

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

ISSUES FACING YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY

HON. BERNARD SANDERS

OF VERMONT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 30, 1998

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to have printed in the RECORD these statements by high school students from my home state of Vermont, who were speaking at my recent town meeting on issues facing young people today. I am asking that you please insert these statements in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD as I believe that the views of these young people will benefit my colleagues.

STATEMENT BY TREVOR GINGRAS, MIRANDA GIRVAN, JESSICA BORDEAUX AND APRIL HATHAWAY REGARDING TEEN SMOKING

TREVOR GINGRAS: We interviewed teenagers to see how many did and didn't smoke. Out of the ten, eight of the teens smoked. Teenage smoking rates go higher and higher each year. They start at a young age and get addicted to it. Some teenagers got started by getting pressured by their friends, some started smoking because they think it is cool, and some teenagers smoke because their parents smoke and they figure it is okay.

Teens get their cigarettes by either their parents or someone who is old enough to buy them. No law or even raising the price of the cigarettes are going to stop the teens from smoking. Teens save their money for gas for their cars and to get cigarettes. There are many places where teens are allowed to smoke, so this doesn't help the issue any.

We also did a survey on what types of cigarettes teens smoke. These were the results: Marlboros, Camels, Newports and Parliaments.

Congressman SANDERS: Thank you.

STATEMENT BY SHAWN BRACKETT AND SID MESSICK REGARDING FEDERAL FUNDS FOR YOUTH PROGRAMS

SHAWN BRACKETT: Hello. My name is Shawn Brackett, and this is Sid Messick. We represent Youth Build Burlington. Youth Build Burlington is a unique program dedicated to helping out-of-school youth complete their education and prepare for the world of work. Youth Build does this by providing alternating weeks of academic instruction and on-the-job training in construction skills. We also perform community service by building or renovating affordable housing units and providing our help to local agencies.

For example, Youth Build provided assistance during the Montgomery flood cleanup efforts last summer, and during the ice storm cleanup this January. We are currently completing the construction of a new house on Hyde Street.

Currently, I am completing my high school diploma through Youth Build, and Sid is completing his GED requirements. Over the past ten months, Youth Build has helped four of us earn our high school diplomas and eleven of us have already earned our GEDs. Youth Build has provided us with a supportive atmosphere. It has made counseling available and instruction in small groups or

on an individual basis. Without Youth Build, none of us would have completed our education or learned the work readiness skills that we need to move ahead in our lives. If this program is not funded in the future, it will be an immeasurable loss to the youth and the community.

SID MESSICK: What Youth Build has done for me has changed my life a lot. I was in trouble a lot all the time. So I decided to go back to school, because my probation officer said Youth Build would be a good program. So I just about have my GED completed, and my construction certificate.

The amount that it cost for one Youth Build student for one year is \$20,000. We do activities like volunteer work also. Like the ice storm, we helped like elderly people clean up their yard and whatnot. We do like activities, like at the Racket's Edge. We are trying to set up one to go to Camp Abanaki.

That is pretty much it, but it has done a lot for me.

Congressman SANDERS: Shawn?

SHAWN BRACKETT: For people that are looking for places to go for the youth in the community, I think Youth Build is the best program for a lot of kids that will jump at the opportunity, if they research it, with Youth Build. It is the ideal program for this community.

Congressman SANDERS: Thank you very, very much. That was an excellent presentation.

STATEMENT BY ANDREW JASPERSOHN, HEATHER COOK, DEBBIE COLE AND ALEXIS OUSTINOFF REGARDING ISSUES

ANDREW JASPERSOHN: Thank you Congressman Sanders, distinguished panel members. My name is Andrew Jaspersohn. I am a senior at Lamoille Union High School in Hyde Park, Vermont. I am also a product of school overcrowding. From grades one through six, I attended an elementary school, Johnson Elementary, that has some 375 students in a turn-of-the-century building meant for fewer than 300. At Lamoille Union High School, my student life in overcrowded conditions has continued. I have taken math classes with as many as 30 students in a classroom designed for fewer than 25. I witnessed teachers teaching in hallways, closets and stairwells, and have seen one of Lamoille's finest teachers, Mark Gilbertson, who is also a member of 1990 U.S. winter Olympic ski team, pushing a grocery cart full of the teaching materials through the crowded hallways of our school for want of a permanent classroom.

Congressman Sanders, I have managed to have a decent high school education despite overcrowded conditions, but I wonder, sir, how much better that education might have been given more space. I also wonder about those students, many of them friends of mine, who dropped out of school early, who, in effect, fell through the cracks of our overcrowded infrastructure. Education takes time, but it also takes space.

DEBBIE COLE: As a student at Lamoille Union, I have been overall satisfied by my education, but continually frustrated by the limited opportunities. As a result of overcrowding and underfunding, there is a lot that my school has not been able to offer me.

The beginning of ever semester finds me in the guidance office pleading for more classes and less study halls. Usually, I end up pursuing the list of courses offered and at what

times, and rearranging my own schedule. In this way, I have incorporated woodworking, cooking and creative writing into my schedule, usually with the help of my counselor pulling strings to get me into an already full class. By second semester, senior year, I was left with 18 out of 40 periods per week as study halls, almost 50 percent. Two of the classes were only being taken to fill time because that was all that was available. They held no real interest to me. The other classes that I would not have minded taking were only offered during the periods when I had my essential courses.

The one thing my school could offer was an honors program which allowed me to take up to two courses at Johnson State College for \$50 apiece. I took advantage of this, and now have two college credits that are transferable. However, by the time I paid for the classes, the fees and the books, the cost was up to \$150 per class, not to mention I needed my own transportation. This was a valuable alternative, but not an ideal one for many people.

Students should have alternatives within the school which could be provided by more space and more funding. I would have much preferred to take other high school classes than to be removed from the high school environment for over half the day. With more space and more teachers, more classes could be offered, not to mention the current class size would decrease, making all the courses more effective. Space and money are also key aspects to incorporating satellite learning into the school systems.

Students should have more options within their schools. They should be completely satisfied by their high school careers, based solely on the offerings of their schools, and not have to search elsewhere, if they don't choose to.

ALEXIS OUSTINOFF: There always has been a greater demand for tax dollars than will ever be available. However, a look at the news on any given day sends warning signals that we need to deal with the youths of this country.

By doing this, many problems may be prevented in the future. The best place to deal with youth is in a school system, especially as the schools are forced to take on roles formerly left to the families. By spending money on the schools to upgrade facilities, install adequate technology, and make sure quality teaching is provided, we can only enhance the education, and also make school a better vehicle to help our youth and prevent outbreaks of violence that we have seen so much of lately.

Our proposed solution to these issues is that the Public School Modernization Act be passed. Until now, our district has been able to fund temporary fixes, such as our now decrepit modular classrooms, instead of projects that would not only accommodate our immediate needs but our future needs. The Public Schools Renewal Act would also improve education by providing grants and programs to help schools improve conditions and train teachers. Our school is not alone in this problem. Other states have been struggling with these problems of overcrowding for years. And what we would like to see is some of these acts actually passed into law.

Congressman SANDERS: Thank you very much.

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