

of the other points, though, I want to make with that is the cost of the machinery. When we talk about our farms and ranches, we have a plant that manufactures farm equipment. The price of some of that equipment coming out is several hundred thousand dollars.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Like a combine.

Mr. TERRY. \$200,000 to \$300,000, and even more if you go to some of the other equipment. A small family-owned printing company that I toured last summer when I was home, one printer runs hundreds of thousands of dollars, half a million dollars for a printer. So when you talk about what level do you set this, if you do not eliminate it, and picking the winners and losers, you fail to recognize that they are eking out a small living with very expensive equipment, but yet we tax on the value of that equipment, not the living that a father and mother and maybe a son and a daughter can make off of that. That is why it remains fundamentally unfair.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank both of my colleagues for their input on this very important issue.

Let me just close with one very important point. We will also hear that making the inheritance tax repeal permanent will hurt donations to charity.

□ 1800

The assumption there in that argument is that people are only giving to charity so they do not have to give it to the Federal Government.

I just think that is not true. If we look at what happened after the Reagan tax cuts in the 1980s, giving to charity skyrocketed. I think wealthy people are motivated by the best intentions when they give. If they do not have to give as much money at death, I think they will give even more money to charity, and that America's charities will benefit from the permanent repeal of the inheritance tax.

EDUCATION DETERMINES THE FUTURE OF AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. OTTER). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this time, and I will be joined by some of my colleagues a little later, I hope, to talk on this special order on the floor this evening about a very important issue facing this country today, maybe one of the key issues.

Everyone talks about my issue is more important, or that issue is more important. But the truth is, when we are talking about the future of America, that issue is education, because that is the one issue that not only helps us this week, this year, next year, but really secures our future

when we are headed into the 21st century and the challenges we face. This group of young people in our schools today will determine the kind of future we are going to have.

So many times I get perplexed when I have my colleagues come to this floor, and I really sense, number one, that they have not visited a school recently; or if they have been to a school, that they did not go into the classrooms; and if they went into a classroom, they probably did not pay attention to what they were seeing or listening to from the teacher, or they were not looking into the eyes of some of the very bright children who were in those classrooms struggling to learn in conditions, in many cases, that Members of this body would not want to be in every day.

They are overcrowded, and in the summertime they are hot, and in the wintertime they may be cold. Or they are in a trailer outside, and if it is raining, they walk through the rain to get to the classroom, or walk through any kind of inclement weather.

First, this evening, let me talk about some very positive things, some good things that are happening in our public schools. As this hour goes on, I will talk about more of them.

Let me first talk about some schools in my district, something I know about, and in North Carolina. I had the occasion over the last couple of weeks, and I make an effort to visit schools about every week, but I went to a school down in part of my district, Anderson Creek Elementary, and visited with the principal, Ms. Cobb, and an awful lot of the teachers and students.

They have a program where they encourage children to read. It is really a kindergarten through about fourth grade reading program. Some of the schools I am going to mention actually do it in the higher grades.

She got those young people so excited about reading by giving them certificates and tee shirts, and getting the parents involved through kindergarten, that those youngsters in that school, and there are about roughly 700 elementary school students, over 545 of them read at least 100 books. They had read a total of over 155,000 books this year; probably more than that by now.

When we talk about good things, those are the kinds of things that make a difference. Because if a youngster learns to read and they learn to do math and they learn to communicate, that will make a difference. They will be successful students.

I went to North Harnett Elementary the same day, where the leading reader in that school had read 410 books. It is amazing to me that a youngster would read 410 books and still do his or her homework.

At Anderson Creek, they had one student who read 545 books. The children in that school had read a substantial number. It is sort of contagious. These are good things happening in Harnett County.

Lafayette Elementary, the same thing. They went in, had an assembly, and they honored the students. Their program was titled Reading Around the World, where they actually put flags of nations around the world about which the youngsters had read. They got involved. They had tee shirts and they got certificates, and they honored top readers.

These are the things we do not hear a lot about, but we always hear people critical of those people who are giving so much time in the classroom who really are creative, innovative, and thinking about how do we make things better for children.

Then I went to Cleveland Elementary School, a school in the community I grew up in. The same kind of thing: a very caring principal and assistant principal, with an awful lot of hard-working, focused teachers. They were doing the program not only in reading, but in a number of other areas, and they were giving out certificates. Children were really and truly getting ready to build a strong foundation for the future, things we were not doing 10 or 20 years ago.

