

Never before has a judicial nominee with clear majority support been denied an up or down vote on the Senate floor.

Not until Miguel Estrada's nomination in 2003 has a judicial nominee with clear majority support been blocked by a filibuster.

Fairness in the justice system begins with the confirmation of capable judges. Each time a nominee is denied a vote, the American people are denied justice. The American people deserve better. It is time for every judicial nominee to receive an up or down vote.

Remember, never before has a judicial nominee with clear majority support been denied an up or down vote on the Senate floor.

**PENSION FUND BLACKMAIL FROM LABOR UNIONS**

(Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, recently the Wall Street Journal highlighted a disturbing trend among labor union boards. They are engaging in pension fund blackmail to bully corporations into agreeing with their partisan political agenda. A top AFL-CIO lobbyist was referring to financial services funds backing the President's personal retirement account proposal and he said, "We have no intention of letting any of these companies get away with this while they manage our workers' funds."

And 3 trustees representing the New York City Employees Retirement System sent a letter to several investment banking companies demanding to know their Social Security stance.

These union boards should be ensuring their members' pensions are being wisely invested in qualified ethical companies.

How can we say that Sarbanes-Oxley has strengthened corporate responsibility if labor unions are investing in and managing corporate boards based on their political interest rather than their fiduciary responsibilities to their members and the corporations for which they represent?

**APPOINTMENT AS MEMBER TO COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS**

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to Section 2 of the Civil Rights Commission Amendments Act of 1994 (42 USC 1975 NOTE), the order of the House of January 4, 2005, and upon the recommendation of the minority leader, the Chair announces the Speaker's reappointment of the following member on the part of the House to the Commission on Civil Rights for a 6-year term expiring May 3, 2011:

Mr. Michael Yaki, San Francisco, California.

**ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE**

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken after 6:30 p.m. today.

**CONGRATULATING CHARTER SCHOOLS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO EDUCATION**

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 218) congratulating charter schools and their students, parents, teachers, and administrators across the United States for their ongoing contributions to education, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

**H. RES. 218**

Whereas charter schools deliver high-quality education and challenge our students to reach their potential;

Whereas charter schools provide thousands of our families with diverse and innovative educational options for their children;

Whereas charter schools are public schools authorized by a designated public entity and are responding to the needs of our communities, families, and students and are promoting the principles of quality, choice, and innovation;

Whereas, in exchange for the flexibility and autonomy given to charter schools, they are held accountable by their sponsors for improving student achievement and for their financial and other operations;

Whereas 41 States, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico have passed laws authorizing charter schools;

Whereas nearly 3,300 charter schools are now operating in 40 States, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and are serving approximately 900,000 students;

Whereas over the last 10 years, Congress has provided more than \$1,500,000,000 in support to the charter school movement through facilities' financing assistance and grants for planning, startup, implementation, and dissemination;

Whereas charter schools improve their students' achievement and stimulate improvement in traditional public schools;

Whereas charter schools must meet the student achievement accountability requirements included by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, and contained in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, in the same manner as traditional public schools, and often set higher and additional individual goals, to ensure that they are of high quality and truly accountable to the public;

Whereas charter schools give parents new freedom to choose their public school, charter schools routinely measure parental satisfaction levels, and charter schools must prove their ongoing success to parents, policymakers, and their communities;

Whereas nearly 40 percent of charter schools report having a waiting list, and the total number of students on all such waiting lists is enough to fill over 1,000 average-sized charter schools;

Whereas charter schools nationwide serve a higher percentage of low-income and minority students than the traditional public school system;

Whereas charter schools have enjoyed broad bipartisan support from the Administration, the Congress, State Governors and legislatures, educators, and parents across the United States; and

Whereas the sixth annual National Charter Schools Week, to be held May 1 to 7, 2005, is an event sponsored by charter schools and grassroots charter school organizations across the United States to recognize the significant impacts, achievements, and innovations of charter schools: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved, That—*

(1) the House of Representatives acknowledges and commends charter schools and their students, parents, teachers, and administrators across the United States for their ongoing contributions to education and improving and strengthening the public school system of the United States;

(2) the House of Representatives supports the sixth annual National Charter Schools Week; and

(3) it is the sense of the House of Representatives that the President should issue a proclamation calling on the people of the United States to conduct appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities to demonstrate support for charter schools during this week-long celebration in communities throughout the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. PORTER) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. PORTER).

