

Last week, as the gentleman knows, we had Bob Dole who spoke to our communications group, and he said that 68 percent of the single candidate coverage in his presidential bid that was only on Bob Dole was negative, but 67 percent of the only Bill Clinton news was positive.

Now, one just cannot go up against those odds. The other day, AL GORE, here is a guy that invented the Internet; here is a guy who goes to the Buddhist temple, comes back, shakes down these Buddhist monks, sworn to poverty, for \$300,000, does not recognize it as a fund-raiser, and says he is one of the more intelligent of the presidential candidates. He said the population of America is 250 million people; therefore, we need sampling for Census as a way, instead of head-by-head count, he wants to guess at it.

Well, the interesting thing is he said it was 250 million people. The population of America is 274 million. He was 24 million people off.

Now, if Dan Quayle had said that, we would bet that the national media would have had a heyday. But since it was AL GORE, one of their own, they were not going to worry about it.

So a lot of the problems that we are up against is we cannot get our message out when we have an unwilling messenger, and that bias of the major networks or some of the newspapers is that way.

That is why I get down on my knees and thank the Lord for C-SPAN because people can hear things; and if they do not like me for my own merits, which I am sure many do not, that is fine; but at least they do not have to have Dan Rather interpret it for them.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I think probably one thing that disturbs a lot of Americans that observe this Chamber is the partisanship between one side of the aisle and the other. Somehow we have got to figure out a way to reduce that partisanship. Somehow we have got to find a way to communicate the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, to the American people.

I think information technology, I think the Internet, I think some of the talk shows are going to be the way that we are able to communicate exact information. But if we are going to solve some of the tough problems, there is no question that Republicans and Democrats and the President, whichever side of the political fence he might be on, are going to have to work together to solve the tough problems of Social Security and Medicare.

Mr. SANFORD. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield, I would just say, following up on the need to be bipartisan, if there is ever a need that we need to move off dead center on, it is this one.

It is interesting, there was a report this week that basically looked at the insolvency date, if you will, of Social Security. And what the report showed was that the actual insolvency for the

“fund” was, moved back from about 2034 or so to 2037, something along those lines, but moved back a couple years. People say, that is way down the road. I do not need to think about it.

The more interesting number is, when does Social Security begin to run shortfalls? In other words, when is more money going out of the system than is coming in? And that number was moved from about 2012 to about 2015 in what they call the intermediate set of assumptions. And if we look at a worst-case scenario, it is about 2008 or so, which is only 8 years away.

This is an issue that we have got to deal with now. And I think that some in the administration are saying hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil; and some in my own party are saying that, as well. It is something we can worry about later on.

It is so long to look at that 2030-something number, and here is why. If we would imagine a family that lived in Michigan or lived in South Carolina or lived in Georgia that saved \$100 a month every month towards their retirement, clearly, at the end of the year, they would have \$1,200 in their retirement account.

Now, this family also loved to take a cruise every year. So they would go over to their retirement account jar, they would take the \$1,200 of real cash out, they would write themselves an IOU, put back the IOU in the jar, saying, we owe our retirement account \$1,200.

At the end of 40 years, that family would have some wonderful memories in terms of great cruises that they took. But in terms of retirement security, they would not have a whole heck of a lot because they would have a jar filled with IOUs. And in retirement, they cannot spend IOUs. If they go down to the drugstore or the grocery store, they will not take an IOU. They want cold hard cash.

So what we have to look at is, the way our present system is configured with this odd notion of a trust fund, we are really misleading the American public because that money is borrowed; it is spent by the rest of government; and all we have in its place is this IOU.

We cannot spend money twice. We may try to in Washington, but gravity dictates that we cannot. So it is important that we not get lulled into complacency thinking about 2030-something and look at how immediate this problem is. That is why I again would commend the gentleman for what he has done on this subject.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, maybe we have made a significant difference in our yelling and screaming and getting on our soapbox and saying we have got to be fiscally responsible, because even now the Democrats are saying we should not spend the Social Security surplus, a huge change from where we have been for the last 40 years.

I know the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SANFORD) is keeping his

commitment to have a citizen legislator on his term limits that he has imposed on himself and is leaving after this term. It would be so good if we can, at least, move a little bit in the direction of accountability and having some kind of personal accounts.

I chaired the Social Security Task Force, bipartisan. It is interesting that we agreed on 18 findings. I think we are coming closer. I think the Chamber is realizing more and more, simply because the people of America are insisting that we face up to some of the tough problems, that we get rid of the partisan bickering, and that we deal with the problems of Social Security, Medicare, and education.

We have decided in this budget that education is going to be one of our top priorities. We have increased the money for IDEA and other education provisions. Because, look, the problems we are running into Social Security and Medicare, if we do not have a top-notch educated workforce in this country, then we are going to lose out to other countries of the world.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON) if he would like to make a final statement.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, let me encourage both of my colleagues to keep up the good work on Social Security. But, also, let us continue to ferret out the waste and fraud in government and try to do a better job for the hard-working American people. Put common sense in the process.

□ 1800

EDUCATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about one of the most critical issues facing our Nation today, and, that is, the education of our children. As a former superintendent of my State's schools for 8 years in North Carolina, I know firsthand how important it is and I know about many of the amazing stories, wonderful stories that have occurred and are occurring every single day in our public schools. Too many times we hear about the problems, and we do not hear about the successes. We tend to want to talk about those problems and not acknowledge that the majority of our children are good youngsters, they do a good job, they work hard, our teachers are working hard and they deeply care about the young people they work with. Just this past weekend, I had the opportunity to be with almost 100 of them in a group in North Carolina, and I will talk about that again in just a few minutes. But I would say to my colleagues that if America is going to

seize the opportunity of this new economy we talk about, the digital age that we are entering, Congress must provide some national leadership in this most vital effort. Too many times we say, well, it really is not a national issue, we ought not to get involved in it, we ought to be doing something else, and education is important but it ought to be left here or there.

