

A BIPARTISAN SOLUTION TO  
EDUCATION CRISIS IN AMERICA

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

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, of the many challenges that our country faces in this new century, there is none greater than education, educating our populace so that we have a skilled workforce and so that everybody has the level of education that they need in today's economy.

When I go around my district and go visit businesses and it does not matter what size or what level of skill they are looking for and I ask them what their greatest challenge is, the answer is always the same, finding employees. This is particularly true certainly of high-skilled jobs, computer, engineers, math, science, but it is also true across the board of just about any level of job that you could need in any business. We are not educating our population to fill the jobs that are available in our country. If we are going to maintain the economic growth that we have enjoyed for the last 7 or 8 years, we are going to have to start doing that.

Increasingly, the battle over education has broken down into an either/or partisan debate that is not benefiting either party or certainly not benefiting the people of this country. On the one side you have people saying that all we need to do is spend more money on public education and the problems will be solved. On the other side, you have people saying all we need to do is privatize the system and it will magically be solved. The truth is that neither answer really works or really applies to the challenge we face in this country.

I rise today to talk about a new solution to this that will bring some of the ideas from both sides and hopefully forge a bipartisan solution to the education crisis that we have in our country. As a member of the New Democrat Coalition, this is something that Members like the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. ROEMER) and the gentleman from California (Mr. DOOLEY) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DAVIS) and the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND), myself, and many others have been working on to forge a solution to our education problem that gets away from the old partisan polemic, that gets away from the idea of trying to score political points on education and to actually work towards a solution. And it blends together a couple of very basic ideas. Yes, we need to support public education. Ninety percent of the students in this country, more in most places, are educated in public institutions. They need our support. Anyone who says money does not matter in education is not being realistic.

I do not think you would hear any businessman say that money does not matter in his or her ability to run their business. It matters. But it also matters every little bit as much how you

spend that money. Not only do we need to support public education, we also need to make sure that there is accountability and choice at every level of the education establishment. Right now in K-12 education that really is not true. Either for the students or the employees, whether it is administrators, teachers, principals, students, whatever, we really do not have many methods to measure results, to measure how well our students are doing, how well our teachers are doing, how well our administrators are doing. The people of this country are demanding that accountability. They will support public education, they will support lower class sizes, better school construction, mandatory preschool, a variety of different things but they want to make sure they are getting their money's worth.

What we need to advocate is programs that give parents and students reasonable reason to believe that we are going to have that sort of accountability within our education system. We need to measure results. I understand that nobody is excited about having their results measured. If you show up to work and someone says, "Okay, today we're going to do a 2-week evaluation of how well you're doing at your job." It is not something that anybody is looking forward to nor is it easy to do. I am not advocating that we simply have one multiple choice test fits all. It is a complicated process to evaluate. But some evaluation has to be done.

It is not enough for those of us who advocate public schools to stand up and say, "Well, it's too tough to evaluate. We can't really tell you what schools are working and which ones are not." We need to figure that out.

We also need to give parents choice. Expanding charter schools in this country would give parents realistic public school choice. They could mold and shape their local community school and be invested in it. Those options would help improve public schools. But at the end of the day, we also need to fund schools. If we are going to tell teachers that we are going to hold them more accountable, we are going to have to pay them more. You will not attract people to the teaching profession if they know they are starting out at \$24,000 and topping out at \$50,000 when they have other options.

Another good idea, something that the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DAVIS) has worked on a lot, is the idea of alternative certification, the idea of taking people who have been working in the business world, have developed skills and giving them an alternative method to allow them to teach perhaps for a short period of time to help fill that quality issue. So we are going to have to increase quality through increasing pay and increasing accountability if we are truly going to move forward in education.

In this election year, I ask both parties to step up to this problem. This should not be an issue where we try to

advance an idea or a piece of legislation for the political purpose of making the other party look like either, A, they do not support public schools or, B, they do not support accountability. We need people working together who both support public schools and support accountability and choice. I think that is the majority of this body, frankly. We just need to forge that coalition and work on that so that we can move forward.

Mr. Speaker, one final point. Local control is going to be a critical aspect of this. This cannot be solved from Washington, D.C. Local schools have to make the difference, and we have to empower them to make that difference.

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TRIBUTE TO JUDGE JOSEPH  
CLEMENS HOWARD, SR.

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

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to note the passing from this life on September 16 of a great American. I rise to pay homage to a man of peace, United States District Judge Joseph Clemens Howard, Sr.

Judge Howard served the cause of justice for many years, first on the Supreme Bench of Baltimore City, and later on the United States District Court for the District of Maryland.

Some may think it unusual that I characterize this man who was such a fierce and tenacious fighter for justice as a man of peace. We must never forget, however, what Dr. Martin Luther King taught this Nation when he said, "Peace is more than the absence of war. Peace is the presence of justice."

All too often in this life, we fail to recognize, Mr. Speaker, the greatness of the people around us. Judge Joseph Howard was a man, however, whose elevated stature as a human being, whose intellectual capability and moral character, as well as physical presence, demanded recognition.

As a consequence of that stature, Joe Howard was acknowledged in his own time as both a legal scholar and as a trailblazer for civil rights.

President Jimmy Carter nominated Judge Howard to serve on the United States District Court for the District of Maryland in 1979. That action on the part of President Carter was an historic event.

In recognition of Joe Howard's capabilities and proven accomplishments as a member of the Maryland judiciary, both Maryland Senator Charles Mathias and our Democratic Senator Paul SARBANES strongly supported Judge Howard's nomination. The Senate gave its advice and consent, and on October 25, 1979, Judge Joseph Howard was sworn in as the first African American to ever serve on Maryland's United States District court.