

Sec. 10004.—The conference agreement includes a provision, as proposed in the Senate bill, to permit the transfer back to the State Department of up to \$12,000,000 that was transferred out of the State Department to other agencies pursuant to section 404 of the fiscal year 1998 Commerce, Justice, State Appropriations Act. Section 404 provided funds for the implementation of the initial year of operation of the International Cooperative Administrative Support Services program. The transfer permitted under this provision is based upon a re-estimate of the allocation of costs among participating agencies. The conferees intend that the funds transferred back to the State Department pursuant to the provision shall only be used for State Department ICASS costs. The House bill did not include a provision on this matter.

Sec. 10005.—The conference agreement includes a provision, as proposed in the Senate bill, which continues a refugee program for the unmarried sons and daughters over 21 years of age of Vietnamese reeducation camp detainees who were previously admitted to the United States pursuant to the Orderly Departure Program. This section extends the original provision, included in the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act for fiscal year 1997, through fiscal years 1998 and 1999. The House bill included no similar provision.

Sec. 10006.—The conference agreement includes a provision, as proposed in the Senate bill, requiring the United States Representatives to the World Trade Organization (WTO) to seek changes in certain WTO procedures to promote greater openness and transparency in its activities. The House bill included no similar provision.

In addition, the conferees expect the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to move promptly with the award of funds provided in the fiscal year 1998 Appropriations Act to the Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space to undertake a ground-based demonstration of the collection of wind data.

The conference agreement does not include Section 2004 of the Senate bill. This in no way can be considered as expressing the approval of the Congress of the action of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in establishing one or more corporations to administer Section 254(h) of the Communications Act of 1934. However, the conferees expect that the FCC will comply with the reporting requirement in the Senate bill, respond to inquiries regarding the universal service contribution mechanisms, access charges and cost data, and propose a new structure for the implementation of universal service programs. The conferees concur with the provisions of the Senate bill relating to compensation for employees administering these programs. In carrying out the reporting requirement, the conferees believe that any proposed administrative structure should take into account the distinct mission of providing universal service to rural health care providers, and include recommendations as necessary to assure the successful implementation of this program.

The conference agreement does not include section 2008 of the Senate bill, waiving a matching funds requirement for a Small Business Development Center pilot project on Internet commerce in Vermont.

The conference agreement does not include section 2010 of the Senate bill, setting forth the sense of the Senate relating to United States contributions in support of United Nations peacekeeping missions.

The managers considered, but did not adopt, language that would create a Trade Deficit Review Commission, as proposed by the Senate. The conferees agree that serious concerns exist regarding continuing trade

deficits and intend to work with the legislative committees of jurisdiction to establish such a Commission, including in the context of the fiscal year 1999 appropriations process.

Sec. 10007.—The conference agreement inserts a new section 10007 as a technical amendment which provides that provisions of the District of Columbia Code affecting the employment of the Chief of the Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia shall not apply to the Police Chief to the extent the provisions are inconsistent with the terms of an employment agreement between the Police Chief, the Mayor and the District of Columbia Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority. The section further includes language making the procedure for the appointment and removal of the Chief during a control year consistent with procedures for the Chief Financial Officer and certain department heads as set forth in the District of Columbia Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Act of 1995 and the District of Columbia Management Reform Act of 1997.

Sec. 10008.—Support for Democratic opposition in Iraq.

The conference agreement includes a general provision providing that, notwithstanding any other provision of law, \$5,000,000 of the funds previously appropriated for the "Economic Support Fund" in Public Law 105-118 (Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1998) be made available for support for the democratic opposition in Iraq. The funds are to be used for such activities as organization, training, communication, dissemination of information, developing and implementing agreements among opposition groups, compiling information to support the indictment of Iraqi officials for war crimes, and for related purposes. The provision also requires a report from the Secretary of State to the appropriate committees of Congress within 30 days of enactment into law of this Act on plans to establish a program to support the democratic opposition in Iraq.

The Senate amendment contained similar language, but included a supplemental appropriation of \$5,000,000 for these activities. It also designated these funds as an emergency requirement under the terms of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, as amended, and further provided that the entire amount would be made available only to the extent that an official budget request for a specific dollar amount, that included designation of the entire amount of the request as an emergency requirement, was transmitted by the President to Congress. The House bill did not address this matter.