I went over to East Clayton Elementary School over near Clayton, and the same kind of thing: a very focused principal providing great leadership, and teachers who were caring, creative, and making a difference.

I only mention these schools because they are representative not only of just schools in my congressional district or in my State of North Carolina, but I happen to think they are representative of teachers and students and principals and administrators all across this country.

Do we have problems? Sure. Do we need to improve? Absolutely. But they are about making a difference. This is the way we improve it. I have learned a long time ago that if we want to improve education, we lay out a plan, we work with the people, and we give them encouragement. It is awful easy to be critical.

It is a lot like a little poem I use many times, and I think my colleagues would benefit from that, because it reminds me of being an architect. It takes a long time to go to school to be an architect. It takes a number of years. But the last time I checked, if we want to hire somebody to tear a building down, we can put them in a machine and put a ball at the end of a chain and we can knock it down pretty quick.

"I watched them tear a building down,
A gang of men in a busy town.
With a ho heave ho and a lusty yell,
They swung a beam and a side wall fell.
I asked the foreman, are these men skilled,
The kind you would hire if you had to build?
He smiled and said, 'No, indeed,
Common labor is all I need,
For I can wreck in a day or two
What people have taken years to do.'
And I thought to myself as I went my way,
Which of these roles have I tried to play?
Have I been a builder who builds with care,
Carefully measuring the world by the rule or
a square,

Or have I been content to roam the town, Content with the business of tearing down?"

Too many times we have people who unfortunately are willing to tear down, but are not willing to help be architects. We not only need architects to build buildings, we need architects in our classrooms. We have them in teachers; we need more. Yes, we need resources to help train them better, because the needs for our teachers are changing every day.

I think that is the key issue in education, is that we give encouragement where it is needed. Certainly, we give counsel when it is not working out. If we have people who are not doing the job, then we need to take appropriate action, like we would do in any other area. But we ought to acknowledge when our teachers and our administrators and people who work with our children every day are doing a good job.

Let me just share with Members, if I may, before I get to some prepared remarks, I read an article recently that I want to just read some pieces out of. It is by Gerald Bracey, and it was in *The Washington Post*. I think it is right on target when we are talking about education.

It says, "Why do we scapegoat the schools?" I could not help but think, there is a lot of truth in this. I think I know a little bit about this. I said to my colleagues when they came here, I served as State superintendent of schools of North Carolina for 8 years. That is an elective office in North Carolina, like the governor and some others.

There is one thing I learned. We may not know all the answers of what to do, but I know some of the things that do not work. Sometimes that is worth an awful lot.

Gerald Bracey made this point: "There is no pleasing some people, even when they get what they want. So why do we keep listening to them? For more than 20 years now, people have been bashing our schools."

He goes all the way back to the time when the Russians put up the Sputnik, and we got all carried away in this country and said our math and science programs are in shambles, our schools are failing us, our schools need to be fixed, so we put together a program. Lo and behold, with President Kennedy's focus and commitment, and yes, this Congress, the House and Senate put in resources behind it, and I emphasize, resources, and translated, that is money behind it, we put a man on the moon before the end of the decade.

But Bracey goes on to say, we didn't say to the public schools, you are no longer in crisis, you have done a good job. You make this happen. Then all of a sudden, we walked along, and they did not get credit for what they had done. We stayed quiet. All of a sudden, after that happened, he said that there was no declaration that the crisis in education was over, and the question was raised, do pigs fly? Translated,

that is that we did not give them the credit; it was assumed they had to do it.

He goes on to talk about, again, he says, "I don't mean to suggest, of course, that America's public schools are perfect. The dreary state of some urban and poor rural school systems is well documented." I would agree with that. He said, "But I have been following the anguish over our competitive capabilities since the '83 report, and I've noticed the same pattern. In the early nineties, as the economy tanked and the recession set in, many variations of 'Lousy schools are producing a lousy work force and it is killing us in the global market' could be heard, but those slackards somehow managed to turn things around. By early 1994, many publications featured banner headlines about the recovery that later became the longest sustained period of economic growth in the Nation's history. And then, 'The American economy, back on top,' was the way that *The New York Times* summed up the turnaround in February of 1994."

Well, did the public schools have anything to do with that? Were the people that were employed in those businesses all of a sudden better 2 years later than they were 2 years before? Did we give them any credit for that happening? No. They continued to be hammered.