**GENERAL LEAVE**

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Res. 218.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 218. This resolution honors our Nation's charter schools and the students, parents, teachers, administrators and other individuals involved for their hard work and dedication to providing a quality public education.

This week, May 1 through May 7, has been designated National Charter Schools Week. During this week, charter school organizations and others around the United States recognize these schools for their continued contributions to education. The Nation's charter schools deliver high-quality education and challenge students to reach their potential.

Forty-one States, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, have passed laws authorizing charter schools. Since the first charter school law was passed in 1991, almost 3,300 charter schools now serve nearly 900,000 students in 40 States, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Specifically, I am pleased to honor the 19 charter schools in the State of

Nevada that serve nearly 4,500 students. Nevada first passed charter school legislation in 1997. As a co-sponsor of that legislation, our first charter school opened in 1998 and in 1999 school year.

The State charter school legislation was revised in 1999, lending teachers more room for creativity and allowing charter schools the ability to offer an extended school day as well as an extended school year.

In my own community, the Andre Agassi College Preparatory Academy serves as a model for other charter schools across the Nation. Designed to enhance a child's character, respect, motivation and self-discipline, Agassi Prep, as the school has been nicknamed, was created specifically to improve skill levels and combat lowered academic expectations among the community's most challenged children.

Advanced technology, smaller class sizes, and extended school hours are just some of practices that Agassi Prep utilizes to achieve a higher standard of education.

I commend the charter schools in the State of Nevada and across this great Nation for recognizing the immense need for improved education and for their commitment to improving student achievement for students who attend these schools.

At charter schools nationwide, almost half of the students are considered at-risk or are former dropouts. Charter schools serve a significant number of minority students, students with disabilities, and students from lower income families.

These schools give opportunity and freedom to students and parents who otherwise not might not have had the chance to receive a quality education.

Nearly 40 percent of charter schools report having a waiting list. And the total number of students on all such waiting lists is enough to fill another 1,000 average-sized charter schools. By allowing parents and students to choose their public schools, charter schools can stimulate change and benefit all public students.

In exchange for flexibility and autonomy, public charter schools are held accountable by their sponsors for improving student achievement and for their administration.

Charter schools respond to the needs of America's communities families and students while promoting the principles of quality, choice, and innovation.

Charter schools must meet the same No Child Left Behind student achievement accountability requirements as other public schools and often set higher and additional individual goals to ensure that they are all high quality and truly accountable to the public.

According to the Center for Education Reform, as many as 15 studies find that students who frequently enter charters significantly are below the normal grade level. These students then achieve the same or even higher

gains as compared to their surrounding district's demographically-compared schools, or even the State average.

A report from America's Charter School Finance Corporation called "Take Me on a Reading Adventure," cites research from several States that shows greater gains and/or higher scores in reading for charter schools as compared to their traditional school peers.

Charter schools have enjoyed broad bipartisan support from the administration, the Congress, State governors and legislators, educators and parents across the Nation. The Sixth Annual National Charter School Week held this week, May 1 through May 7, 2005, recognizes the significant impacts, achievements and innovations of our Nation's charter schools.

Through this resolution, Congress today acknowledges and commends the charter school movement and charter schools' students, teachers, parents, and administrators across the United States for their ongoing contributions to education and improving and strengthening our Nation's public schools.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 218 discusses the impact which charter schools are having on our educational system. Charter schools, while relatively new, like all public schools, have continued to garner both accolades and criticism for role they play.

Recent studies by the American Federation of Teachers and the Economic Policy Institute have raised questions about whether charter schools are outperforming traditional public schools. These studies have generated a great deal of debate from both detractors and supporters of charter schools.

The one thing that does seem clear is that charter schools on the aggregate are not performing on the level most hoped they would. Regardless of whether you are a supporter of charter schools, we can all agree on the importance of a strong public school system. This system, including charter schools, continues to educate ninety percent of American students. Our public schools must have the resources and the focus on quality to ensure that our children get the best education possible regardless of race, ethnicity, disability, status or whether they can speak English.

It is our public school system that I rise to support today.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER) and chairman of the committee.

(Mr. BOEHNER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks, and include extraneous material.)

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 218, to recognize charter schools and their students, parents, teachers and administrators across the United States for their ongoing contributions to education.