The truth is it is all of our responsibilities, Federal, State and local, and having been at the State level as a county commissioner prior to being a State legislator and a superintendent, I can tell my colleagues that the bulk of the money continues to come from the local and State level, it always will as it should and the decisions by and large will be made there. But if we had not had programs at the Federal level for children with special needs, then they would not be taken care of the way they are today and we still are not funding that adequately. There are a lot of other areas that we need national leadership on. Certainly education is one of those areas that I think that we need it.

There was a time in this country when we did not pay a lot of attention to roads or water and sewer and then we recognized it was an important national issue and it still is today, and education is one of those. Across this great country, the American people are calling for a greater investment in our public education system. They are also calling for accountability. This Congress had an opportunity to do that last year and would not step up the way they should.

This past week, we talked about the whole issue of the Republican leadership. And last year they dealt with it, the Republican leadership wanted to put together a voucher plan, providing vouchers which in my opinion is not the way to improve education for all of our children. It is really a joke and a hoax on most of them. It will provide an opportunity for only a few and it will pump billions of dollars of tax money into financing areas that is so badly needed for our children in the public schools. I happen to believe that that is absolutely wrong. It would drain those resources from the public sector that is badly needed and leave too many children behind, in my opinion, condemned to a bleak future of failure.

As I was starting to say a few minutes ago, with about 90 some young people, high school students I was meeting with this weekend, a variety of young people across our district where we were talking about the needs of what we ought to do about school violence.

It was amazing the answers these young people came up with. One of the issues they focused on was the need for quality facilities and resources in those schools. How do you tell a student that education is important when they do not get a textbook until 3 or 4 months into the year? How do you tell them it

is important when the toilets do not work in the bathroom? How do you tell them education is important when all they have in the classroom on a fairly regular basis are substitute teachers because they do not have enough regular teachers in the classroom for a variety of reasons. We are not paying them enough, we are not attracting them, we are not making the quality of where they work and that is where teachers work and students learn and work. They have to be quality facilities. That is important.

You can say, That isn't the most important thing. I would say to you if you look across this country at what we value, we normally have nice buildings, the buildings that we value. They say a lot about what we care. Young people can pick that up very quickly.

My colleagues and I who are participating in this 1-hour special order this evening, we happen to have, I think, a better idea. We want to invest in a national commitment to educational excellence where schools are accountable to taxpayers for raising standards and every child has an opportunity to learn. My colleagues who have heard me talk about this before know that I not only believe that but I have worked that as a State official and as a State legislator because if you look at North Carolina, you are looking at one of the school systems in this country that really is holding our system accountable. And of all the States in the Nation, they are showing some of the highest growth in academic scores and accountability of any State in the Nation.

It takes a total commitment on the part of everyone. Improving education in this country is about creating a classroom environment where children can learn and teachers can teach. We need to foster greater connection between students, teachers, and parents and I might say the broader community. Schools in most communities are, have been and still are, that center focal point; and they need to be more so in the future. Our schools can do better, and with our help they will do better. Because that is where the future of America is, that is where the future of our States are and where the future of our communities are. They are in our classrooms today.

Children do not know what they need many times unfortunately in school. They only know what they get. Unfortunately in some cases, they are not getting what they ought to get, for a variety of reasons, one of which may be the community does not have the resources to invest. In other cases the community is not willing to invest those resources. That in my opinion is shameful if that should happen.

One of the best ways that we can improve education is to help provide smaller class sizes that are orderly and disciplined and where children can get additional attention from their teachers who really can ignite that spark of learning, the thing that teachers call

the teachable moment, when the child really gets turned on to learning.

As I met with those roughly 80 to 90 students this weekend and we were talking about school violence, one of the issues they talked about was how do we get smaller class sizes, how do we get in a class where we really know that our teachers care and gives us the time? We know they care about us but she has so many students to take care of, she cannot give me the individual attention that I need.

These were some pretty bright students, as are most of our students, but there are some who need that special attention to catch up and to keep up. Not all of us learn math as fast as others. Not all of us do as well on composition. So there are a lot of ways that we need it, but if we have smaller class sizes, we can do a better job for our children. I happen to believe we do a better job for ourselves because the information age of the 21st century is going to require that all of us be able, whether we want to or not, no matter what our age is incidentally, we are going to have to be able to be on the Internet, we are going to have to be able to type, we are going to have to be able to compose, and we are going to have to send information back and forth. It is so critical and so important. I think one of the best ways we can do it is follow through on our commitment to reduce class sizes.

We started that with the President's initiative a couple of years ago, we have to fight for it every year, and certainly what we do here, it will set the tone for the country. It is not the dollars that we need because they still are going to come at the local level but we can leverage the Federal money to make a difference, and I think that is important. We need a new national commitment to the notion that parents in America have the right to expect that their children will have the best teacher in the world. How do we do that? We certainly do not do it by cutting education funding. That is the first thing we do not do. We do not do it by talking about how bad our teachers are. We talk about how do we make them better, how do we provide staff development for those teachers that are in the classroom. We can do that.

I know as a State superintendent, one of the things that once you have a tight budget, one of the first things you start to see is staff development gets cut, retraining of teachers. No business in this country in their right mind would cut out the resources to retrain their staff, especially at a time when they want to expand their product line.

What are we saying to our teachers and students? You have got to teach technology, you have got to teach math, you have got to teach computer skills, you have got to do composition. We keep adding more on, but we do not want to give them the resources to get the job done. Too many times we say, well, what we really need to do is you

need as a teacher to go after school and learn how to be a better teacher. That is what we do in many places in America. Or you do it on a weekend, or you do it in the summer on your own time. The last time I checked, teachers are not paid 12 months of the year in most places in this country, they are paid either 9 months and if they are real lucky, they may get paid 10 months and spread it out.

