addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Ms. CARSON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentleman from California (Mr. BECERRA).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from South Dakota?

There was no objection.

LIBERTY AND LEARNING, EACH LEANING ON THE OTHER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. CARSON. Mr. Speaker, long ago, James Madison spoke of one of our most fundamental American propositions. That was liberty and learning, each leaning on the other. We cannot have a healthy democracy or any democracy without quality public education.

It is our job to show that education can rely on democracy. Let us put 100,000 new teachers in our classrooms.

This Congress has been one of the least productive in recent memory. While urgent, unmet needs confront American families in areas like education and health care, this Congress just dithers with inconsequential suspension bills and ideological dead letters like tax cuts that drain away the budget surplus.

In the State that I represent, Indiana, Indianapolis specifically, 29 percent of public schools are in serious need of repairs and 67 percent have outdated or inadequate facilities.

Back in January this year, Congressional Democrats and the administration laid out an extensive agenda to improve the quality of public education in this country. The Republicans spent the entire year blocking that agenda, preferring instead to focus on scandals that divert public attention. Now we are asking that as a bare minimum Congress begin providing funds to hire new teachers and to fix up our crumbling schools. By hiring new teachers, we will be able to reduce class sizes.

Research in Indiana and the State of Tennessee shows that reducing class size to 15 students in the early grades improves student achievements, particularly among low income and minority students in urban areas.

Public school enrollment in Indiana is expected to grow by almost 6 percent in the next decade. We desperately need more teachers to handle this growth. When I look at the overcrowding in the Indianapolis public school system, I can say the students there sure could use more teachers.

The need is overwhelming but this Congress has turned a blind eye to that need. Only now, confronted with extraordinary demand by the voters for better education, are the Republicans grudgingly coming forward to agree to more school funding. Even now, though, they are dragging their feet. Rather than funding new teachers, the Republican leaders want to spend the money on other things like school administration.

Mr. Speaker, we need teachers, not administrators; classrooms, not office complexes. Even worse, they tried to revive their anti-public school agenda. They want to use the District of Columbia as a guinea pig for experimenting with school vouchers. The D.C. public schools already are in distress but the Republicans want to drain away their funding and put it into private schools.

The proposition about dollars for classrooms was indeed another cruel hoax. My State of Indiana, under that proposal, stood to lose \$8.3 million in the process of a so-called block grant back to the State of Indiana.

Instead of spending our taxpayers' money on private schools, we must invest it wisely in public schools, where the vast majority of our children get their education.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for this Congress to get back to the business of helping to secure greater success for American families.

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

(Mr. GOSS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentleman from Florida (Mr. GOSS).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from South Dakota?

There was no objection.

WILL THE PRESIDENT'S EDUCATION PROGRAMS IMPROVE EDUCATION OR IS IT AN ELECTION YEAR PROPOSAL?

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

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask a question: Will the President's education programs improve education or is it an election year proposal?

Last night I shared my thoughts on school construction. I will review them quickly. The school construction program, as proposed by the President, takes half of the money and designates it to 100 urban poor districts, but does