This week is the Sixth Annual National Charter Schools Week and a great opportunity for Congress to honor charter schools and those involved in the role they play in reforming and improving our Nation's public education system.

□ 1430

Charter schools are public schools that agree to improved academic achievement and accountability in financial and other operations, in exchange for increased flexibility and independence. Greater autonomy allows charter schools to focus on increasing academic achievement for individual students, rather than complying with bureaucratic paperwork.

Charter schools are subject to all the same No Child Left Behind achievement goals as other public schools, but with greater flexibility in how they improve student success. Increased flexibility allows charter schools to use varied educational methods and techniques while accounting for results.

Almost 3,300 charter schools serve around 900,000 students in 40 States, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico; and nearly 40 percent of these charter schools have waiting lists.

Charter schools are adept at meeting the specific needs of the local communities in which they are located and are particularly devoted to serving low-income communities. Nationwide, almost half of charter schools serve students considered at-risk or who have previously dropped out of school. Charter school students share similar demographic characteristics with students in all public schools, and charter schools serve significant numbers of students from low-income families, minority students, and students with disabilities.

Because charter schools often serve students with limited access to educational options, these innovative public schools allow many parents and students freedom of choice that otherwise would not be available. And studies show that the increase in educational options, including access to charter schools, is improving outcomes for students.

According to the Center for Education Reform, 15 studies show that students frequently enter charter schools significantly below grade level. These students will then progress at or above the gains being made in surrounding districts, demographically comparable schools, or at the State average.

In December, Harvard University released a comprehensive, long-term study comparing student academic achievement at charter schools and

traditional public schools, and I will enter the executive summary of that report in the RECORD at this point and share just one of the most compelling facts.

ACHIEVEMENT IN CHARTER SCHOOLS AND REGULAR PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED STATES: UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCES

(By Caroline M. Hoxby)

ABSTRACT

This study compares the reading and mathematics proficiency of charter school students to that of their fellow students in neighboring public schools. Ninety-nine percent of all elementary students in charter schools are included in the study. The charter schools are compared to the schools that their students would most likely otherwise attend: the nearest regular public school with a similar racial composition (the "matched" school). Compared to students in the matched regular public school, charter students are 5.2 percent more likely to be proficient in reading and 3.2 percent more likely to be proficient in math on their state's exams. Students in charter schools that have been in operation longer are more likely to have a proficiency advantage over their peers in the matched regular public school. In reading, the advantage is 2.5 percent for a charter school that has been operating 1 to 4 years, 5.2 percent for a school operating 5 to 8 years, and 10.1 percent for a school operating 9 to 11 years. Also, charter school students are more likely to have a proficiency advantage if their school has funding that is at least forty percent of that enjoyed by regular public schools. The results suggest that charter schools are especially likely to raise the achievement of students who are poor or Hispanic.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

This study compares the reading and mathematics proficiency of charter school students in the United States to that of their fellow students in neighboring public schools. Because charter schools are public entities, their students take state exams. Thus, this study is based on schools that enroll approximately 99 percent of elementary students who attend charter schools. The charter schools are compared to the schools that their students would most likely otherwise attend: the nearest regular public school with a similar racial composition (the "matched" school).

Compared to students in the matched public school, charter students are 5.2 percent more likely to be proficient in reading and 3.2 percent more likely to be proficient in math on their state's exams. Charter schools that have been in operation longer have a greater proficiency advantage over the matched public schools. For example, in reading, the advantage is 2.5 percent for a charter school that has been operating 1 to 4 years, 5.2 percent for a school operating 5 to 8 years, and 10.1 percent for a school operating 9 to 11 years.

The results show that charter schools are especially likely to raise the achievement of students who are poor or Hispanic. This is a useful finding because charter schools serve students who are disproportionately likely to be minorities or poor.

Charter school students are more likely to have a proficiency advantage if their state has a strong charter school law that gives the schools autonomy and that ensures that charter schools get funding equal to at least 40 percent of the total per-pupil funding of regular public schools.

In states where charter schools are well-established, charter school students' advantage in proficiency tends to be greater. For instance, in Arizona, fourth grade charter

students are about 10 percent more likely to be proficient in reading and math than students in the matched regular public schools. In California, the corresponding proficiency advantages are 9 percent in reading and 5 percent in math. In Colorado, the corresponding proficiency advantages are 12 percent in reading and 14 percent in math.