Mr. Speaker, we have to get serious about this business of educating our children. If we are going to be serious, then we have to make a new, renewed national commitment to education in this country. Providing support for our teachers is more than just providing resources. That is one of the most critical, one of the toughest tasks that anyone will do. I would challenge every Member of the United States Congress if they really think education is an easy job, go in the classroom and spend a week. Do not go spend an hour as a visitor and walk through and smile and say, I'm glad to be here, and have someone put on a performance for you.

Go in at 7 or 7:30 in the morning and have bus duty. When you finish bus duty, then you go to the classroom and you teach. When you get a break, you have hall duty. You get through with hall duty and get ready to go to the cafeteria and your children are eating, you have lunchroom duty because you stand around and watch the students and make sure the paper gets picked up and they are behaving in that, depending on their age level. Then when you finish, depending on the school, you may have tutoring duties after school is over in the afternoon.

And, oh, by the way, then if there is a basketball game or a football game that night, you may have duties assigned to you for that. Oh, and by the way there is not additional money for that, that is just part of your duties of being a teacher. Thank God that we have people who are willing to do it and teach our young people. When we see those yellow buses running up and down the road on the weekend, they may be going to a band concert or they may be coming back from an athletic event or they may be going to a science fair or a math fair or any number of things that our young people participate in on the weekends and the teachers and staff are volunteering.

Yes, there are parents, and I am grateful for those parents who take the time and are willing to do it, because we need parents. We need every parent engaged. I have often said if every child in America had one adult mentor, be it one of their parents or their grandparents or someone who really and truly was their one individual, that other person that would stand up and fight for them and make sure they got in the right class, they got the right attention and they were on a track to be all that they could be, it would be a different education system in America and we would have a different country. But not all children have that. They

depend on their teachers and counselors and others to help them.

So rather than these things that we talk about in this Congress many times, many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle want to bash teachers, want to bash education, I say we ought to hold them up and help them. We ought to encourage them. Yes, we ought to challenge them and when they are wrong we ought to point it out but not always bash them because they have too tough a job. And we ought not be talking about block grants, because I think block grants are many times in, my opinion, an irresponsible way to get out of our duties of providing the true resources that are needed in the classroom and in other areas for education.

□ 1815

I believe that we do not have in this country any children that we can give up, nor any children we can waste.

Mr. Speaker, America is a great country. I get frustrated sometimes when I hear people talking about how great the economy is, what a terrific job this country is doing, and how bad our public schools are. Really? Who are most of the people who are running our industries and doing all of these jobs in America? They went to the public schools of this country.

What we need to do is help those who are there today so we will continue to have that growth. We have more young people in public schools in America today than ever in the history of this country. And that is why classrooms are just bulging at the seams; schools are overcrowded and overloaded. I went into a school in my district just last week; the school is in its third year and they have 18 trailers outside the school. Now, that is because it is growing so rapidly. The communities are growing. People are moving there. As I often tell people from time to time, we are glad to have people moving and we are proud to have them come to our State.

We have a great growth economy in the Research Triangle Park area, one of the great dynamic, high-tech centers in America. But there is something about when people move there, they have a tendency to bring their children with them, as they should. And that puts additional pressure on our schools and local governments, and that is true across America because we have a very mobile society, a more mobile society today than we have ever had in history. We have to make sure that our systems fit it and that we have opportunities for young people.

Mr. Speaker, as we talk about this idea of vouchers and block grants, I think we need to get that out of our vocabulary and get back to what is really important: how do we help teachers, how do we help children, and how do we help our educational system become what it needs to be to provide for the challenges that we are going to face in the 21st century. We must make every

neighborhood public school in America work. We must make every neighborhood public school in America work, and we can. If we are supportive and engage the community, the business community, the civic community, and the parents in those schools, we can make them work.

Mr. Speaker, I have a bill and a number of my colleagues have others, like the school construction bill that I have that will provide resources to the local units of government. What it does is that the State governments will have it, and they will not have to pay the interest. That will be picked up at the Federal level. They only pay back the principle. They decide where the schools are going to be built and how they are going to be built. It will not solve the whole problem of \$100-plus billion that are needed for our schools for renovation and new schools; but what it will do, it will send a powerful signal to America that our public schools are important and we are going to engage at the Federal level and we do care and we are going to make a difference.

I have another bill that many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle have signed on to, and it is entitled Character Education. I will talk about that again in just a few minutes. A third one that we are involved in on both sides of the aisle, the Speaker and Minority Leader Gephardt; and Speaker Hastert appointed 24 Members on a Youth Violence Task Force. I want to talk about that also in a few minutes. I think these items are very important to us as we look at education and where we want to go.

Mr. Speaker, this whole issue of character education is a critical piece, and what this legislation does, and let me hold up for my colleagues a chart, because we have used this, and we really started this in North Carolina in about 1989. We did a survey at that time of our public schools. We surveyed about 25,000 students; and one thing we found from that survey is a large number of our students did not respect, number one, their fellow students and in some cases their teachers. It was an alarmingly high percentage. So we felt it was something we ought to do.

So we started out with a panel of citizens, teachers, superintendents, judges, lay people, ministers and others and we came up with what we call ethics education. Well, we did not really like what we were doing on that; we kept playing with it. In about 1993, we finally finalized it to be "character education" at the Vanderbilt University and other places, and came up with a number of character traits that we felt were the core issues and shared it with all of our public schools. There are seven of these. Now the truth is that systems can enlarge on it, and did. The basic ones that we laid out were respect, citizenship, justice and fairness, honesty, caring, responsibility, and trustworthiness.