The managers expect that a significant portion of the support for the democratic opposition should go to the Iraqi National Congress, a group that has demonstrated the capacity to effectively challenge the Saddam Hussein regime with representation from Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish elements of Iraq.

OFFSETTING EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS

The conference agreement deletes a sense of the House provision contained in the House bill that stated that all emergency supplemental appropriations considered in the 105th Congress should be offset. The Senate did not include such a provision.

CONFERENCE TOTAL—WITH COMPARISONS

The total new budget (obligational) authority for the fiscal year 1998 recommended by the Committee of Conference, with comparisons to the fiscal year 1998 budget estimates, and the House and Senate bills for 1998 follow:

Budget estimates of new (obligational) authority, fiscal year 1998	22,597,439,000
House bill, fiscal year 1998	551,430,066
Senate bill, fiscal year 1998	23,859,654,012
Conference agreement, fiscal year 1998	3,409,562,066
Conference agreement compared with:	
Budget estimates of new (obligational) authority, fiscal year 1998	-19,187,876,934
House bill, fiscal year 1998	+2,858,132,000
Senate bill, fiscal year 1998	-20,450,091,946

BOB LIVINGSTON,
JOSEPH M. MCDADE,
BILL YOUNG,
RALPH REGULA,
JERRY LEWIS,
JOHN EDWARD PORTER,
HAROLD ROGERS,
JOE SKEEN,
FRANK R. WOLF,
JIM KOLBE,
RON PACKARD,
SONNY CALLAHAN,
JAMES T. WALSH,
JOHN P. MURTHA
(except for IMF and section 8 housing recission),
Managers on the Part of the House.

TED STEVENS,
THAD COCHRAN,
ARLEN SPECTER,
PETE V. DOMENICI,
C.S. BOND,
SLADE GORTON,
MITCH MCCONNELL,
CONRAD BURNS,
RICHARD C. SHELBY,
JUDD GREGG,
R.F. BENNETT,
BEN NIGHTHORSE
CAMPBELL,
LARRY CRAIG,
LAUCH FAIRCLOTH,
KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON,
ROBERT C. BYRD,
D.K. INOUE,
ERNEST F. HOLLINGS,
PATRICK J. LEAHY,
DALE BUMPERS,
FRANK R. LAUTENBERG,
TOM HARKIN,
BARBARA A. MIKULSKI,
HARRY REID,
BYRON L. DORGAN,
Managers on the Part of the Senate.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA STUDENT OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIP ACT OF 1997

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LEWIS), the deputy chief whip.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, it has been 3 years since a GAO report found that 1 out of every 3 of our Nation's schools are in need of major reconstruction and repair. Public school buildings are crumbling. Our schoolteachers are dealing with overcrowded classrooms. Many of our schools are fighting a war on drugs and violence.

Parents and teachers in my own district tell me about these problems and the lack of resources in the public schools in Atlanta. The GAO report shows that these problems exist nationwide, because overcrowded students attend classes in closets, hallways and even bathrooms. Yet, in 3

years, the Republican leadership has done nothing to address these devastating problems.

Nine out of 10 children in America attend public schools. The bill before us does nothing to address the problems that they face.

In fact, this bill is nothing new. It is just the latest assault on public schools by the opponents of public education.

□ 1230

In the last three years, my Republican colleagues have proposed abolishing the Department of Education, cutting the school lunch program, cutting funding for safe and drug-free schools, for teacher training, and for Head Start. The Republican record is clear. It is anti-public education.

And now they have the audacity to propose draining \$45 million from the Federal Treasury to send just 3 percent of D.C. students to private and religious schools. The vast majority of students in D.C. public schools, 76,000, will be left out and left behind.

Now, the Republicans will have us believe that they care about D.C. public schools and their students. Do not be fooled. Education is a great equalizer in our Nation. For \$45 million, we could set up computer labs for every school in the District of Columbia. We could hire teachers, reading teachers for all of the public schools in the District. With adequate funding, with public education as our top priority, we could truly make a difference for the majority of our schoolchildren in this city and nationwide.

Madam Speaker, the Democrats have a plan that will rebuild and repair 50,000 of our Nation's schools, put 100,000 more teachers in our Nation's classrooms, reduce the class size to 18 students and strengthen teacher training.

It is time for us to take action and move forward to improve American public schools. This legislation is a step backward. It is a step in the wrong direction. Oppose the Republican D.C. voucher scheme and invest in public education for all of our children, so no child will be left behind in the District of Columbia or any place in America.