North Carolina is the only state in which charter students' proficiency is statistically significantly lower, by 4 percent, in both reading and math, compared to students in the nearest public school. In addition, Texas' charter students appear to be statistically significantly less proficient in math (not reading).

By adjusting for schools that serve at-risk students, the study focuses on regular charter schools that are expected to meet the same standards as traditional public schools. The study's "matching" method compares charter schools to public schools that are likely to share the same neighborhood, same economic conditions, and the same population of students and parents. The selection of a neighboring public school as the point of comparison ensures that the groups of students being compared are as similar as possible. It is also likely that the public school selected for comparison was the school that most of the charter school students would have attended, had there been no charter school.

A national study like this one is useful because it is comprehensive. Nevertheless, it is useful to complement studies like this one with studies based on randomization. Because many charter schools have more applicants than places, they routinely hold lotteries, which allow scientific, random assignment studies to be conducted. The key advantage of randomization-based studies is that the charter school students and regular public school students are comparable not only in terms of race, ethnicity, and income, but also on subtle dimensions like motivation and aptitude. Multiple studies based on randomization are underway. The first such study (Hoxby and Rockoff 2004) finds that a large system of Chicago charter schools raised math and reading scores by about 6 percentiles among students who entered in grade 5 or below.

Because charter schools enroll only 1.5 percent of students, it is important to include nearly all of them in a study. Results based on only a small sample of charter school students (for instance, studies that rely on the 3 percent sample of the National Assessment of Educational Progress) cannot be used to draw conclusions about states' charter school policies. A study that relies on a 3 percent sample of 1.5 percent of American students is a study based on only 0.045 percent of students. In contrast, this study uses data that are sufficient for detailed investigations of charter school students' proficiency, nationwide.

The study, completed by Harvard economics professor Caroline Hoxby, found charter schools overall are more likely to raise the academic achievement of students who are poor or minority, and show a larger effect on reading and math proficiency when they operate in areas that have a high percentage of students who are poor, African American, or Hispanic. Charter schools serve the very students who need help the most, and they are getting results.

Charter schools have benefited from a strong degree of bipartisan support at the local, State, and national levels. This was evidenced in 2001 by the ef-

forts of both Republicans and Democrats in Congress to expand access to charter schools through the bipartisan No Child Left Behind Act. In the last 10 years, Congress has provided \$1.5 billion to support charter schools through facilities' financing assistance and grants for planning, startup, implementation, and dissemination.

Through this resolution honoring National Charter Schools Week, Congress is recognizing the continued success demonstrated by charter schools and acknowledging the benefits that charter schools provide to our local communities. Charter schools provide parents with a wider variety of educational choices. This not only helps the students who attend those charter schools but also helps to take some of the pressure off traditional public schools that might be struggling to improve.

I want to thank my colleague, the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. PORTER), for introducing this resolution and urge my colleagues to join me in strong support for our Nation's charter schools.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON).

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Michigan for yielding me time, and I thank him and I thank the gentleman from Nevada for bringing this resolution in support of charter schools to the floor.

Mr. Speaker, charter schools are one of the most innovative developments in the history of public education in our country, and they came from the bottom up. They have not developed out of State governments or the like. They have come from searches within jurisdictions for all alternative public schools, and this is what they are.

In the District of Columbia, we think of the charter schools as an alternative public school system because there are so many of them. We have 43 charter schools in this one city alone, and that is the largest number of charter schools per capita in the United States.

Why are there so many charter schools? We feel strongly in the District of Columbia that public money must go to public schools, and it is understood that here and throughout the United States public schools which have to take every child are often overcrowded and underfunded, have had a very tough time making up for what particularly the most disadvantaged children do not bring to school. As a result, public schools in many jurisdictions show low scores for children in those schools.

What is a parent to do? What parents increasingly do is look for a public alternative to their public schools. They want better schools, but the public is very clear that it wants public money for public schools. If we have any doubt about that, remember that even this House has never voted a voucher bill for, nor has the Senate, anywhere except for the District of Columbia where

you can undemocratically do anything you want to do, but for everybody else they have listened to what people say and that is, yeah, we will punish you if one dime goes to anything but a publicly accountable public school.