So what we did as we worked on our curriculum, we asked that each school

that was involved integrate that into their curriculum. We did not want to have an additional add-on for the teachers. They had enough to do. So what they have done is tied that into when they are teaching math, when they are teaching history or science, or whatever they may be teaching that day, they pick out one of these characteristics, and as the year goes on, whichever ones they have agreed on, that becomes an important part of the students curriculum, and they have signs that they put in the school.

But let me say to my colleagues, before they agree to do it, the community comes in and agrees on the numbers of the different items of the character traits that they are going to use, in that individual school system.

Now, normally it winds up being the whole LEA; and it may be, depending on the size of it in North Carolina, anywhere from 3,000 all the way up to the biggest school system with about 110,000. But what it does is amazing. We see the discipline problems go down in those schools. I was in one in Four Oaks about a month ago talking with the principal. The number of discipline problems have gone down by almost a third, and the academics went up on the part of the students in that school. We say well, why would that happen? Easy. When they start respecting one another, they respect their teachers, they understand they have a responsibility to do their homework, they have a responsibility to one another, they care about themselves, they have citizenship responsibilities, and this starts to be a part of what we are talking about.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing wrong with this being a part of public education, as it should be, of every education, of a good education. We get away from these issues that tend to divide us, when we talk about whether or not we can have prayer in school or whether or not we can have these other issues that become constitutional issues. What we ought to be talking about is something we can do something about to make a difference for children in America and make sure that our education system is the best it can be. Because when we talk about public education, we ought not to be dealing with division; we ought to be dealing with addition. How do we add to what we have done to make it better for all children?

Mr. Speaker, we have a chance in this Congress, now that we have some resources, to make sure that Social Security is fixed, we start paying down the debt, and we invest in the future of our children; and we can do it by putting resources out there and do some school construction. I am going to talk about that in a minute.

At this time I want to yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND), my friend who has been a real leader in this Congress, who serves on the Committee on Education and the Workforce and has been a real leader in public

education because, number one, he knows what it takes; and, number two, he cares about it and is committed to it.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. I want to commend the gentleman, especially for the leadership that he has brought to the United States Congress on this very important issue on education, bringing his experience as former State superintendent of the school system down there in North Carolina, and his active role within our caucus, but within this body generally in trying to elevate this issue and the importance of this issue for the rest of our colleagues. It has been a great privilege for me personally over the last 3, a little over 3 years now as a Member of this Congress to serve on the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

During the first term, 2 years ago, the focus on the Committee on Education and the Workforce was reauthorizing the Higher Education Act. This is the panoply of Federal programs that assist students if they want to go on and receive a postsecondary education, whether it is technical school or colleges or universities, the financial aid packages that are available, the grants and loans and the work study programs, the Gear Up for High Hopes Program that another Member, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FATTAH), was a champion on. This session, we are in the middle of reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and that is the Federal involvement in K through 12, and also some preschooling programs, early childhood education programs, after-school programs as well.

Mr. Speaker, this is vitally important. It is no surprise that this has consistently ranked as one of the top issues for the American people that they are concerned about, whether it is an election year or not. It is certainly showing up right now in the election year polls, that education is a top, top priority for them. They want to hear what we as policymakers are going to do to improve the quality of education and implement the reforms that are needed in order to give our children the best chance and the best hope that they have to become productive members of our country and this society.

I also want to commend the gentleman for speaking out about the need for character education and the role that that plays, because again, this is a growing concern that many of us share in regards to our own children and to the younger generations, that there should be an important character education role in this.

Tomorrow, in the Committee on Education and the Workforce, we are actually going to be moving and marking up another aspect of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. I hope we get it right. Last year, we had some education initiatives that I think we can be proud about, such as the Education Flexibility Act which was

passed which provides greater flexibility for local school districts and being able to use the Federal monies designated for specific programs, for targeting it to areas that they feel they need extra help on or areas of innovation or creativity that they have working at the local level. And I was very supportive of that fine legislation.

We also passed the Teacher Empowerment Act last year, which will provide resources for professional development programming, the important aspect of making sure we have the most talented and most qualified teachers sitting there in the classroom teaching our children. Outside of the active involvement of parents in their children's upbringing and especially in their education studies, the next most important determinant of how well a child is going to perform is the quality of teacher in the classroom. So I am glad to see that we had a heavy emphasis on the Teacher Empowerment Act and the professional development aspect that that brought.

I also included a provision in that bill that would provide professional development assistance for principals and superintendents and the administrators of our school districts realizing the all-important role that they play as, so to speak, the quarterback of the school district, being the leader and being able to implement the reforms and knowing what reforms are going to work at the local level. But there has been a real, I think, lack of a good, quality pool of talent to draw from into the principals and superintendent ranks. Now we are hoping that as that legislation moves forward, that is going to be an important part of it.

We also reauthorized the Title I funding last year, which is the targeted funding to the most disadvantaged students in our country. So I think there has been progress made.

The Senate has taken another course of action. Tomorrow will be an indication of how well we can reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education bill. I am offering a bill that my friend from North Carolina is an original sponsor on that would provide more resources back to local school districts to enable teachers to better integrate technology into the classroom curriculum.

Mr. Speaker, we all understand the important role that technology now plays in this global new economy that we find ourselves in. Virtually all of the jobs that are being created today require some form of technology literacy, and we just cannot afford as a Nation to underinvest in this area when it comes to being able to deliver in important and powerful new learning tools, technology and the Internet, and make that an integral part of a child's learning process.

So we are going to be offering that up tomorrow during the markup. Hopefully, it will be adopted, because I think that is clearly the direction we need to be going in as far as education policy in this country.