Mr. ARMEY. Madam Speaker, I yield 4½ minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY), the majority whip.

Mr. DELAY. Madam Speaker, an ancient Greek philosopher once said that only the educated are truly free. To a remarkable extent, that is still true today. The state of our education system pounds that point home. In many of our communities our children get the best education in the world. They are free to become lawyers, doctors, astronauts, engineers or whatever they want. They are free to live the American dream.

But in other communities, those communities that are not so well off, those communities that are ravaged by crime and drugs, the schools very often

fail the children. They fail to give the children the necessary tools so they can realize their dreams. They fail to provide the children the safe and secure environment where they can learn. They fail to provide teachers who have the knowledge and the ability to teach. They fail to use their resources wisely to ensure that money is spent on teaching children, not on padding the wallets of bureaucrats.

And as a result of these failures, the children in these communities are trapped. They are not free to live their dreams. They are trapped in a system that ensures mediocrity, that inspires despair, that instills failure.

The District of Columbia has many examples of failure in its education system. It has amongst the highest illiteracy rates of any school system in the country. It spends more money per student than most schools. The question today is pretty simple: Do we take the steps that will instill accountability and responsibility and quality into the school system, or do we let the status quo continue unabated?

Well, in my view we need to shake this system up, and I cannot think of a better way to do that than to establish scholarships for children who want to break out of a failing system. I have heard most of the opponents today; and a lot of opponents in Washington, D.C., including half the teachers in the school system, send their children to schools other than the government school system. I have heard many complaints from those people who oppose the proposal offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY) to establish this scholarship program. They say it means that we are abandoning the public school system. Nothing could be further from the truth.

If we wanted to abandon the public school system we would offer legislation that would give every student in the D.C. system a scholarship, every student a scholarship to the private or public school system somewhere else. And my guess is that that proposal would be a cheaper alternative than the current system and wildly popular with most of the residents in the District of Columbia.

But the majority leader is offering his proposal to inspire a rebirth in the D.C. school system. There is nothing like a little competition to get a system to change for the better, and we know that in business and we know it in life.

So some teachers' unions are fighting this proposal and other school choice proposals, and half of them send their kids to private schools, and they fight them with every ounce of energy that they can muster. Apparently the unions are scared of the concept of accountability and responsibility and quality.

I know many teachers who are as frustrated with the current system as we are. They want the best for these students. But the bureaucrats and the union leaders want the best for the bu-

reaucracy and the union and not for students. And what is best for the bureaucracy and for the union is often the worst for the student and the parents.

Giving families the opportunity to choose where their children will attend school is an innovative way to inspire competition and improve our public school system. Many low-income families cannot afford to send their children to private school or even the means to take them to another public school in a better area.

The D.C. Scholarship Opportunity Act would give a low-income family in the District a choice, a chance, the power to provide their children with a better education. The D.C. Scholarship Opportunity Act is an important way to begin to affect our communities, to show them that we in Washington are committed to improving the educational system.

So, Madam Speaker, I applaud the majority leader for his commitment. Improving this system will help more children to realize the American dream.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I yield 30 seconds to the distinguished gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLAY), the ranking member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

(Mr. CLAY asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CLAY. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) for yielding me this time.

Madam Speaker, I rise in opposition to this voucher bill because it will do absolutely nothing to improve the quality of educational opportunities available in the District of Columbia. What this bill will do, however, is create false hope in the minds of schoolchildren and their parents and allow the Republicans to trumpet a lot of their baseless partisan political themes.

Let me say to my Republican colleagues and the District residents that federally funded school vouchers will not be made available here or anywhere else in America during the 105th Congress.

Madam Speaker, this is the third time that Republicans have trotted out this misguided D.C. voucher proposal for consideration in the House. Twice before they unsuccessfully attempted to attach it to the D.C. Appropriations bill. Now, the proposal finally stands alone to be judged on its own. It has never gone through the committee process for deliberate consideration. If it had, it would not have seen the light of day.

Just, last November, a bipartisan majority of this body soundly rejected legislation to offer federally funded vouchers nationwide. Why? Because Members recognized that vouchers simply channel taxpayer dollars to private and religious schools—something ridiculous to do when budget pressure makes it difficult to properly fund public schools. Members also recognized that the bill would erode protections afforded through our civil rights laws.