Looking for a way to deal with the fact that, yes, many public schools do not show the progress they should, it seems to me we have to look to the paradigm that the public itself has created, and those are charter schools. There is no better place to begin than in the District of Columbia where people have simply voted with their feet. When they did not like their school, they have gone to a nearby charter school.

They have advantages. They are not the advantage discussed in this resolution, where it says, whereas charter schools improve students' achievement. That is very controversial. I do not know whether they do or not. All I know is that there are studies that say that they do and studies that say they do not.

I want to say to my good friends on the other side who are with me in support of charter schools, our case does not rest on that. If my colleagues understood how difficult it was to deal with education in the inner city, they would understand that the fact that they come so close ought to be enough; that parents want them as an alternative; that they are small; that they are flexible; that they are in their neighborhoods; that sometimes they are specialized. That is enough.

We have got a long way to go before we find the elixir for bringing particularly disadvantaged children to where they should be; but if we just look at what some of these schools in the District of Columbia, like just by some of their names, District of Columbia Bilingual School, that is totally a bilingual charter school.

The SEED school, this is the first public live-in school in the District of Columbia. These children do not go home during the week. They do not go home at night. So they have money from us per capita from the school budget, and they raise other money; and these children actually live in a public charter school like a boarding school.

There is the Marriott Hospitality Public Charter High School, where children, besides learning the general high school curriculum, also prepare themselves to go into the hospitality field, which is the most important industry in this region.

Here is another one, the Washington Mathematics, Science and Technology School. And these are some of the reasons that parents have, in fact, sometimes chosen alternative schools here in the District of Columbia: the public school test scores are better. They are better and systematically better, but my colleagues do not see me here saying public schools are better because their scores are better.

The fact is that each kind of school has broad benefits that parents have

chosen and both kinds of schools are accountable to parents and to the public for the dollars spent.

I do believe that they stimulate competition, unlike private schools which do not stimulate any competition at all. Private schools in the District of Columbia, which can take whatever children they want to or not, are no competition for the District of Columbia; but if there is a charter school in one's neighborhood, the principal will look to see what that charter school is doing.

The superintendent today has announced a plan because there are a few charter schools that are very good and they must take every child, but there are a few charter schools that are very good about actually pairing those charter schools with some charter schools in their neighborhood which are not doing as well.

With No Child Left Behind we have a problem we are seeing all over the country. You have got to find yourself a better school. Well, guess what. Those schools are all full so there is no place to transfer now. Everybody ought to wish for charter schools because there is a publicly accountable school with a public dollar that perhaps one can transfer to. They are opening fast, but not fast enough for us here.

There is no real substitute in any civilized society for a public school system; but particularly when parents are not satisfied with their public schools, it does seem to me that charter schools offer the alternative and the only alternative we ought to fund.

The District received the first Federal funds, first funds from this Congress for charter schools. That was when Speaker Gingrich was here. He knew that he profoundly opposed school vouchers. He worked with me on charter school funding for the District of Columbia. That paved the way for charter school funding which is now available to every State in the Union.

We had mothers who went to schools with private school vouchers. The vouchers that this Congress mandated be paid for in the District of Columbia were fully paid for by private funds, but we said you do not have to pay for them. You have been raising money every year; we will pay for them. So we simply transferred public funds for the private funds which have been sending these same children to school.

Well, the mothers came to me who had been going to school on the private funds, and I said you are my folks and I understand why you are looking for alternative schools. Tell me more. I wanted them to know why I opposed vouchers from public funds for private schools; and I was amazed at how many of them said, Congresswoman, we wanted to go to a charter school, but they were all full. So, look, we wanted a better school, and that is why they chose and were pleased to get these vouchers.

Well, of course, I argued since charter schools are what the people of Dis-

trict of Columbia want, if you have got any extra money, Congress, please give it to us for charter schools. We said, oh, no, you are the District of Columbia; we can experiment on you. We can do anything undemocratically to do what we want to do, and we will do some undemocratic things to you that our people would punish us for doing if we did it to them.

So now our folks are still hungry for even more charter schools, and we have got people going to private schools as well.

I am going to put in the RECORD what our charter schools have done because each year we have a climbing up. This is how people vote. They vote with their feet. This is what a market system is about. Ask people what they want. This is what democracy is. Ask people what they want, and they will choose what they want. Do not impose on them what you want.