I am hoping that as the presidential election season moves forward too that we are going to have an honest and healthy discussion about education and education reform in this country, because it is so vitally important. We are already starting to see the differences between the candidates, whether it is Governor Bush or Vice President Gore, some distinct differences in direction, in vision, in what their agenda would offer. In fact, Governor Bush just late last week was campaigning in my congressional district in western Wisconsin and visited an early elementary school and a Head Start Program there; and he was talking a little bit about his education initiatives, one of which was a new program that he is proposing that would offer \$5 billion in spending for early childhood literacy programs. Unquestioningly, this is something that I think all of us should be able to come together on in a bipartisan manner, because it is something that we need a healthy investment in.

□ 1830

But quite frankly, this has already been implemented back in 1996. It is called the Reading Excellence Program, something that Vice President GORE had already championed and helped usher through the United States Congress, and that President Clinton in fact signed into law. It was a commitment for more resources for early childhood literacy programming.

In fact, the State of Texas happens to be the largest recipient of those funds for the Reading Excellence Program, so perhaps that is where he got his idea from. If that is the case, so be it. I just say, welcome aboard. We are glad to have you there.

There are areas I think that there are some deficiencies in where Governor Bush would take the Nation or fight for when it comes to educational programming that provides a distinct difference from where Vice President GORE is. Vice President GORE is a strong proponent and advocate for the need for doing everything we can to reduce class sizes in this country.

If we can develop an education system with a better teacher-to-pupil ratio, there are just a multitude of benefits that derive from that: more personalized attention; better discipline in the classroom; teachers that are not overburdened, overworked, having to take home assignments and papers that they have to grade until the wee hours of the morning.

Anyone who harbors the illusion that teaching is a 7 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. job is sadly mistaken, because that job continues after the final bell rings, and they are either working with students on an individualized basis or grading papers throughout the night and over the weekend. It is a major, major commitment.

As we talk to teachers about what we can possibly do to help them do their jobs better with the increasing demands that we are placing on them for

better student performance, this is one area that they continuously come back to us on; that is, reduce the class sizes, give us the chance to work in a more personalized and individual manner with these kids in the classroom, and we will produce the results.

We have a very successful program in the State of Wisconsin called the SAGE program. It is a pilot program, not universal yet in the State. I would like to see it made universal. It is for reduced class sizes. In fact, last year the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee just released a study showing the benefits of reduced class sizes under SAGE in the State of Wisconsin.

In the State of Tennessee, we have had hearings before the Committee on Education and the Workforce. They are very proud of the Star Program they are able to implement on a universal State-wide basis. The results speak for themselves. Governor Bush is not talking at all about the need for class size reduction, whereas this administration and Vice President GORE have been willing to fight to try to maintain a separate funding stream for that very purpose, to hire teachers to reduce class sizes.

I think another very important missing component in Governor Bush's education plan has to do with school modernization and school construction. Again, he is silent on this issue, when, if we travel throughout the country, not just in our own congressional districts but throughout the country, there is an overwhelming need for an increased investment in modernizing today's school, the need for more school construction to deal with the demands of overcrowding, but also to deal with the technology and infrastructure that really has to be put in place.

Vice President GORE has a distinct idea and plan on how to get there. Perhaps the greatest difficulty that I have with Governor Bush's education agenda is that I do not see how we could fund it. I do not see how, even if he comes up with a lot of great ideas on that, where he can have some meaningful and credible funding commitment for these programs. That is because in his fiscal policy for the Nation that he has laid out, he is proposing a \$2.1 trillion tax cut over the next 10 years.

Last year, this body moved about an \$800 billion tax cut. They tried selling it to the American people at home, and they were not buying it. It is because I think people are generally fiscally conservative with these matters, fiscally responsible, and they understand that we already have existing obligations that we need to live up to: shoring up social security and the Medicare programs, paying down the \$5.7 trillion national debt, having a greater commitment to education funding and education programs within this country.

But with a \$2.1 trillion tax cut, if enacted, that would virtually make that impossible. In fact, the most rosy economic scenarios that economists are

giving us right now show that maybe if we are lucky an \$800 to \$850 billion surplus over the next 10 years might appear. So it does not take a third grade math education to do the revenues and realize there would be a serious revenue shortfall which would require one of two things, either dipping back into the social security trust fund to finance a tax cut of that magnitude, which I feel is very risky and very irresponsible, or basically an across-the-board spending reduction in virtually all the programs and important investments that we have to make as a Nation, somewhere to the tune of 25 to 30 percent cuts in programs such as education.

So he really cannot have it both ways, by being out there on the stump talking about this huge, fiscally irresponsible \$2 trillion tax cut, while at the same time also saying, but I support a \$5 billion 5-year initiative for early childhood literacy programs, which I would hope would receive good bipartisan support but hopefully within the context of fiscal responsibility.

Let me just end with this one last point. In my District, in the Third Congressional District in western Wisconsin, we kind of are blessed with a mecca of higher education and learning. We have five State universities, seven technical school campuses, a private college right in my hometown of Lacrosse. Higher ed issues are very important.

As I travel around the campuses and meet with students, asking them, what can we do to make secondary education an opportunity for you and other students, their constant complaint is that there is a greater and greater reliance on loans and requiring them to take out more and more loans to finance their education, which leaves them with a mountain of debt as soon as they graduate, just as they are starting their lives and starting families and starting their careers, which places an incredible financial burden upon them.

It was not so long ago, and my friend, the gentleman from North Carolina, probably remembers, where the priority on the Federal level was an emphasis on grants to students. In fact, as recently as a decade or two ago, the ratio was roughly 80 percent grants to 20 percent loans that the students were asked to do. That has been inverted now, and it is just the reverse, where 80 percent of the reliance is on loans and only 20 percent in the grant program.

I think we need to do more in the grant area in order to alleviate this financial burden on students and their families. Unfortunately, Governor Bush disagrees with that. In fact, when a reporter up in Eau Claire asked him specifically where he was on loans versus grants, his response, well, the headline I think says it all, "Bush Averse to More College Grant Funding."