He goes on to say, "Looking at a number of the different rankings of schools and school reports, the United States looked particularly bad in one DEF category: the difference in quality between rich and poor schools. We finished 42nd lower than any other developed nation, which is shameful for a rich nation."

So if 26 nations had better schools, how did we wind up being number 2 in competitive ranking of all the nations in the world? The DEF used dozens of variables in many sectors, and the United States ranks well across the board.

One important consideration is the brain drain factor. Our scientists and engineers stay here, earning us a top ranking in that category. Other nations of the world who send young people to the United States to be educated, and certainly we have received or we have been the beneficiary of that for a number of years, they come here and many of them stay in the United States, and they make their contributions here. We as a society and as a people have been beneficiaries of their coming to America and getting their educations here. It has made a difference.

I only share this because I think this article is a good article for me to segue into the comments I want to make this evening, because I think there are some good things. There are a lot of good things about our public schools. I think the American public cares very deeply about our public schools.

We have roughly 53 million young people in this country in the public

schools of America. Depending on what State one is in, that may range from roughly 93 or 94 percent in North Carolina to where some States, maybe a little lower, we probably have 95 instead of 94, and some States less because they have more parochial schools. The bottom line is, the bulk of the students in this country are in the public school sector, and historically they have gotten a good education.

The challenge we face today in the 21st century is a much different challenge than we faced 50 or even 100 years ago, or even 25 years ago, for that matter. The world is a different place. We are technology-driven, by and large. We want every child to be able to make it. We do not have the luxury that we had 30 or 40 years ago where we could educate the top 20 percent, the rest of them could get a job on the production line.

Those jobs in industry, wherever it may be, or even on the farm, for that matter, wherever they work, are really tied to technology.

□ 1815

Many of the jobs around this country and increasingly around the globe are tied to technology; and that is why we need our young people better educated today than ever in the history. And that is why we look to the public schools and we are challenging them. Parents are, rightly so, looking at their community. That is why when you see survey after survey, if you look at the rankings, and I have had occasion to follow them for a number of years now, by and large parents tend to rate the schools that their children attend fairly high. They usually get a B or higher for the schools their children attend. And if you look at schools, in general, they tend to get a much lower ranking.

Why is that so? I think the reason is that parents and the people in that community are familiar with those schools where their children go. They know the teachers. They know what happens in that school, so they get a much higher ranking. They do not know about all these other schools. What they hear about these schools is general information that is shared, be it accurate or inaccurate, so they tend to process it. If they tell them schools are bad and they hear public officials continue to say it, they will say, My school is good.

I think it has a lot to do with the same kind of ranking with Members in this body. They say Congress in general, we really do not have that high of numbers; but if you ask about a Member that represents in a district, he is a pretty good guy or lady. I know him. They represent us well. I think that is reflected in that as well.

Let me move now to some of the issues I want to talk about, and I am joined now by some of my colleagues, and I will call on them in just a minute, the gentleman from Chicago, Illinois (Mr. DAVIS), who really has

been a tremendous leader in education in this body. But I would like to begin tonight by talking about why education is such an urgent national issue, and it really is.

Since September 11 we have all been heavily focused on the issues regarding our national security, and I think that is appropriate, and on homeland security specifically. And that focus is completely appropriate as we have become aware of threats to our security in this new era of terrorist attacks. I mean, if we pick up a newspaper, we read a magazine, we turn on the TV, it is in front of us. So it is appropriate we deal with it. But we make a huge mistake, I think, if we fail to recognize and act on the reality that increasing the investment in education is imperative but it is absolutely critical to our Nation's security. It is as important, maybe more important, but it is equally as important as protecting our borders, both in the immediate sense and in the long term.

You know, it is a lot like a child developing. It is awful hard for a child to develop healthy if we do not feed them the proper food. And if you give them food to develop the bodies, we have to give them the right education and opportunities to develop their minds, to be a well-rounded person. In the 21st century, America's economic growth and prosperity depend more and more on a knowledge-based economy and on the skills of our people. And we have seen that over the last many years.

Working Americans are beginning to understand that their level of earning is tied directly to their level of learning. Let me repeat that again. Their level of earning is directly tied to their level of learning. And it will be more so in the 21st century. And we really do not think about it; a lot of us as adults think of learning as academic being in the classroom. Let me remind my colleagues that all of us learn every day in the people we come in contact with, the interactions, the bulletins we read, whatever we do. It is things that we pick up. And it really perplexes me when I hear people talk about, and sometimes they do not think before they speak sometimes, they talk about how a student made little of this and a little of that.

