

Mrs LOWEY. Madam Chair, I rise today in strong support of the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act. This long overdue and deficit-neutral measure will make the federal government a more family-oriented workplace.

As a mother of three and a grandmother of eight, I understand the challenges families face. Balancing work with child care, especially after the arrival of a new baby, is a challenge Congress can and must do more to address. By providing federal employees with four weeks of paid parental leave after the birth or adoption of a child, H.R. 626 is an important first step in this worthwhile effort.

As the nation's largest single employer, the United States government should be leading the way in adopting family-friendly employment policies, not struggling to catch up. Not only do 75 percent of Fortune 100 companies already provide paid parental leave, but a Harvard University study of 165 nations revealed that the United States joins Lesotho, Liberia, Swaziland and Papua New Guinea as the only nations that do not guarantee paid parental leave to their federal employees. Like many of my colleagues, I am pleased that the House of Representatives will act tonight to rectify this embarrassing discrepancy.

According to the Office of Personnel Management, roughly three million federal employees or nearly 60 percent of the current federal workforce will be eligible to retire within the next ten years. The bill under consideration this evening represents a strategic investment in the future of our federal workforce, ensuring that the United States government is able to recruit and retain young, talented professionals.

Madam Speaker, with our nation embroiled in two armed conflicts and confronting the worst economic recession in decades, I believe that this measure is an essential step toward maintaining and enhancing the quality of the federal workforce in years to come. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act.

ENHANCING SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATHEMATICS EDUCATION ACT OF 2009, H.R. 2710

HON. MICHAEL M. HONDA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 8, 2009

Mr. HONDA. Madam Speaker, last week I reintroduced the "Enhancing Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Education (E-STEM) Act of 2009," H.R. 2710. This legislation, improved from last Congress, provides comprehensive mechanisms to coordinate the Nation's science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education initiatives. Forty-nine members of the United States House of Representatives signed on as original cosponsors of this bipartisan legislation.

The intent of this bill is to increase the coordination, collaboration, and coherence to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education initiatives for the students of today and the citizens and workers of tomorrow.

As a former teacher, principal and school board member I am deeply committed to improving the education we provide our young people. Developing citizens that are critical thinkers and scientifically literate will help drive a vibrant society and create sound economic policy. Our economy depends on our country's education.

Today, more than ever, our economic resiliency depends on the competitiveness of our labor force. Unfortunately, the signs are not good. Over 25 years ago, "A Nation at Risk" identified America's need to improve STEM education to ensure that we remain competitive in an increasingly global economy. In this country we have many successful STEM education programs. The challenge is that these programs are not coordinated. Over a dozen agencies are engaged in STEM education and often not aware of the efforts of other agencies—they are working in isolation. Our Nation is not maximizing the impact of our STEM education initiatives.

The E-STEM Act will provide a framework for federal agencies, the states and all stakeholders, to work collaboratively. It will help them establish national STEM education goals, coordinate STEM education initiatives, and avoid unnecessary duplication among these efforts.

The bill has four major components:

(1) Elevating the STEM Education Subcommittee at the President's Office of Science Technology Policy (OSTP) to the standing committee level. This change would give STEM education a higher profile within OSTP and establish the mechanism for the coordination of federal STEM education initiatives.

(2) Establishing an Assistant Secretary for STEM Education at the U.S. Department of Education. This Office would bring together the Department's STEM education efforts and manage programs such as Math and Science Partnerships, Math Now, Math Skills for Secondary Students, Minority Science and Engineering Improvement, Teachers for a Competitive Tomorrow, and Upward Bound Math-Science as well as the non-financial aid components of the National Science and Mathematics Access Retain Talent (SMART grants), the Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH grants), and the Academic Competitiveness grants.

(3) Creating the State Consortium on STEM Education. This voluntary group of states will be provided with support to align their STEM education efforts. Their mission is to coordinate policies to address weaknesses in STEM education. For example, the Consortium will work with stakeholders to identify strategies to improve the representation of women and minorities in STEM fields.

(4) And lastly, this bill establishes the National STEM Education Resource Repository (NSERR). This clearing house will be a portal to information about all federally funded STEM education programs, making the results of the more than \$3 billion the Federal Government spends annually on STEM education available to local educators. NSERR will make STEM education resources, research and promising practices and exemplary programs widely available to educators, search engines, and third party developers to create applications to enhance STEM teaching and learning.

We need to ensure that all our children are prepared for citizenship in a world that is in-

creasingly dependent on STEM literacy. The bleak outlook for our economy should be a wake-up call that we cannot continue to move forward without a blue print for our students and our future economic well-being. This is why I reintroduced the E-STEM Act.

I want to thank all my colleagues for joining together to address the critical needs of our Nation. I look forward to working together to move this legislation through this Congress.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE PEOPLE OF LEBANON ON ADVANCE OF DEMOCRACY

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 8, 2009

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, I wish to congratulate National Assemblyman Saad Hariri and his March 14 coalition on their victory in yesterday's elections in Lebanon. In December, I participated on a delegation to Beirut meeting with Saad Hariri and his colleagues who were bravely campaigning to promote a free market democracy. At their campaign headquarters, I was, inspired by the large number of portraits of assassinated parliamentarians. Saad Hariri is upholding the tradition of dedication established by his martyred father. Following the American-led coalition liberation of Iraq, Syria withdrew from Lebanon giving new hopes for the spread of democracy across the Middle East.

I would like to submit the following portions of an article entitled "Hezbollah loses Lebanon vote" that ran in today's Washington Times reporting on the success of Mr. Hariri and his coalition:

"Lebanon's pro-Western coalition claimed victory Sunday night after an election that appeared to douse fears of a militant Islamist takeover in the tiny nation known for sectarian conflict and as a proxy for Iranian and Syrian interests . . .

"Hezbollah, labeled a terrorist group by the United States and European Union, appeared to suffer from a high voter turnout that exceeded 50 percent—the largest since the end of Lebanon's 1975-91 civil war.

"The outcome appeared to avoid a crisis with the United States and Europe, where some analysts had feared that the Hezbollah-led coalition would win and force the United States and European Union to reconsider foreign aid, especially for the Lebanese army. The army is a key institution in a country that transcends sectarian divisions.

"This is a big lay in the history of democratic Lebanon," Saad Hariri, leader of the pro-Western March 14 coalition, told cheering supporters.

"Congratulations to you, congratulations to freedom, congratulations to democracy," said Mr. Hariri, the son of slain former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri . . .

"Analysts said the next government would have to work with the opposition to prevent instability and fighting from a year ago, when Shi'ite Hezbollah-led forces briefly seized control of Sunni-dominated West Beirut.

"Hezbollah is a longtime ally of Iran and Syria. It opposed a 2005 agreement in which Syrian troops withdrew from Lebanon, ending a 29-year occupation."