

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, this Member rises today to express his strong support for H.R. 4055, the IDEA Full Funding Act of 2000, of which he is a cosponsor.

Within his home state of Nebraska, the number of children enrolled in special education programs has risen 3,700 students from 1995–1999, a nine percent increase. To continue supporting these increasing numbers, we must fulfill the commitment by Congress made in 1975, prior to my service in the U.S. House to fund IDEA at 40 percent. This is a classic and very damaging unfunded mandate.

Currently the Federal Government is funding an average of 12.6 percent of the per-pupil expenditure for children with disabilities. The other 27.4 percent of our unfilled promise is a burden that state and local governments are having to include in their budgets. This Member has said for many years now that the one significant way that Congress can help decrease property taxes for my Nebraska constituents is to keep the promise to provide 40 percent of the costs of special education.

Nebraska is currently facing teacher shortages and has among the lowest teacher salaries in the country and yet continues to produce top-ranked students. By meeting this commitment and fully funding IDEA, Nebraska could use its state and local dollars to meet the needs of attracting and maintaining quality teachers or direct dollars to programs the local school districts deem to be priorities, such as school modernization, curriculum improvement or more advanced technology.

Mr. Speaker, this Member encourages his colleagues to meet our commitments and phase-up that 40 percent by the year 2010. Support the IDEA Full Funding Act of 2000.

Mr. ROGAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania and my colleagues from the Education and Workforce Committee for their leadership on this issue.

The IDEA program was developed as a partnership, uniting local and federal education funds for students with disabilities. Under this program, the federal government committed to funding up to 40 percent of the average cost of educating disabled students.

Sadly, over the lifetime of this bill, the government has never contributed more than about 12 percent of the average. The time has come for Congress to pay its fair share in this long unfunded mandate.

Despite the federal government's two-decade old commitment to educating disabled students, Congress has never once funded its full share, leaving local and state educators to scramble for funds to pay for special education programs.

The result has been an unnecessary and unfair competition, pitting the funding needs of disabled students against the needs of students in traditional programs. In turn this has spurred excessive litigation resulting in exorbitant costs for local educators. By failing to meet its original commitment, the federal government has put local educators in a financial catch-22. The bill we support will aid in ending this crisis, and enact much needed reforms in the IDEA program.

H.R. 4055, the Individuals with Disabilities Full Funding Act will guarantee that the federal government keeps its commitment to support local education programs for students with disabilities, and authorize the federal government to fund the full 40 percent of the cost of local programs for students with disabilities.

The IDEA Full Funding Act will authorize approximately \$7 billion in FY 2001 and expand this allocation by \$2 billion per year over the next decade. It is a necessary measure and will help the federal government maintain its commitment to provide a quality education to disabled students.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the long-overdue proposal, and thank the gentleman for his leadership on this vital issue.

Mr. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that today the House of Representatives is rising above partisan politics to address a matter of utmost importance. Be it urban, rural, small or large, every school district in our country is suffering because the federal government had not made good on its 1975 commitment to fund 40 percent of education costs for special needs students.

I commend Chairman GOODLING for bringing this bill to the floor, and for his commitment to fully fund IDEA by 2010. Fulfilling our commitment to our special needs students is absolutely the right thing to do.

I would like, however, to challenge this House today. I'll take this bill and raise you one. I urge my colleagues to cosponsor H.R. 4090, a bill introduced by Representative VITTER of Louisiana. This bill would fulfill our commitment to our schools and our children in two years. I know this is an ambitious goal, but I think 25 years of unfulfilled promises is long enough. So does Representative VITTER. I am one of a group of cosponsors from both sides of the aisle who think our government should step up to the plate and make good on its promise.

I urge my colleagues to pass this bill today. And tomorrow we should come to this floor and pass H.R. 4090, the IDEA Keeping our Commitment Act. It's the right thing to do and it's about time.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, my goal in Congress has been the promotion of livable communities. A community that is safe, healthy and economically secure must view educating our children as a priority. The well-being of our families depends upon the health of our schools.

In the 94th Congress, we mandated—appropriately—that there would be special education access for children with severe learning disabilities. Along with that mandate came a promise that the federal government would pay 40 percent of the cost. This too was appropriate, for these children are the most difficult and expensive to educate. Unfortunately, the federal government has not met this important commitment. Funding has fallen as low as 9 percent, and currently, we fund only 12.6 percent of the average per pupil expenditure to assist children with disabilities. As a result, the financial burden has fallen on local districts.

I am proud to support H.R. 4055, the IDEA Full Funding Act, which addresses the critical issue of assistance for the children whose needs are the greatest. This bill authorizes increases of \$2 billion a year to meet the federal commitment of 40 percent by the year 2010. I have cosponsored similar legislation because programs such as IDEA offer the chance to improve the lives of more disabled people than ever before.

Livable communities are for all of us, not just a select few. The federal government should lead by example in offering the best

possible education to our nation's disabled children.

Mr. RAMSTAD. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 4055, the IDEA Full Funding Act. I am proud to be a cosponsor of this important legislation.

It is high time the federal government kept its statutory commitment to fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA).

In 1975, the Federal Government mandated that all states provide Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to all children with disabilities by 1978. This law established a federal commitment to provide funding aid at 40 percent of the average pupil expenditures to assist with the excess costs of educating students with disabilities.

Unfortunately, annual appropriations for IDEA have not even come close to the 40 percent level! Before Republicans took control of the Congress in 1995, the federal government was only paying 7 percent of the average per pupil expenditure. We are now paying 12.6 percent of the cost, but this still is not enough.

The Congressional Research Service (CRS) estimates that almost \$16 billion would be needed to fully fund Part B of IDEA. The FY2000 appropriations for Part B was \$6 billion, leaving State and local governments with an unfunded mandate of nearly \$10 billion.

Local school districts currently spend on average 20 percent of their budgets on special education services. Much of this goes to pay the unpaid Federal share of the mandate.

Passing H.R. 4055 would be a giant step closer to our goal of fulfilling the promise. If the federal government would keep its commitment, this money could be used to hire and train more high quality teachers, reduce class size, build and renovate classrooms, and invest in technology.

We must improve the education our children receive. A good way to do this is to show a strong federal commitment to education by fully funding IDEA and passing H.R. 4055, the IDEA Full Funding Act.

Mr. GOODLING. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. OSE). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GOODLING) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4055.

The question was taken.

Mr. GOODLING. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

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GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GOODLING. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 4055.

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

There was no objection.

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PAMELA B. GWIN HALL

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the