I used to go to civic clubs. I specifically remember one Rotary Club, and I will not call the name of where it was because somebody might be watching from that town. We had an eighth grade exit math exam for our students in North Carolina. I thought, I will have some fun. So I carried that math exam with me to the civic club. I will not even call the name of it. I handed it out.

I said, I have read in this local paper how this exit exam is not even an eighth grade level. So I passed it out to the people who had come to lunch. Now, I was not so dumb as to not carry the answer sheet with me. I carried it with me. So I watched their faces as they were working on it. Finally as we

got near the end of the meeting I said, if anybody wants to raise their hand and give me the answer, and I would read the question. And I could tell by looking at their face some of them had not done too good on getting their answers right.

The point is we have some of the brightest young people in our public schools today we have ever had. But our challenge today in this body as we develop policy and across this country is to make sure that every child gets that opportunity, and we are trying. I want to talk about it as the evening goes on about the bill of No Child Left Behind and why it is important that, if we are going to do legislation, we have to put the resources behind it.

An educated populace is also critical to the survival of a free people and the sustaining of our democracy. Our Nation's experiment with self-governance can only endure if our people know and understand their stake in its success. And I will talk more later about the long-term challenges we face in education, but I want to now talk about the immediate challenges we face in America's schools. And I think before I do that, though, I want to talk about some infrastructure needs; but before I do, let me turn to my colleague from Chicago, Illinois (Mr. DAVIS), who has been a champion for education in this body. But he has really been a fighter for young people since he has been here.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE). I was sitting there thinking and recalling that North Carolina is recognized as having one of the best public education systems in the country; and as I have observed the gentleman over the last several years, I kind of smiled to myself and said, yes, I know why. And one of the reasons is because they have had great advocates like the gentleman over the years, even before he came to the Congress, who seriously promoted and functioned as an advocate, who kept pushing and kept recognizing how valuable and how important education is. And so I simply want to commend the gentleman for the kind of leadership that he has displayed in the State of North Carolina and in the United States Congress, pushing the concept that we really cannot afford to leave any child, that we cannot leave any of our children behind, especially as we continue to try and make America become the Nation that it has the potential of being.

So I thank the gentleman for giving me the opportunity to share a bit of the time with him this evening to talk about how important education is because it has always been a priority for me. And I, too, believe that the best way to preserve the safety of our country is to educate our Nation's youth so that they can continue to grow and develop and help be in a position to con-

front the issues and solve the problems that we continue to face.

I was thinking of the fact that we spend and we are going to spend, because we have no choice except to, billions of dollars to protect our Nation from future terrorist attacks and to rebuild what has already been torn down. And I support this kind of spending and know that it is vital to the success of our country. But I also think that we cannot afford to lose sight of the fact that, as we increase military spending, we also need to protect the future by continuing to invest in the education of our children.

I am fortunate to come from a congressional district that has some of the very best public schools as well as private schools. I mean, I have got schools like Whitney Young High School, which has won the academic decathlon every year for the last 10 years. It is known as the best college prep school in the Nation. This is a public high school. Yes, it is a magnet school; but it is also a public high school. Then I have got other schools like the Oak Park and River Forest High School, like Trinity Lutheran. All of these schools have super records.

Then I have got a little school like Providence St. Mel, which is a little private black school in the heart of the inner city where 99 percent of all the young people who graduate from there go to college. And this school has a tremendous program of discipline where every young person has to comply with whatever the rules and regulations are. If not, you just cannot go there. Paul Adams does not allow it. Then I have got St. Ignatius Prep, one of the top prep schools in the country.

And then I also have schools that turn out great athletes, people like Mark Maguire, Kevin Garnett. All of these individuals came out of my schools, schools in my community. Westinghouse just won the boys' championship this year. And Marshall High School has the best woman basketball coach in the Nation. I mean, Dorothy Gaters has won more championships and has had more offers to go to universities and go to the pros, but she will stay right there at Marshall; and that is where she is going to probably end her career.

But we also have to recognize that there is still a tremendous amount of unmet need. And that is to say, far too many of our young people do not have the resources made available to them so that they too can actualize all of the potential that they have, and so we have to keep putting in the resources. I mean, it is not good enough to talk about leaving no child behind. We also have to put the money in where it is necessary. We have to have standards that are high. There must be accountability, and there must be adherence to standards that have been set. And so I agree with everything that I have heard you talking about here earlier this evening. And I certainly want to

keep commending you for keeping education on the front burner, out in the forefront.