During the question period, it was quite illuminating where he stands on this issue. The reporter in the article

wrote, "Governor Bush, who attended both Yale and Harvard, conceded that some people have complained that those loans carry a repayment burden." His response: "Too bad. That's what a loan is." Then he went on to say, "There is a lot of money available for students and families who are willing to just go out and look for it."

I get the feeling that there is a serious disconnect between the reality of having to finance higher education opportunities and how he perceives the issue right now.

Just recently I had a group of students from back home who were in my office, and they delivered basically debt scorecards of what their own individual debt was going to be like once they finish school. On the average, at least in the Third Congressional District, the average debt burden was over \$16,000 by the time they got done with school. It is an incredible burden.

I think we should be moving in the direction of being able to alleviate that, and opening up the doors to higher education to more students, and especially the more disadvantaged low-income students. But obviously, Governor Bush sees a different tack to take, one which will, I feel, exacerbate the situation and make it more difficult for students to go on, rather than easier for them to go on.

We just cannot afford to leave students behind, especially when we have a tight labor market right now. We have a shortage of well-educated, skilled workers to fill the growth needs of many, many, many companies out there. I think this, too, is going to be a distinct difference when it comes to education policy between what Governor Bush envisions what is needed versus where Vice President GORE is.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. When the gentleman is talking about young people, I think that is interesting. Sometimes if we ask them, it is amazing what we find out.

This past weekend, and I try to keep in touch with them, as the gentleman does in his district, I convened what I call my District Youth Advisory Committee. Really, we brought them together to deal with this issue of youth violence, similar to the conference we convened here, and I convened one at home.

We wanted to discuss a number of issues that were reported in the Second Congressional District of North Carolina, and hopefully that was somewhat representative of North Carolina.

We had a great meeting, of course. When we get young people together, if Members really want to be energized, they will give us an awful lot of energy. They have a lot of it, and they are very bright. They were engaged on the issues. The sessions were very informative.

We sort of gave them some room. They went in some directions and some places where, I guess I was not surprised, having worked with them for 8 years as superintendent, but it was good to be reminded.

The students said, "We need more counselors in our schools. The counselors we have are tied up doing other things, and with testing and with paperwork. When we have a problem, we need someone to go talk with in confidence. Our teachers are overloaded because of class sizes. The classes are too large," because lots of young people come to school with more problems than they did years ago. They recognize the need for more support from their communities.

They talked about teacher qualifications. They said, we want qualified, devoted teachers in the classroom, people who really care about us; the same thing we want as adults. A strange thing, we think students want something different.

They want people who care about them, and they realized one thing, that resources translate into money. We as adults sort of skirt around money. They said, that translates into money. It was amazing to me, the things they were able to talk about saving that we as adults talk about spending in school. They really said, we ought to save those.

One of the interesting things they came up with, I am almost embarrassed to bring it up, somebody might rap my knuckles because I was involved in doing it, was name badges. When I asked all the students, and we had 85 or 90 of them, I said, raise your hand, how many have name tags? Many. Now, how many of you wear them? Three raised their hands. I hope their administrators are not listening.

And then I said, why do you not wear them? They said, nobody checks, so they figured out that was not an important issue with adults. They said, why do we not take that money and buy textbooks?

I think we as adults, if we listen to our young people more often, we will learn a great deal. The diversity of this group that we had, they came from some of the poorer communities in the district. We met in one of the most modern high-tech high schools in North Carolina, with Internet hook-ups in every classroom. It was remarkable. Some of those students' eyes were just sort of marveling. They went into the media center and saw all the things they had that they did not have.

But all of them, every student that was there, whether they were from a large, modern high school or a rural, poor school, said, we want reduced class sizes. And these were high school students, not elementary students.

We here in Congress are talking about how do we help reduce class sizes, and the President's initiative is to reduce class sizes in K through 3, for obvious reasons. You will have more student time, you will have reading comprehension, and have children prepared by the third grade. If children are behind by the third grade, they are likely to stay behind.

That is why, as the gentleman well knows, I started a Congressional Read-

ing Program in my district. If a child reads 100 books they get a certificate and some other stuff. It is amazing.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would yield for a point, another thing class size reduction brings is the interest level of the students in the classroom. One of the great challenges, again when we talk to parents or teachers or administrators, one of the great challenges we face in the education system is challenging the students enough in order to avoid boredom in the classroom.

Through lower class sizes, more additional attention, more individual participation of the students, many times that helps overcome that boredom factor that can really stifle the learning process for these kids.

The other thing, too, and it is interesting, in studies coming back now, that also helps in battling the evil of boredom for students is the technology and the Internet, and using these powerful new learning devices that they have available. Students now are responding, saying, this is cool. This is neat stuff. We like using it. We like learning on it.

To me, that is a sure signal, then, that we should step back and listen to what they are saying, because they get it, they like it, they understand it. One of the unfortunate facts we have in the country is oftentimes the students are way ahead of the curve when it comes to the use and comfort level of the technology than the rest of us really need to be.

But the more we can do to encourage an active and energized, engaged student body in the classroom, we should sit up and take notice of that.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, one of the issues these students have, and remember, we are talking about high school students 9 through 12, technology was a big concern. What they were talking about is not just the number of computers in the classroom. Their point was, they wanted the teachers to have the time to get up to speed on the computers, and be able to integrate that in the curriculum.

On Saturday of this past week, we went into a boys and girls club in a YMCA that does computer training and tutoring after school in the evenings and even on Saturday, for that matter.

□ 1845

I must confess, these computers have come out since I left 4 years ago. They had little computers for little tots in kindergarten where they would get at a bench, and they were telling me that in this boys and girls club as they put these children in front of these computers, they were like beginning computers, not big ones that we see but similar to the stuff they play games on, but they were math, helped them in the math, helped them in their composition. I asked them, I said now how many students will be here? They had a bench and they said there will be three on the bench trying to help the

one using the computer and you will see others standing around wanting to help.