The voucher proposal before us today suffers from the very same fatal flaws. What's more, the D.C. voucher bill would be vetoed if it were sent to the President.

Madam Speaker, we should not undermine the efforts of those local officials who are principally responsible for the education of District students by forcing upon them the failed and unconstitutional voucher experiment. Rather, what we should do is support the Norton substitute to provide the D.C. public schools with \$7 million to implement comprehensive reforms and hire additional reading tutors. Both initiatives would target the lowest performing schools. This approach would ensure all D.C. students the promise of a quality education from what would soon become an exemplary public school system.

Mr. ARMEY. Madam Speaker, I yield 4 minutes and 10 seconds to the distinguished gentleman from Virginia (Mr. DAVIS).

(Mr. DAVIS of Virginia asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Madam Speaker, it is with an abiding respect and great reluctance that I oppose the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON), my friend and colleague, but I support this legislation.

I think a few things need to be said. First, this is not taking one cent from the public schools in the District of Columbia, which have the highest spending rate per pupil in the Washington region right now. And I will join the gentlewoman in making sure they have the money to continue to build a quality public school system.

But we have tried through a presidentially appointed control board to make the system better, and it is clear it is more than a one-year ordeal. It is going to take several years. We recognize and we have to recognize the current failures of the public school system that the Washington Post this morning labeled "troubled."

The dropout rate is the highest in the region. Test scores the lowest almost in the country. Opened four years in a row late. It is just not operating. It is so bad that no Member of Congress sends their kids through the District of Columbia public school system today. The President and the Vice President, offered those opportunities, did as most of us and declined and opted for private schools, and I do not blame them or fault them in any way because the school system today is not something that we could be proud of.

Madam Speaker, I want to work to make it better. This is a scholarship. This bill allows not just the opportunity for some of the poorest of the poor to send their kids to private schools. It allows the option for dollars for tutoring and dollars for teacher training and the like.

What has happened in this city over the last 20 years is that the middle class and the upper class have responded by sending their kids to private schools or moving out of the city where there are school systems that

are delivering an educational quality. What we are trying to offer here is a scholarship opportunity for the poorest of the poor in the city to give their children the same opportunity that Members of Congress have to send their kids to quality schools.

Opponents have said we are imposing this on the city. We are not imposing anything on the city. There is an article in the Washington Post today that talks about the Ted Forstmann scholarships for the city. Seven thousand poor families applied for this \$1,700 grant, and they have to put up \$500 of their own, when they could take a free public school system, and they are still overwhelmed with responses. I predict that we will get more responses to this program should this become law.

One lady, Karen Leach, said "I prayed every day. I just prayed every day," that she would be able to get the additional scholarships to send her kids where they could get a quality education. I think this bill will answer the prayers of a few thousand other parents in the city as well.

As I said, it is not imposing vouchers. We are not imposing these scholarships on anybody. If parents do not want them, then they should not apply and should not take them. But please do not tell single mothers like Karen Leach that because they are poor, working poor, working two jobs in some cases to give their kids a better life, that they cannot have access to these educational scholarships just because their political leaders are afraid to admit that perhaps the school system is not working and is not functional in some cases, it has not opened on time for four years, and some of the other things we have discussed. It should not mean that the poor students cannot live and have the American dream like the rest of us.

I agree with my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. Let us fix the system. Let us give the public schools more dollars to do the job. We increased spending in the classroom last year. But even the presidentially appointed control board is not going to fix the schools overnight.

For Christopher Leach, who is mentioned in the Post article today, which I will submit for the RECORD, and others who are going to be in the third grade next year, the schools they will be going to are not functional, are not at an acceptable level for any of us to send our kids. They will never have another chance at the third grade while we are busy fixing the system. Next year is it for them.

What we are trying to offer a few thousand kids the opportunity to have a system with the educational quality that the rest of us enjoy. And while we all know their schools do not meet the standards we want for our kids, why would we relegate them and not give them the kind of choices the rest of us have? But because we are richer, because we can send our kids to private school or we can move to wealthy sub-

urban areas where they have different school systems, we deny them the opportunities that we have.

Madam Speaker, with the gap between rich and poor growing greater in America and in this region every day, we cannot afford to relegate these poor students to a dysfunctional school system. They deserve these opportunity scholarships. I support the legislation.