In our city, since most of our Catholic schools which would be the alternative schools in the Northwest and most of our most deprived children are in the Southeast, the first year of the vouchers, we had most of the children in middle class and better schools, thank you very much. Then there was an outcry, which I can see, whether they can do any better this time. I can tell my colleagues it is very much harder to do better if you are from a very disadvantaged neighborhood in far Southeast and there is a Catholic school over here in this part of town and you have got a voucher to go there. That is not going to work in the District.

What will work in the District is what the people in the District have embraced, and that is, if there is to be an alternative, let it be a publicly accountable school.

The District of Columbia, unlike many jurisdictions, has absolutely eliminated charter schools that were not doing what they were supposed to do.

□ 1445

So we know what to do when they work. We know what to do when they do not work.

I am pleased to see the spread of charter schools. I believe that every district has to decide for itself. In this region, for example, in Maryland and Virginia, where Republicans have the majority of the Congress, they cannot even get charter schools, and yet there are hundreds of thousands of poor Hispanic and black children who might decide that was a good alternative for them, not to mention the children elsewhere in those States, but they cannot even get charter schools, which are publicly accountable charter schools to be embraced in their districts. That is how much people in their districts want every public dollar to go to the public school system.

When I argued that on this floor, they said, who do you think you are, somebody voted by the people or the

District of Columbia? Well, we were not, but we are going to tell you what to do with your schools. Well, we have led the way on what to do if your schools do not work. Designed, publicly accountable schools, which parents agree should be the alternative that they want.

This is still America. This is still a democracy. Nothing is felt more deeply than who decides how a person's child will be educated. It was wrong for this Congress to decide for us rather than to decide on the alternative you now come to the floor to embrace.

Mr. Speaker, I very much thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER).

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman once again yielding me this time, and I am glad that our friend from D.C. was here to honor the contributions of charter schools, because clearly here in D.C. charter schools have had a significant impact on providing educational opportunities for children who, in many cases, are stuck in some very, very bad schools.

Now, I appreciate the support of the charter schools week resolution by my friend from D.C., but let me try to answer part of the charges that were outlined in terms of her opposition to other forms of school choice.

We know that in our large urban centers, we have a difficult time educating low-income children who need our help the most. No place is more evident than right here in the District of Columbia, where we spend over \$13,000 per student and have some of the worst schools in all of America. We have similar problems in other large urban districts and, clearly, charter schools have been an opportunity for some students to escape these dreadful schools and have a chance.

All of us know that without a chance at a decent education, none of us would be here, but without a decent education, many of those children will never ever have a chance at the American dream. I have always believed if we are to reform education in America, if we are going to give every child and every parent of a child a chance at a good education, the way to do that is to provide more choices and more options for parents around the country so that they can choose schools that they believe are in their best interest.

In some communities, charter schools might be the answer. Here in the District of Columbia, clearly they are growing. Dayton, Ohio, part of my congressional district, probably has more charter schools per capita than any large urban center in America. And it is providing a very good opportunity for students to escape the Dayton public schools and enter the charter school of their choice.

But it should not be the only choice. There are a lot of parochial schools, private schools, Christian schools all over America that parents want to

choose. We all know that if you have money, you have choice. Middle income, higher income, you have all the choice you want because you can get your child into the school you think is best for them. But if you are poor and you cannot move, you have no choice. And if there is not a charter school in your particular neighborhood, you do not have any choice. You are stuck, stuck and condemned to an education that will never help lift you out of poverty and never give you a chance at the American dream.

That is why other forms of choice, I think, are important. That is why I and others were involved in helping the mayor here in the District of Columbia and other parents here in the District who wanted a scholarship program. We provided \$15 million to help some low-income children get into a private school and it has helped. It has helped about 1,100 children here in the District in giving them another option. I think, frankly, it is a good option.

I was at two of those schools this morning. I was at St. Francis DeSalles Elementary School, and I was at St. Anthony's Elementary School, both over in the northeast part of town; and both schools, part of the 13 schools that make up the city's Center Consortium. These are 13 very poor Catholic schools here in the District, who I have been involved with over the last few years to help raise them private money to help provide scholarships, to help keep those schools open in those very poor neighborhoods. Last week, I visited four schools in the southeast part of town, in Anacostia. I did not realize Anacostia was as large as it is, but it is very large and it is very poor.