The point of the gentleman was they are engaged in it. He said as soon as they get off the bus in the afternoon, they are there. This is a learning experience.

Mr. KIND. That is right.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. It is important because what the gentleman is talking about in these two areas, the boys and girls club in Raleigh and the YMCA, they are doing a tutorial for a lot of children who have special needs. What this will mean 5, 6 years from now, these students most likely will be in the mainstream, they will make it and be productive citizens in the future and make major contributions. The truth is, they did not get an early start.

North Carolina, and the gentleman was talking about in his State, the governor had kicked off a smart start for pre-school to get kids ready, but these are the kind of things we do.

Mr. KIND. I think we are entering this phenomenal new era when it comes to teaching and learning in our country and it is because of the advent of technology and the availability of technology. Of course, one of the great concerns that we share is the growing digital divide that exists between the haves and have-nots, those who have access to the technology and those who do not. We are talking about, by and large, large inner city schools that are pulling up a little short when it comes to the resources of getting the technology there, a lot of rural areas as well. We need to think creatively on how to overcome that. Because of this exciting new innovation, it is not something that we should be fearful of but rather embrace and try to encourage.

I guess I am speaking a little bit from personal experience as a father of two little boys at home, Johnny who is going to be 4 the end of August and Matthew who is going to be 2 in May, and it is amazing watching how they are absorbing and learning information, which is completely different from when we were toddlers growing up in that. Johnny, for instance, will hop on the computer and do his blues clues program or Sesame Street program and learn the numbers and the alphabet and the shapes and sizes and colors and a lot of the different math programs that they have available, and Matthew will, the 2-year-old, will pull up a chair next to him and see what his older brother is up to. It is kind of fun watching this, and one can just see the wheels turning and they are comfortable with it and they are using that as a learning device.

One of the great fears I have as a member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce is that we may be a little bit slow in realizing the power of this potential that exists out there. We may not be thinking creatively enough or encouraging that type of activity enough in the class-

room and doing everything we can to make sure that they have access to this technology but also have the well trained and qualified teachers who are comfortable in using this technology in the classroom as well, because, shoot, that is the future. It is coming. It is here already and we cannot afford to be asleep at the wheel and we need to encourage this type of activity with our kids.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. The gentleman is absolutely correct. When we start talking about children, it becomes very personal, as it should. With our three, they are fortunate. I wish all children had the opportunity to have those resources. Two of our children are engaged in public education. Our son is a fourth grade teacher in Wake County and listening to him talk about what happens in the classroom and this learning experience and how children need this help, and our daughter taught high school and is now back at the university. My wife is still in the public schools.

Even though I left the superintendent's office, I did not get away from it. I get a dose of it every weekend I go home, but it is so important that we reach out and give children every opportunity.

I happen to believe, as the gentleman does, if we have a good, clean environment for our children to go to school, we reduce those class sizes, we have the space that children need to go to school, then this whole issue that we are dealing with on school violence will go down, the temperature will go down tremendously. I really believe that.

If one goes into a school that they have excess capacity, as I started talking earlier, even if it is a new school and it is a beautiful building outside but they have 30, 40 percent more students than the cafeteria is supposed to have and the bathrooms are supposed to have, the media says they are supposed to have, they start changing classes and when young people go down those halls someone is going to bump into someone and someone is having a bad day and they are going to react to it, as do adults.

So I think there is something we can do and we have a chance to do something about that this year. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves if we adjourn and go home, be more than ashamed, we ought to be held accountable because we have a chance to pass a school construction bill in this Congress to provide resources to the States and to those local schools to renovate and repair worn out buildings that have, in some cases, have leaking roofs, that are not wired to take care of the computers and the technologies that other students have and in some cases those systems that do not have the resources to take care of adding the facilities to make sure we have a good place for teachers to teach.

I always remind folks that of the years I was superintendent and I went into a modern business, there was one

thing I found on every desk of every modern business and this was a computer. When I went into schools, that was not necessarily true. When I went to see a teacher in the classroom, the best thing they could hope for in some cases was a computer lab down the hall, where they took their children to once a week.

I ask folks if they had an automobile and they only drove that car once a week, how good a driver are they going to be, especially when they went there once a week and they only got so many minutes to drive that vehicle? I do not need an answer for that. I know the answer.

We have within our power the ability to change that, and the Members of this Congress cannot do it all but we can do that little small part that says we are important.

Mr. KIND. I commend the gentleman, too, for the leadership and effort he has put in behind the school construction bill. It is something we can act on in this session before we adjourn this year. It is a tax credit on local bond issues for school construction costs and modernization costs. I never thought that on the Federal level we could have in whatever way some impact on local property tax burdens but it is a fact that throughout the country in many regions it is reliance on local property taxes that help finance these school costs and education costs, and it is something that it is very, very important.

Just to bring it back home again for me, I represent an urban, slash, rural district in western Wisconsin. Hopefully the rest of the nation is awake in realizing that there is a crisis in rural America right now; farmers going out of business in droves, three to four family farms a day in the State of Wisconsin alone. Because of the low commodity prices, their cash flow is severely pinched and hindered and it is making it virtually impossible to pass local school referendums in rural parts of the district, not because the farmers are adverse to education or the need for education investment but they are just trying to survive and keep the family farm going and being able to provide for their family. So this is another area where we can, as a Congress, come together, do the right thing, provide some assistance with these tax credits to local school districts so they can meet the all-important school construction and modernization needs that they have back home. I certainly hope that we are able to accomplish that.

