

It lets the police officers and law enforcement officers become knowledgeable about the community. The COPS program helps police officers know the "good guys" and the "bad guys." Neighbors become comfortable with law enforcement officers when they are engaged as people who are concerned about the neighborhood and the community.

At the same time as we raise up and respect our law enforcement officers, let me applaud those who I speak to all the time as I travel to Washington. We have a very effective aviation police force. I get an opportunity as I go through the airport to listen to them and to thank them.

Let us be concerned about the benefits for law enforcement officers. In particular, I know that my city, a very large city, has seen the decline of senior officers. For some reason or another, because our belts are being tightened, we don't have enough resources to provide them with the upward mobility, the professional development and the protection of their pensions and to recognize the sacrifice that they and their families are making. We as communities across the Nation should be concerned about making sure they have the right kind of benefits.

On the Federal level, I am very glad that the House Judiciary Committee has just passed out a COPS bill reauthorization. I think that is a very, very important aspect of the work of this Congress. The COPS program worked. It provided police officers for rural communities and urban communities. I spoke to my police personnel there and they said, yes, it would help us greatly if the COPS program were reauthorized. So as we salute our peace officers across America, let us make sure that we are actually doing as we are saying, and that is providing them with the resources that they need.

At the same time, let me also add the importance of training. There is the sensitivity that our police officers are able to get through experience, but training also helps them detect those with mental illness and have the best resources to address those suffering from mental illness so that those persons can be taken away from society before they do harm to themselves or someone else.

We thank those who are serving today. We offer our deepest sympathy to the families of those who have lost their lives on the front lines of law enforcement in America over the last year, and we certainly acknowledge the continued sacrifice that law enforcement officers will make.

We should promote and congratulate good law enforcement officers. We should not allow

the bad incidents that occur, the mishaps that occur, and many of them have occurred, and I have stood up vigorously against them and I will stand up yesterday, today and tomorrow, when there is abuse.

But we should not allow those kinds of situations to take away from the grandeur, the respect, the honesty, the integrity and the down-right commitment that the law enforcement agencies of America, particularly those in our local communities, show every single day with the idea that as they leave in the morning and kiss their families good-bye, that they might sacrifice their lives so that we might be safe.

We owe them a great debt of gratitude, and it is my pleasure to thank our peace officers. Peace officers, the sworn, public-sector officers entrusted with law enforcement authority and the power of arrest, risk their lives daily to protect our Nation. These individuals, who are responsible for safeguarding the rights and freedoms we enjoy as Americans, are true heroes.

Peace Officers Memorial Day honors those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for the safety and security of their communities and our Nation. Created by Public Law 87-726, signed by President Kennedy in 1962, this day gives us the opportunity to acknowledge and pay our respect to those who, through their courageous deeds, have fallen in the line of duty.

In the Houston Police Department's 168-year history, 109 officers have been killed while on duty. Nationally, the number of police officers that have fallen in the line of duty has decreased. Although the number of officers killed in the line of duty has declined in recent years, the fact that one officer is killed every 2½ days in our country is a sober reminder that protecting our communities and safeguarding our democracy come at a heavy price. There are 17,917 names engraved on the Memorial, representing officers from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, U.S. territories, and Federal law enforcement and military police agencies.

21ST CENTURY GREEN HIGH-PERFORMING PUBLIC SCHOOL FACILITIES ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 13, 2009

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under

consideration the bill (H.R. 2187) to direct the Secretary of Education to make grants to State educational agencies for the modernization, renovation, or repair of public school facilities, and for other purposes:

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Chair, I rise today as a member of the Green Schools Caucus to strongly support the 21st Century Green High-Performing Public School Facilities Act.

Many of our nation's schools are in disrepair. The average American school is 50 years old and almost two-thirds need extensive modernization. According to the GAO, 14 million students attend schools considered below standard or dangerous. In my own district, thousands of students go to class in portable classrooms—trailers located outside the school buildings—because the schools can no longer accommodate the growing student population. But in a time of state budget deficits, fewer dollars are going to school construction projects.

Today's bill will assist local school districts with the initial costs of construction and modernization and, by investing in energy efficient technology, will result in significant long term savings. Building green costs about 2 percent more than conventional construction, but can save 20 times that amount over the life of the school.

Moreover, green school construction yields substantial environmental benefits. Green schools use on average 33 percent less energy and produce less carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxide, sulfur dioxide, and coarse particulate matter emissions.

With its investment in infrastructure, this bill provides an important economic stimulus. School districts have many projects ready to go. When this bill is passed, we will see additional jobs in the construction industry, including suppliers, architects, contractors, and engineers.

Mr. Chair, this legislation is a good, long-term investment. I urge my colleagues to pass this bill today and work to ensure that it is fully funded to improve education, reduce our energy consumption, and create jobs in local communities.