Madam Speaker, the Washington Post article which I previously referred to follows:

[From the Washington Post, Apr. 30, 1998]

1,001 D.C. STUDENTS WIN SCHOLARSHIPS

(By Debbi Wilgoren)

Hundreds of low-income District parents are receiving calls and letters this week telling them that they have won scholarships to help them take their children out of the city's troubled public school system and enroll them in private schools.

They are the winners in a computerized lottery, held Monday and Tuesday, that awarded privately funded scholarships of as much as \$1,700 each to 1,001 children to cover 30 to 60 percent of private school tuition. The money will go to about 750 families, who will receive separate scholarships for each of their children.

"I prayed every day. I just prayed every day," said Karen Leach, a single mother who works nights as a security guard and won scholarships for her sons, Christopher, 8, and Christian, 5. "I just want my kids to have the best that I can get for them."

Leach said she will use the money to put her children back in Catholic school. Her older son attended Assumption School in Southeast Washington from nursery school through second grade, but he and his 5-year-old brother enrolled at Leckie Elementary School in far Southwest last fall because Leach could no longer afford tuition.

The two children have done fairly well in public school this year, but Leach said she believes they will get a better education and more individualized attention in Catholic school because classes will be smaller and the other children will be better behaved.

At Leckie, she said, "some of the kids are just out of control."

The number of scholarships, which are being provided by the five-year-old Washington Scholarship Fund, has more than doubled this year, thanks to the largess of Wall Street tycoon Theodore J. Forstmann and John Walton, heir to the Wal-Mart fortune. They donated a total of \$6 million to the effort last fall.

At a news conference yesterday announcing the 1,001 winners—chosen from more than 7,500 low-income applicants—Forstmann said he intends to launch similar funds soon in as many as 30 U.S. cities, including Los Angeles. That would greatly expand a new type of philanthropy that already is helping to pay the private school costs of 14,000 children across the country.

The effort coincides with growing national concern about the quality of public education provided in mostly poor, urban school districts. It comes as publicly funded, privately operated charter schools are opening in the city and many states, and as Republican leaders in Congress are pushing for taxpayer-funded private school vouchers for poor students in the District and elsewhere.

The House is expected today to pass legislation, already approved by the Senate, that would set up a D.C. voucher program despite strong opposition from Education Secretary Richard W. Riley, Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-D.C.), local officials and parent groups.

President Clinton, however, has promised to veto the bill, and congressional leaders say they lack the two-thirds majority needed to override his veto. Opponents of voucher programs say the government should use its resources to improve public schools. They also complain that such programs unfairly favor parochial schools, where tuition is much lower than at most secular private schools.

Forstmann refused to take a position yesterday on the issue of taxpayer-funded vouchers. But he dismissed suggestions that he and other donors should give money to public schools, saying many public school systems are so dysfunctional that donating to them does not help children.

"It's a little like putting money into the former Soviet Union," he said. "If the system worked, we wouldn't have to be here."

Forstmann said he believes public schools will work better if they are forced to compete more directly with private schools for students. He appealed to others to give money so more poor children can choose between public and private school.

Yesterday, he met with Leach and a few other parents, then telephoned several additional winners. Fund Executive Director Douglas D. Dewey said all scholarship recipients will be notified by telephone and mail this week. Those who were not selected will receive letters by Monday or Tuesday.

The organization originally planned to award 1,000 scholarships. But at the last minute, it decided to include an applicant who was not selected in the lottery but whose academic struggle—he has repeated third grade twice—was featured in a Washington Times article Monday.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, correcting the record for the gentleman from Virginia, the District has the second lowest per pupil spending on students in the region. His district, Fairfax County, is \$7,650. Mine is only \$7,000 and Alexandria is \$9,000.

Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) chair of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Speaker, firstly, I am appalled at the disrespect that is being shown to the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON). It is an unwritten rule in this body to allow the leadership of the district to go to that person who represents that district. Not only is she being disrespected, but after she gives us the facts and the figures, then we have Members on the other side get up and talk about she is wrong and give other facts and figures.

I am appalled at what you are doing, and I do not think for one minute that you care more about this district than the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia. And let me say this, the gentlewoman is smarter than the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY), than the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN) and all the rest of them put together. How dare you question her ability to lead this District?

Madam Speaker, everybody knows this has been a political ploy. Not only do we not believe you care more about these children than the gentlewoman

from the District of Columbia, we do not believe that, but do you expect to buy their education on the cheap?