So, again, I thank my friend for letting me participate here tonight. I commend him for everything that he does in the area of education for this body and for the people back home.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. To my friend, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND), before we close out let us hit one more point. I think it is important to this Congress. I hope we will address it and

hopefully get a chance in the Committee on Education and the Workforce, and that is this issue on character education. I talked about it as I opened how much it counts as it moves into the 21st Century. As we talk about our children, we know these items are important: Respect, citizenship, justice and fairness, honesty, caring, responsibility and trustworthiness. These are things we can agree on as we talk about this whole issue of school violence, because we want our children to be safe and we need to take aggressive action I think as parents so that they will know that every school in America is a safe haven for our children. That should happen; that they are in good order, and discipline is there so it creates a good learning environment, where young minds can flourish and young souls can be nourished. We can do that. We really can if we work together and reach out and make a difference.

I think character education is one of those components that the gentleman has been working with us on to make a difference and Secretary Riley now has endorsed it, and what this new bill will do is give the Secretary additional discretion to make grants to States and to individual schools if they want to participate, to implement a program after they have worked with the total community. I think it is important for that total community to be involved and be a part of it, and that is why I introduced this bill this year, H.R. 3681, called Character Counts in the 21st Century, and many of my colleagues and the gentleman and others are co-sponsors on that legislation for which I thank the gentleman, but I think if we will do that we can help parents, teachers and community leaders not just to implement character education. That is just one of the components to making education more comprehensive and make our communities safer and so that our teachers can teach and children can learn and certainly that is what the gentleman has been about as he has served and provided leadership on education in this Congress, and I thank him for it.

Mr. KIND. In conclusion, obviously there is a lot of work that still needs to be done but I think we can accomplish these goals in a fiscally responsible manner at the same time. There is a role, I believe, for Congress to perform. Sometimes we get into this old stale debate as far as what the proper role is of Federal, State, local authorities. I think what we need to instead concentrate on is what are the desired objectives and then how do we in working together in leveraging the resources we have available at the local, State and Federal level, of attaining that objective and getting the job done? Because our kids deserve nothing less. It is the future of the country we are talking about. If we are able to maintain economic growth and economic opportunities in this country, it starts with a healthy and an honest investment in

the education area. Part of that includes the character education that the gentleman has been advocating. So there is an important role here and it is something that we should be able to move forward on, I feel, too, in a bipartisan manner rather than these oftentimes silly partisan debates that we have on education issues.

So, again, I thank the gentleman for his comments tonight and for the work that he has provided and the leadership that he has offered to this Congress.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. I thank the gentleman for his time and for his efforts and for his leadership, because he has worked hard to make sure education works and he has taken on the tough issues at the right time for the right reason for the right people who do not have a voice many times.

I say this about children so many times. They do not vote but if they did it would be a different world, and I think they would make a difference.

As we talk about character education, I happen to believe it does work because it recognizes that actions do have consequences and helps young people develop into well-rounded individuals who will, given the right direction, contribute to the strengthening of our social fabric in this country. That is so important as we move into the 21st Century. They are our future.

As Benjamin Franklin said, many years ago, nothing is more important for the public wealth than to form and train youth in wisdom and virtue, and only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. That was true over 200 years ago. It is still true as we move into the 21st Century. We have an opportunity this year, with resources at the Federal level, to invest that money in our seniors in making sure Social Security is safe and secure, taking care of Medicare, paying down the debt, and investing a portion of that money in our children for the 21st Century so those of us when we retire will be secure. That means character education, buildings where children can be safe and secure and have a comfortable place to learn and teachers have a good place to teach, and investing the resources in making sure that they have technology and our teachers are well trained in an ongoing basis to teach our children.

□ 1900

DISCUSSING THE ISSUE OF ILLEGAL NARCOTICS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, and my colleagues, once again, on Tuesday night I come before the House of Representatives and my colleagues to discuss the issue of illegal narcotics and helping to develop our national policy to bring under control what I consider the most

serious social problem facing our Nation and the Members of Congress today.

Tonight I am going to talk a little bit about the problem, again, that we face as a Nation and as a Congress relating to illegal narcotics. I want to spend some time tonight talking about the debate that took place for 2 days last week on the floor of the House of Representatives which has consumed much of the time of the Congress in the past several weeks relating to, in particular, an emergency supplemental appropriations to provide some assistance in the war on drugs and, particularly, assistance to the country of Colombia and their effort to combat illegal narcotics.

Mr. Speaker, tonight I also would like to correct some of the misstatements that were made in that debate. I have gone through some of the RECORD, and I think that it is important for the future RECORD of the House that the facts and statistics and the history of this debate about how we deal with the problem of illegal narcotics is, in fact, documented. Those will be a couple topics of conversation.

In particular, I will focus on Colombia. I will also talk, hopefully, if we get time, about Mexico and the administration's policy towards Mexico as it is now developing in the post-certification process; but, indeed, there is no more serious problem facing our Nation.

The last statistics I have as chairman of the Subcommittee of the Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources of the House of Representatives is that in 1998, 15,973 Americans lost their lives as a direct result of illegal narcotics. It is estimated by our national drug czar, Barry McCaffrey, that, in fact, over 50,000 Americans each year lose their lives for various reasons that are related to illegal narcotics, and some of these are not counted in the statistics, the hard statistics.

In that 15,973 figure, there are individuals who we read about. Again, I point to the news of the last month or so with a 6-year-old child going into a classroom in Flint, Michigan, killing a 6-year-old with a gun. Everyone has focused in the media and the Congress and the administration on the issue of more regulation and legislation dealing with gun control; but, in fact, the article that I have here says that the child came from what is quoted as a dangerous environment, the police have said that the residence was used for drug dealing; the father was in jail.

Mr. Speaker, here is an instance in which they focused on the handgun that was taken to school and used in this murder and failed to focus on the core problem, again, illegal narcotics in this home, if you would call it a home, in this setting, this young 6-year-old was forced to deal with, where he lived in a crack house, where his father was in jail. The topics that, again, the media, the Congress, the administration does not really want to talk