And the fact that those schools are there provide more children more choices, more opportunities to have a chance. I saw kindergartners this morning reading at a first-grade level at both of these Catholic elementary schools. Yes, they have some students that are there because they get D.C. scholarships; others are there because of the generosity of an awful lot of people who want to keep these schools open and provide a choice for those parents and those students.

It is this competition from the public schools, the charter schools, the private schools that I believe will make our school system better and will help all of them. Growing up in sports and growing up in a large family, I know a little about competition, and competition makes all of us better. I believe that the increased competition we are seeing in the provision of an education, especially in the K through 12 arena, has in fact made all of education better.

Do we have a long way to go? We certainly do, but I believe that charter schools are playing an integral role in providing that competition. I think parochial schools, private schools, and Christian schools play a role in that competition as well. The more we can do to encourage parents to have more

choice about where their kids can go to school, I think the better off those children will be and the better off our society will be.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE).

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentleman for yielding me this time, and I want to also thank the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) for his years of service and commitment to education, not only of the children in his district but those in America.

Mr. Speaker, I was moved by the accounting and recounting by the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia, particularly because of her leadership on these issues regarding the educating of the children in this district, but I rise to speak of the climate in Texas. And I might say that my children have been in both private and public schools.

As I listened to the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, I would simply say that much of what he has said I agree with, and that is that all of us would want to emphasize the excellence of education for our children and no one is condemning private schools. The simple statement is, however, that the public school system was the underpinnings of the founding of this Nation and has made us the great Nation that we are today; that private schools, obviously, welcome and deserve our private funding and our support and encouragement. But charter schools, which we congratulate today, and public schools, stand as entities which we can account for and which can be accountable to the taxpayers.

I want to congratulate charter schools in my district, the KIPP School, the Knowledge is Power Program; the 3D Academy, a school that emphasizes the "Yes I Can" innovative approach to education, which has been making a significant impact on education across the Nation. The Dominion Academy, which teaches children from first to eighth grade about business and capitalism and other ways of financing and investing in America; and then the WALIPP Boys Academy that focuses on young men, African-American men, to teach them confidence and character and integrity. But yet the charter schools in our community in Texas are accountable.

And, frankly, that is the difference and the distinction between the question of vouchers and charter schools and public schools. In my district right now, Mr. Speaker, we have the leadership of our school district, the Houston Independent School District, suggesting that three schools need to be closed, three schools with enormous history, two of them happen to be Kashmir High School and Yates High School. These are two of our oldest schools in the African-American community.

How unfortunate that the school district, rather than investing in those schools, with all the richness of history, all the outstanding alumni, all those individuals who are doctors and lawyers and teachers and leaders of the community, and business persons who would want to invest back into the public school that they graduated from, and yet our district is talking of closing them or privatizing them.

That is why we need to speak about excellence and congratulate today the charter schools, because they have taken the resources and they are accountable and they teach in a unique way, each of them with their own definition and character, and they are educating our children and they are accountable. Likewise, the public school system must be accountable as well.

Our independent school district in Houston must be accountable to these historic schools. I visited one of these schools yesterday. I had two of the schools with me on Friday afternoon. They have school pride. They are wearing their uniform. They have band uniforms. It may not be perfect, but these kids want to succeed. And it is important to note, Mr. Speaker, that these children I met with, Kashmir High School and Yates High School and Sam Houston that is in the District of my good friend and colleague, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN), that these youngsters have the desire to learn and they have applauded those who are working with them, their teachers and principals. So I am asking for an opportunity to be given to them to learn. That is a public school.

But today, I stand on the House floor congratulating charter schools because they work simultaneously and parallel with our public schools. They are a wonderful fit and they give parents the opportunity to increase the excellence of their children. I believe that our only challenge is to reaffirm excellence in education in America and to educate our children, because they are not only our future, they are our todays.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here today to speak about the benefits of charter schools and their ability to deliver high-quality education and challenge our students to reach their potential. Charter schools provide thousands of our families with diverse and innovative educational options for their children.

I have had the pleasure to visit a charter school in my district, KIPP 3D Academy. KIPP stands for Knowledge is Power Program, and this is an innovative approach to education which has been making a significant impact all over the country. Charter Schools are a unique opportunity for students to access other methods of education, and after visiting with the 3D Academy students, I can see how excited they are for learning. Charter schools are public schools authorized by a designated public entity and are responding to the needs of our communities, families, and students and promote the principles of quality, choice, and innovation.