□ 1245

We heard what education costs in all of these districts and the surrounding ones. But you want to come with a mere \$3,200 a year for 3 percent of the students and then say that the \$7 million will not take away from the other students in the district. It is outrageous.

I would ask the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY), those who believe in this so much, try it in your own district, try it in your own district.

Even though I do not support this kind of thing, this kind of subsidy to private schools and to religious schools, if they want it so badly, I will support it for their districts.

I would ask my Members, please do not run over the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON). Do not disrespect this district. Do not be bullies on this issue. We know that you are stepping on the District in every way that you can. They are down. It is difficult to fight. They do not have the power to stop you. You have the numbers. You can step on their backs. You can step on their necks.

I would ask you to have a little decency. Give the right of representation to the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON). Follow her lead and discontinue this madness.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. RIGGS. Madam Speaker, parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. EMERSON). The gentleman from California will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. RIGGS. Madam Speaker, is referring to Members of Congress as bullies and imputing the intellect of Members of Congress in order with House procedures and rules?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members should refrain from engaging in personalities during debate.

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

Madam Speaker, if I might just take a moment, since my intellect, my motives, and my character have just been called into question, let me just make the observation that I made at the outset, Madam Speaker. This is not about me, and, in all due respect, it is not about the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia. It is about the children.

Quite frankly, we have 8,000 of those children and their parents that have said this is a good deal. We want it. You can read about them in today's paper.

Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from Kentucky (Mrs. NORTHUP).

Mrs. NORTHUP. Madam Speaker, I and all other moms know what it is like to worry every day about how your

child is doing in school. It is terrible if your child is trapped in a school that is unsafe and unworkable. Your daughter's sleepless nights become your own sleepless nights.

Most parents with children in the D.C. public schools live under these intolerable conditions. D.C. schools have received national attention. In spite of funding per student that ranks among one of the highest in the Nation, education in the District has reached crisis proportions.

Decrepit school buildings are literally falling apart. The local news here is filled with stories of fire code violations, violence in schools, and failing test scores.

The problem in the D.C. public schools right now is the entire system is broken. It is not just a bad teacher or disorganized principal or a leaky roof or an unrestrained bully in the fourth grade. It is all of these problems and more. A parent cannot just change their child's teacher or their class or their school. There is no place to escape, and so the children are simply trapped.

Hopefully, the District will begin the long process of improvement. In the meantime, the children in these schools cannot wait. Too many lives have already been ruined. A child only gets to be in first grade once. He or she only gets to be a child one time. We need to make sure that each child has at least a chance to spend that year, that childhood in a safe school with an opportunity to learn.

School choice will offer parents the opportunity to give their children a chance to learn, thus enabling them to lay the foundation for future success. The key to ending the cycle of public assistance dependence is in opening doors for children to receive a quality education.

School choice is popular in this community. A recent poll found that low-income parents support scholarships. Among families earning less than \$25,000, 59 percent support the program. We should, too.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. SAWYER).

Mr. SAWYER. Madam Speaker, while there are a lot of good reasons to be skeptical about the bill before us, I think that the most important is sometimes glossed over, and that is the need for a full and effective evaluation of the program.

Evaluation is critical if we are to avoid monumental failure. Parental satisfaction and other subjective measures are important but wholly insufficient to measure the efficacy of this kind of funding scheme and its educational consequences.

A bill that is serious about a voucher experiment I believe should include statutory requirements for:

The random sampling of the students who are measured in the course of their experience with this;

Baseline data to benchmark evaluation including parental data, their

prior school experiences, relevant educational values, and reasons for making or not making a choice; student data on prior achievement, behavior, and special needs;

Appropriate control groups, including sibling nonparticipants;

Data from within and across all sites;

Comparable testing across all sites;

Data on transportation problems and solutions such as we experience in Ohio; and

Effects on all students, beyond standardized testing, including changing patterns of school enrollment by school type and demographic characteristics; the enhancement of geographic mobility among students; how school choices expand or contract; the kind of students who are accepted and rejected and retained by "choice schools"; and effects on racial and class integration.

In section 11 of the bill, there is an evaluation component that comes close to addressing some of these requirements but hardly even a majority of them. However, the evaluation component's very language assumes the success of the program. This is a large and costly experiment in the lives of real children, both the ones in the program and those who are not. We owe it to them to include a serious effort to measure the costs and benefits and measurable change in student performance.

