

income children for elementary school. At the same time, it is Congress' responsibility to examine every program up for reauthorization to see if it is truly meeting our high standards for success and if there are any potential reforms that we can perform.

I would argue that regardless of the political reluctance to enact and accept fundamental reforms, every Federal program could do a better job of carrying out its mission than it is currently performing. This applies to those programs on the elementary and secondary school level, it applies to programs governing postsecondary education, it applies to workforce development programs, and, yes, it applies to early childhood programs like Head Start.

And so we come here to consider H.R. 2210, which will improve the Head Start program and close the readiness gap that exists between Head Start children and their more affluent peers. We strongly believe that we must strengthen Head Start's academic standards by emphasizing cognitive development and the results of scientifically based research on topics critical to children's school readiness. I believe that Head Start has placed an unbalanced emphasis on providing health and social services to children and their families, which have resulted in Head Start children not making the gains necessary to begin school with an equal opportunity to succeed.

A critical component of school readiness is the attainment of prereading abilities. Head Start programs should provide children from low-income families with a high-quality oral language and literature-rich environment. Through scientific research, much has been learned about the way children learn to read and the strong foundation that is important before children are given formal reading instruction in kindergarten and first grade.

Consistent with the early reading initiative, launched as part of the No Child Left Behind Act, Head Start must play a pivotal role in this effort. We have done this and can do this while preserving all current health and nutrition services for Head Start children.

Mr. Chairman, I know there has been a lot of criticism about this bill because of the State option, but I think it is important to point out this committee has produced a bill which improves the education of our Nation's most vulnerable children, and for this reason I urge all my colleagues to support this bill.

□ 2100

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 15 seconds just to say to my colleague, we do not know whether this bill will improve the education of the children, but we do know that the language contained in this bill will weaken the education standards, will weaken the comprehensive services available to these chil-

dren and will weaken the accountability of this program.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE), subcommittee ranking member.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I rise in opposition to this bill.

This bill literally turns back the clock on decades of efforts to improve programs for our youngest children. Head Start has meant so much to so many of our most disadvantaged children and their families. Rather than strengthen Head Start through bipartisan consensus, this bill begins the dismantling of the most successful and popular early childhood education program in our Nation's history.

I must also express my disappointment that the majority has not sought to reach bipartisan consensus on this legislation. I have been through, Mr. Chairman, a number of Head Start reauthorizations during my 27 years here in the Congress, and they were all pleasant and productive experiences. This statute has always been reauthorized in a bipartisan manner. I strongly believe that we do our best work when we pass bipartisan legislation, especially legislation dealing with children. Not to do so is a doleful disappointment.

The Republican Head Start bill creates an unaccountable block grant that undermines the comprehensive nature of Head Start. Under this legislation, the strength of Head Start's decades of existence would be eviscerated through lower-quality State-controlled block grants.

What makes the bill's block grants even more troubling is that it departs from the efforts of this committee over the past decade to strengthen accountability and results in Federal programs, the most recent example being the No Child Left Behind. On that bill, Democrats and Republicans in both the House and the Senate, along with the President, all worked to create bipartisan legislation to strengthen accountability in our K-12 programs.

Now we are confronted by a White House and Republican bill to create unaccountable block grants in the Head Start program. This does not make sense. I urge opposition to this legislation.

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. ISAKSON) having assumed the chair, Mr. DUNCAN, Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2210) to reauthorize the Head Start Act to improve the school readiness of disadvantaged children, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

REPORT ON H.R. 2861, DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2004

Mr. WALSH, from the Committee on Appropriations, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 108-235) on the bill (H.R. 2861) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2004, and for other purposes, which was referred to the Union Calendar and ordered to be printed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 1, rule XXI, all points of order are reserved on the bill.

#### SCHOOL READINESS ACT OF 2003

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 336 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the further consideration of the bill, H.R. 2210.

□ 2103

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the further consideration of the bill (H.R. 2210) to reauthorize the Head Start Act to improve the school readiness of disadvantaged children, and for other purposes, with Mr. DUNCAN in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. When the Committee of the Whole rose earlier today, time remaining under general debate, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER) has 15½ minutes and the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) has 20¼ minutes remaining.

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) who not only is extremely well known for his expertise in coaching, but is one of the leading experts on mentoring in this country.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE) controls the time.

There was no objection.

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Chairman, I certainly agree with all those who have spoken tonight that Head Start is an excellent program. It is a necessary program. Yet many people feel that no changes are needed to the program.

I guess if you put it in any context, let us say you ran a business for 35 years, a football team for 35 years, a school for 35 years, and you said over and over again, if it ain't broke, don't fix it and you stayed with a pat hand, my feeling is you would drift toward mediocrity. There is no organization that can stay the same year after year after year. I think there are a couple of things that really can be fixed. I think