Let me just tell you as I end and go back and do some other work, I went to a one-room school when I first started school. As a matter of fact, there was one woman, Ms. Beadie King was the teacher, and she taught eight grades plus what we called then the little primer and the big primer. And much of whatever it is that I know today and much of what I can recall, I am a person who likes to use poetry when I am talking and use vignettes, and most of those I learned from Ms. Beadie King, and I can still remember them. Today I could not remember anything, but I remember them.

So there is nothing greater than good teachers, and we need to make sure that our teachers are well compensated, that they are paid for the work that they do so that the quality of their lives can also be what it should be.

So I commend the gentleman and thank him for the leadership that he has displayed, and it has just been a pleasure to be here these few moments and join with the gentleman.

□ 1830

Mr. ETHERIDGE. I thank my colleague, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS), and I would say to him that his comments here on the floor and the comments as Members speak and acknowledge great teachers that made a difference in their lives, honors those teachers in a very special way, and all of us could stand up and acknowledge those people who have made a difference.

As the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) mentioned about compensating teachers, it is important that we do a better job of it because they want their children to go to college. They want to own a home. They would like to have a nice car. And in some places in this country, they who are some of the more educated people in the communities cannot even send their children to the schools where the people who educate their children do. And that is not right in America and we have got to change that and we can do better.

The number one security threat, though, to our schools is a lack of adequate infrastructure. Let me talk about that just for a minute. My colleague from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) alluded to it a few moments ago talking about the communities that really have some of the resources and others who do not because in many of America's communities, school buildings are old and unfortunately because of the resources of those communities, they are neglected and falling apart and they do not have the kind of quality infrastructure that would make a difference. We send in children into buildings, and I have often said in my communities as I have moved around, and I think it is still true, that we have prisons in this country that we as

members of this United States Congress helped build and pay for that are a whole lot nicer than the buildings we send our children to. That is wrong. It is not wrong that we have the prisons. It is wrong that we have better facilities for them than we do for our children. We have it within our power to do something about that, and I am going to talk about that more in a minute because we come on this floor and argue about issues and policies, and many of them are short term, built to get to the next election, but I am here to tell everyone this issue is far beyond the next election. This is about the next generation and the future of this country, and I think the American people are going to hold some folks accountable for not living up to this part of the bargain because the average school in this country is over 40 years old. If the average is 40, then one can imagine how old some of those buildings are. Some of them were built shortly after the turn of the century and some are approaching 100 years of age. The age is not the issue. The condition is what is the problem. Fifteen million American children currently attend what has been classified as substandard facilities. If these were prisons in the country or if they were jails, because of the codes we have in America, we close prisons and we close jails and we are forced to build them, but there is nothing that says we cannot send a child to a substandard facility, and children, in my opinion, are not as safe as they can be in substandard schools. And they certainly are inviting targets for would-be terrorists, either foreign or domestic, in some of these cases, and let me tell why, and I am going to use my congressional district, which I think is a very progressive district and I am sure other members would probably say the same thing, but certainly they are. Our State passed a \$6.2 billion State bond issue in 1996 and the counties that I am getting ready to cite have raised revenue and built buildings every year, I know, for the last 10 or 12 years, and part of their challenge is they are growing so rapidly, they cannot keep up. The biggest challenge is school overcrowding, certainly in my congressional district, and I am sure it is true in a number of the others, and use of temporary trailers or substitutes for quality classrooms.

Why is that an issue? There are several reasons. One is they are isolated from the rest of the building. In many cases they do not have shelters. They go out to the classrooms in the morning or the afternoon and it is raining or it is cold in the wintertime, they are losing instruction time. The teachers have children put a coat on to go to the bathroom or to go to the cafeteria or to the library. Members get the idea. It is just a challenge, and there are not many businesses in this country that allow their business to operate under those conditions, and yet we send our children to them and we say to the

teachers we want them to send them back to us all A students, and if they do not, we are going to hold them accountable. I do not have any problem holding people accountable for the job they do. I think we ought to hold them accountable and we ought to have high standards, but we ought to have the gumption, as some of my friends would say, to put the quality facilities there to get the job done and put the resources there so they will have the tools to teach with.

Mr. Speaker, in and around the Triangle region of the Raleigh area where I represent, our schools are literally bursting at the seams. Despite the best effort of local, as I have already said, and State officials, our school systems are finding themselves swamped by rapidly increasing enrollment forced on by growth. Many people have moved to the area to find good jobs because we have seen a lot of growth over the last several years, and they have had to put children in trailers.

