

hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EDUCATION FUNDING PRIORITIES

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

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker I would like to take some time here this afternoon to talk about education in furtherance of the discussion we just had and the votes we have just had on the floor of the House of Representatives.

In a time when education has risen to be the number one issue in all of the polls that we see across America, everyone is trying to take credit for what is happening in education, or to blame others. In reality, I do not think there is a man or woman on either side of this Chamber who would not want to, in some way, be able to help young people with education.

Mr. Speaker, I like to believe very strongly that we on the Republican side have worked very, very hard to further this purpose, just as we did on the last vote, trying to take the same amount of money and giving flexibility to the States and local districts to make the decision about how to use the money and not mandate just school construction or just reduced class size.

Similarly, we have been working very hard on the funding aspects of education. Indeed, as I indicated in our discussion earlier today, in the first 5 years of the last decade, with the Democrats in charge of the House of Representatives, the increase in funding for education was 6 percent per year. Basically, it was 6 percent in the 5 years the Democrats were in charge of the House, and when the Republicans took over, the increase has been 8.2 percent a year. Anyone who knows anything about mathematics and takes that 2.2 percent additional increase each year realizes how many dollars that amounts to. So there has been no shirking of the responsibility of Republicans with respect to education.

But I think just as important has been some of the issues that underlie this. We have been very determined to help children with disabilities, to help with IDEA, the individuals with disabilities education act. They need particular help because, in some cases, it is particularly expensive to help those young people be educated.

We have been concerned about quality. We have talked about quality effectiveness and results in education. We have talked about better teaching. In our classrooms today, particularly today with the technology and some of the problems in society, we need teachers who are competent and who are

well trained and, in particular, who know their subject matter. We need accountability. As we are deregulating more Federal education programs and providing more flexibility, which we have been doing, we must ensure that Federal education programs produce real accountable results.

We believe in local control. Ultimately, we have to make that decision, be it Washington State or Washington, D.C. or Wilmington, Delaware or some place around the United States of America, we need to give them the flexibility to do what they have to do in order to educate. We need to get dollars to the classroom. We have been pushing very hard to make sure that the appropriations which are done here go into the classrooms to help the young people get educated.

Basic academics is important. No more fads or self-esteem approaches, perhaps new math, open classrooms, some of the things which have failed over the years. We need the basic academics, and we do need parental involvement and responsibility. I think all of us are aware that parents are often out of the house more because of the need for income, jobs, matters like that, but the bottom line is that we need to get parents as involved as we possibly can.

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We have been working very hard in order to get that done, and we have been providing the funding for this, and I think that is a significant point that needs to be made.

There are a lot of areas we have been involved in: the Charter School Expansion Act; some real opportunities to educate differently, perhaps better; prohibiting new Federal taxes, for example; dealing with the Teacher Empowerment Act and the Student Result Act. These are all areas of building for education for young people across America.

But there are other areas as well, and some are not necessarily connected to what Republicans do. One is called Head Start. Head Start is a very significant program that helps young people who may need a particular start in education to get up to the starting line equal. I like to believe that every kid in kindergarten at the age of 5 is going to be equal at that point if we can possibly help with that.

And Republicans have been leading the way over the last few years with Head Start. Funding for this program has expanded by 106 percent since 1995. That is a tremendous increase. That is a real commitment, to take all of those children who may come from families or circumstances where they need some extra help and provide that extra help to them.

At the same time, we are talking again about quality and not just quantity, and we are saying that those people who are in these Head Start programs, that is teaching and running them, should have the background to do that. Hopefully, they will be teachers or people on their way to a teaching degree so that they will have the

advantages of knowing exactly how they can handle children. So we are working on that. And now half the people teaching in Head Start have a college degree. There is a balance, I think, between quality and expansion, which is going on here; and we think that is important as well.

We think quality child care is important also. A great sum of money has been spent with respect to the area of helping with our children. Again, children are the future. Children are a precious commodity that we have to pay a great deal of attention to as Members of the Congress of the United States of America.

Literacy is also important. And under the tutelage of the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GOODLING), the retiring but extraordinarily talented chairman of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, we have also addressed these issues. So there are many, many things which we have done with respect to education for which the Republican Party may take credit, as well as some Democrats may take credit.

The bottom line is that we care a great deal about education. We have funded education and we want to make sure all those children have every opportunity possible.

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

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

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COVERAGE

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

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. Speaker, on April 12, I led an hour of debate on the topic of prescription drug coverage for senior citizens. I read three letters from around the state from seniors who shared their personal stories. On the 12th, I made a commitment to continue to read a different letter every week until the House enacts reform. That was five months ago. Although the House passed a prescription drug bill this summer, I believe it will not help most seniors. So, I will continue to submit letters until Congress enacts a real Medicare prescription drug benefit. This week, I will submit a letter from Virginia Langell of Chippewa Lake, Michigan.

At most, there are only three weeks left for Congress to enact a meaningful prescription drug benefit. It is critical that we do so before Congress adjourns.

This week, Newsweek magazine has devoted its cover story to the issue of prescription drugs. It is the same story that I have been sharing on the House floor since April.