In exchange for the flexibility and autonomy given to charter schools, they are held accountable by their sponsors for improving stu-

dent achievement and for their financial and other operations. During my visit to KIPP 3D Academy, I was able to see their substantial progress with their students, and how their strict curriculum embodied their slogan that Knowledge is Power.

Nearly 3,000 charter schools are now operating in 37 States, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and serving 750,000 students.

Charter schools improve their students' achievement and stimulate improvement in traditional public schools. They also give parents new freedom to choose their public school, charter schools routinely measure parental satisfaction levels, and charter schools must prove their ongoing success to parents, policymakers, and their communities.

Charter schools nationwide serve a higher percentage of low-income and minority students than the traditional public system. These schools have enjoyed broad bipartisan support from the Administration, the Congress, State Governors and legislatures, educators, and parents across the United States.

The sixth annual National Charter Schools Week is this week. This event is sponsored by charter schools and grassroots charter school organizations across the United States to recognize the significant impacts, achievements, and innovations of charter schools. I am pleased to join my colleagues in the House of Representatives to acknowledge and commend charter schools and their students, parents, teachers, and administrators across the United States for their ongoing contributions to education and improving and strengthening our public school system.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 218, supporting the sixth annual National Charter Schools Week and honoring the outstanding achievements charter schools have made.

As a former educator, I understand the importance of charter schools. These schools are educational laboratories, as they allow students to learn and grow in a non-traditional sense. Charter schools are an alternative to public schools that allow for trial, experimentation and development. With a freedom to employ innovative techniques, charter schools, year after year, continue to provide academic excellence and prepare our youth for higher education, the workforce and their future.

The State of New Jersey has 52 approved charter schools. These schools serve nearly 14,000 students statewide in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. In 2004, 16 applications were filed in New Jersey for new charter schools with hopes of openings in 2005 and 2006. Many of these applications are for schools in some of New Jersey largest cities, including Newark, Camden and Jersey City.

My district is fortunate enough to have eight exceptional charter schools that offer students a diverse educational opportunity, rigorous curricula, and an outstanding learning environment.

One of these schools, the Princeton Charter School in Mercer County became the first charter school accredited by the American Academy of Liberal Education in April of 2002. In addition to this esteemed recognition, the Princeton Charter School was also recently named a No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon school. This award is given to schools that meet the national goals and high standards of educational excellence.

Another school in my district, the Greater Brunswick Charter School in Middlesex County will be the subject of a documentary film that will feature the middle school students who have worked hard to develop a class project based on the Buck Institute's model for project based learning. This documentary will be produced in conjunction with the Buck Institute for Education, the Rutgers University Center for Media Studies, and the George Lucas Education Foundation. The documentary will be available online through the George Lucas Education Foundation website.

I applaud the students, teachers, administrators and parents of charter schools for all of their hard work and commitment to the educational community of charter schools. Charter schools continue to grow in number in New Jersey and across the country, offering students an exceptional educational opportunity with room for innovation and development.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOOZMAN). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. PORTER) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 218.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

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HONORING THE LATE PLAYWRIGHT ARTHUR MILLER AND THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN ON ITS INTENTION TO BUILD A THEATRE IN HIS NAME

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 216) to honor the late playwright Arthur Miller and the University of Michigan for its intention of building a theater in his name, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 216

Whereas Arthur Miller was considered a legend during the vaunted period known as Broadway's Golden Age, earning him a celebrity status that few playwrights would ever realize;

Whereas, as noted upon his death by The Michigan Daily, the student newspaper where Arthur Miller honed his writing, Miller was twice denied admission to the University of Michigan, and gained admittance only after appealing directly to the Dean;

Whereas in 1949, at the age of 33, with his play "The Death of a Salesman", Arthur Miller seized all major drama awards for the year—the Pulitzer Prize, the Tony, and the New York Drama Critics Award;

Whereas Arthur Miller's plays, books, essays, and articles touched the moral fabric of a nation;

Whereas, according to Robert Falls, Artistic Director of Chicago's Goodman Theatre, "Probably not a day goes by that, somewhere in the world, one of Miller's plays isn't being performed.";