In my home county, as an example, Western Harnett High School now packs students and teachers into 22 trailers, 22. Multiply that by 25 to 28 students, and my colleagues get an idea of how many young people are outside the main building. They have to go somewhere else to go to bathroom. They have to go to the cafeteria, anywhere else they want to go, and in high school, remember, they change classes every hour if they are on a regular schedule. If they are on a block schedule, it may be every hour and a half or two hours. So there is a lot of movement and a lot of people outside the building.

Think of the security challenges that a high school principal faces in those conditions. They just are not big enough to handle the load. These young people are really young adults, and they are in facilities that are not what they ought to be.

Next year, school leaders on this campus, now it already has 22, are going to have to add six more because the community is growing so rapidly. Someone said, well, are they doing anything? They are getting ready to build a new high school, but the point is that is happening all across our States and many places in America.

Among all the schools in Harnett County, we have 122 trailers. Next door in Johnston County, a county that I grew up in, the school leaders have been forced to employ 169 trailers. That is how fast they are growing, and they are building new schools every year. Four Oaks Elementary alone has 16 trailers. Three-fourths of the schools in Johnston County have at least one trailer, and the story is the same all across the district because it is growing so rapidly.

Local and State leaders have stepped up to the plate and they have built new schools, but the enrollment growth is so rapid that many of these new schools are overcrowded the day they open. Across the State of North Carolina, we have more than 1,500 trailers

today in use, and that number is growing, despite the best efforts of local governments and State government to put money in at a time when they are really feeling the pinch with the economic downturn.

Overcrowded schools and trailers, they are not as safe as brick and mortar, we know that. I do not want to send anyone into a panic because their children attend school in a trailer, but any principal, if he is being honest, will tell someone that security is severely diminished by the use of trailers because they are outside the main building, they do not have the kind of control, and certainly they raise the risk of security around the building.

As Congress thoroughly examines our Nation's security needs in the wake of September 11, we must not fail now because we did and we have spent money and we continue to do as we should have. We must not fail to provide assistance to get students out of trailers and into more safe and secure permanent buildings, and we can do it.

Some of my colleagues say, well, Congress ought not to do it. Let me remind them. We spend money on a lot of stuff. We build schools overseas. We build prisons here at home. I just want somebody to tell me why we cannot build school buildings because there is a bill to do it. In our State and in our local areas, we have issued a record number of bonds to finance school construction in recent years. We did it when I was superintendent.

Congress and the administration now can help provide the kind of leadership to deal with this pressing issue if they will only decide to do it across this country. At a similar time in our Nation's history where we were seeing tremendous growth and the challenge to our public schools, America faced unprecedented school age population growth with the onset of the baby boomers, and when did this happen? It really happened in the 1950s, after World War II, and at that time there was a Republican president who had been an American general that led us through World War II. He responded to the challenge with a proposal worth of \$9 billion in current dollars for the Federal Government to assist with school construction.

So I do not want my colleagues on either side of the aisle saying this Congress is unprecedented, and we spend money. This was a Republican president. It was not a Democratic president. He understood there was a need. It was not about party. It was about ideology. It was about building a future for America, and there are a lot of young men and women in this country who are today adults who went to school in these buildings that were paid for by the Federal Government.

President Dwight David Eisenhower really was an American hero. That is why both parties tried to recruit him. The Republicans got him. He ran for president, but he was not afraid to provide the needed leadership on the do-

mestic front. He understood it. Let me repeat it again. He understood that if we are going to be a strong Nation and we are going to be prepared for the future, we had to have a strong domestic economy, and on school construction, President Eisenhower said, "Without impairing in any way the responsibilities of our States, localities, communities or families, the Federal Government can and should serve as an effective catalyst in dealing with this problem." The president was right then, and we now need that same kind of leadership once again.

Here in the U.S. House, my colleagues and I are working to provide that same kind of leadership. We have endorsed H.R. 1076, the America's Better Classroom Act. This legislation will provide Federal tax credits to the holders of school construction bonds to help leverage precious resources at the local level. H.R. 1076 will help provide more than \$22 billion in school construction bonds across this country, and this is a bipartisan piece of legislation. It is not partisan. It will work to build new school buildings, alleviate overcrowding, strengthen security and improve education in the United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I have worked for several years to pass a similar piece of legislation. We now have 226 cosponsors on this piece of legislation, and I implore the Republican leadership of this House tonight to allow this bill to come out of the committee and come to the House floor. It is an urgent national problem, and it needs to be addressed.

President Bush, who is doing a fine job on the war against terrorism and has shown leadership on other education issues, has unfortunately ignored the school construction crisis facing this country. Mr. Speaker, the American people deserve better. The American people deserve quality schools for their children. Their children are the most precious resource they have.

Talk is cheap. It takes action and it takes responsibility, and the American people deserve the peace of mind that quality, secure schools will provide. I am proud to work with my Democratic colleagues, and yes, Republican colleagues who will join us, to support innovative solutions to this important issue. School construction is an important part of this agenda.

In addition to school construction, there are a great many other educational issues that this Congress needs to address. Over the last several weeks, we have challenged several proposals, one that floated out of the administration, to change college students' loan rates. To their credit, they pulled it back after we raised the issue, that it would cost those students and their parents considerably more.

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I have had the great privilege to serve at the local level, the State level,

and now at the national level. And it never fails that whenever budgets get tight, some people insist on putting education on the chopping block. That is distressful because that truly is our future. But I know too well that you cannot strengthen education on the cheap.

Also, it would be less than honest if I did not acknowledge that there are areas that we need to pay attention to. Where there are areas that need to have trimming and cutting back, we should do that. Everyone should acknowledge that; and we should not allow anyone, I do not care who they are, what position they hold, or where they are, to misspend public education money for our children and misrepresent the funding sources that they would be using. Because I happen to believe that when you cut education, you pay a heavy price.

I grew up in a rural farm community; and I always say that when you cut education, it is as dumb as eating your seed corn. Because you always save the best corn to plant the next year. Some people in this town may not understand that reference, but back home, folks understand that eating your seed corn is not a smart idea if you hope to have a crop next year. And the same is true with our children. It is sort of an old cliché, but it is so true when we talk about our children, that they are our future.

I expect if you ask most parents, they would, if they were open and honest, and most of them are, they would say to us that they could get along with a whole lot less than they do, if they had to. Because we all really, I think it is true of me and my wife, most of us want things better for our children. And that is why we work hard, because we want to make sure they are successful and they have the opportunity for a bright future.

That is why the budget resolution that the majority pushed through this body a couple of months ago now contained many, I think, very misguided proposals and misplaced priorities that I think were wrong for this country. And education was caught in that crossfire. The Republican leadership's budget resolution cut \$90 million in education funds from President Bush's own proposal that was just recently enacted, the No Child Left Behind Act. If you are going to have a program and you are going to ask people to live by high standards, and I think we need to have that, if we are going to ask them to do the kind of assessment to know where children are and help them get better, we have to give them the tools to get the job done, especially at a time when we are seeing almost 40 States, I think over 40 States in this country, facing budget crisis. If we do not live up to our part of the bargain, they are probably going to figure out right quick that we did not really mean it. Because they are not going to do it, and then we will be worse off than we were when we started. And I think that budget was misguided.

The budget resolution also cut Pell grants for colleges, cut safe and drug-free schools by \$200 million, improving teacher quality by \$105 million, education technology by \$134 million, and also eliminated 28 important educational efforts, such as dropout prevention, rural education, an area that is really hurting because of the disparate resources there, civics education, and numerous technology and training programs.

It is important that we live up to our commitment at this level. Because if we do not, even though the Federal Government only puts in, depending on the local jurisdiction, 6 to 7 percent, and in North Carolina it is probably no more than about 7 percent of the total budget because the bulk of it is State and local, that is an important piece of money because it sends a powerful signal. It says that this is a priority at the national level; we really do believe in what you are doing, and here is how we want to help those who have fallen behind.

Historically, Federal monies have been to help those who had needs in specific areas, by and large children with special needs, which we really are not meeting that obligation. We originally said we were going to pay a substantial amount more than we are now paying. We are paying 20 percent, and we should be paying more like 60 that we committed to. But these kinds of shortsighted cuts are wrong for our children, and they really are wrong for my home State and I think for the other States who are struggling to meet the needs and who really want to make a difference in children's lives.

I just hope that as this session moves on, and we are now getting into moving into the appropriations process of the budget, which will be coming up in the next several weeks, that we will correct some of these problems; that we will put the resources in that are needed so that teachers can teach and they will have the resources to meet their needs. Because if we do not put in the resources that we need and we put the mandates in for the things we want them to do, and then we threaten to hold back other monies if they do not live up to that obligation, what we do, the people we hurt the most are not the wealthy school systems in this country. They may be getting few of the resources on a percentage basis to the budget than a lot of others, but the ones who are really getting hurt are the children, in most cases, who are the most vulnerable, those in the poorest school systems, the children with special needs who get some of the money.

All those areas that are on the edge are the very youngsters that we are going to need to help. So I think sometimes we do not really understand when we pull the cord and not put the resources in place. Mr. Speaker, it has been my experience in the few years I have been here that we put together a lot of words, and talk is awful cheap.

But at a time when we spend a lot of time back and forth about appropriations and budgets and so on, a lot of stuff gets lost in the sound and fury of the debate. But at the end of the day it really is about budget and spending choices that we have to make that really defines the kinds of priorities that we ought to have, and they really express our values as a Congress and as a people.

I trust that in the next several weeks that we will show that we really do value education, because we know that lifetime learning is the key to the American dream for every family, middle class, wealthy, and those who are struggling to get into the middle class. As I said earlier, in today's global economy, America's international competitiveness is absolutely dependent on our people's ability to perform knowledge-based jobs that produce the best products and services in the world. And if we are going to continue to compete, we had better be about making sure the next generation of Americans in this new economy of this Information Age can be able to earn based on what they have learned.

And it is so true. It is as true today as it was last year; but it will be more so over the next 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 years. And so we have been trying to get Congress to give higher priority to strengthening our public schools, really our neighborhood schools; and by doing that they will demonstrate how much we value the education of our children and how much we care about the communities we live in. It is irresponsible, in my opinion, to talk about how much we value education and how much we care about the future and about our children when we come to this floor and squander the opportunity to make a difference and not put the resources in place to help our children be successful.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, let me say that both our immediate and our long-term security needs depend on our investment in education. It is as critical today as it has ever been in the history of this country. You have heard others talk earlier about a number of things, but it is about looking at the future and how do we, as Members today, help those teachers in the classroom and the administrators teach our children to make decisions for tomorrow. We cannot allow children to be continually placed at risk by being condemned to less than quality facilities, and that same thing would be true for curriculum and instruction. That means we have to put the resources in where we can.

We cannot put them all in. We will never have enough, I realize that. But it has to be a partnership, and a true partnership with State, locals, and, yes, with the private sector to make sure that teachers get the skilled training they need and the ongoing training. Too many times we say to these professionals, you are professionals, we believe in you; and yet,

when they walk out of the classroom and they need to get their certificates renewed or upgraded, they have to take it out of their own meager salaries to pay for it. We do not do that in any other profession I am aware of that pays that kind of wage in this country, but we do it to teachers. And that is wrong. We can do better, and we ought to be doing better.

I think America is looking to Congress to provide leadership on these urgent national priorities, and I trust that not only my Democratic colleagues but my Republican colleagues will also join me. I certainly can say to you that I stand ready to help deliver on that because I think it is critical to the future of this country. We will not get many more opportunities. Even though these are challenging times and resources are tight, if we spend them wisely, we can have a very bright tomorrow. Our children will inherit a better country, and our democracy will be safe and secure. I really believe that an educated citizenry is important to maintaining a democracy. We have seen it around the world. When we do not have quality education, we are in trouble.

I will close with this, Mr. Speaker. If we want to look at Afghanistan as a place, the first thing they did was shut down the schools. Of course, the first thing they did was oppress the women and then they shut down the schools. But the truth is if you poison the minds of young people and do not give them an opportunity, your future is pretty grim. We are not going to let that happen in America. We are going to work together to make it better. We have the chance, we have limited resources, but we can target them, we can build better schools, we can help those teachers in the classrooms who are telling children about the better world they will have. Someone has said if you want a better world, tell a child, they will build it.

RECENT BIPARTISAN TRIP TO RUSSIA, CHINA, UZBEKISTAN AND NORTH KOREA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. OTTER). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I will perhaps not take the entire hour, but I want to take this opportunity to review a recent congressional delegation trip that I led over the Memorial Day recess.

Mr. Speaker, this was a historic trip, and one that has laid the groundwork for, I think, some future historic activities for this Nation in a number of areas. The trip was to basically countries involving Russia, a visit to Moscow and then on to Tashkent, Uzbekistan; on to Beijing, China; Seoul, Korea; visiting military sites along the way. And the only disappointment of our trip was that we