Whether or not the politicians on this floor or across this country agree about vouchers, no one can say we know for sure how well they will work. The students cannot afford for us to proceed without a mechanism for knowing if we are wrong.

Mr. ARMEY. Madam Speaker, may I inquire as to how much time is remaining for each side.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY) has 39 minutes remaining. The gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) has 33 minutes remaining.

Mr. ARMEY. Madam Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN).

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I will not take issue with my colleague from California. I do not want to speak for the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY), but there is no question in my mind that I am not as smart as the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON). I would never try to compete with the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia on any kind of an intellectual or even a rhetorical basis.

I am going to, though, plead with my colleagues on the Democratic side, where the opposition to this bill lies, to set aside the suspect political motivation behind this bill and to put aside all that kind of lofty ideological rhetoric that partisanship can inspire. I do not necessarily disagree with all that rhetoric in principle. But I am going to ask you to strip away the esoteric and political issues that normally accompany this issue and look at the essence

of what this bill does. Because all it is is an additional \$7 million that can only go to poor families, only poor families. If it is not spent, it will not go to DC, nor to any other educational effort of merit. It will be lost. A lost opportunity.

What does it do that is so threatening? It lets parents pick where their kids will go to school. Those parents can choose the school my children go to, only a couple of miles away from the District of Columbia. It is in an almost entirely minority neighborhood, a public elementary school, with an African American principal, and an African American administration. Almost the entire student body is minority. But it is safe. The children that go to this school get the basic education they need, and they are going to get to go to college if they have the will and make the effort. It is a credit to the public school system as so many thousands of schools in this Nation are a credit to our investment in public education.

I am also going to ask you to let me make this a little more personal. A few months ago, my daughter broke out crying at the dinner table. She said, "Mommy, Daddy, I cannot keep up with the other kids in my class. I cannot think as fast as them. I am the worst in the class."

We comforted her and explained to her, "Honey, the radiation that killed the cancer cells in your brain also killed the brain cells, but we are going to send you to a tutor," which we do, "and we are going to make sure you can keep up." Expensive? Very. All out-of-pocket. Worth it? Of course.

But what about the dozens of other kids in the same condition at D.C. Children's Hospital, almost all of them minority, low-income families? Why should they be doomed because of the accident of their birth? Their parents do not have any possibility of enabling their kids to keep pace, of realizing their potential, of ever going to college. This bill gives them a faint, dim glimmer of hope because it can be used for tutoring that they could not otherwise afford.

Madam Speaker 85 percent of the children in Ward 3, the wealthiest ward in this city, have a choice of schools, and they choose to send their kids to private schools. Why should the parents in other wards of the city not have the same choice? Why should their kids suffer so because of the accident of their birth?

We spend more on D.C. public schools and get less out of them than any other school state system in the country. Three-fourths of their 8th grade students flunk basic math. Forty percent drop out. A minority of high school graduates are able to qualify for a college education. On average they're at least 2 years behind their peers in other school systems.

Why should we condemn all of these children to continue to suffer such inequity because we want to uphold our

lofty principles and our traditional politics? Of course we believe in public schools. But we also believe in the intrinsic worth of every one of those children born in the District of Columbia. They have the same right anyone else has.

Why are you denying that right to even 2,000 children who could break out of the bonds of a failed school system? Because you want to maintain the status quo? Because you do not want to admit that the current failed condition is the reality of this failed school system? It is not fair to deny hope to even 2,000 children. What is fair is to support this bill.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I invite the gentleman to exercise some of that passion for vouchers for the children of Alexandria.

Madam Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ROTHMAN).

Mr. ROTHMAN. Madam Speaker, last year, within our balanced budget bill, Congress gave American families a \$400 tax credit for every child under the age of 17 in the household. This year, it will be \$500 per child. American families can use all of those monies for private or religious school tuition. That is their choice.

This year, some in Congress want to bust the Nation's first balanced budget in 30 years by subsidizing private and religious school education, a subsidy that would ultimately affect funds available for the public schools.

If this voucher bill passes, the other real consequence would be higher property taxes for America's families to make up the difference. In New Jersey, our property taxes are already too high.

Besides, what is next? If someone does not like the books in their public library, should the government give that person a money voucher to buy books so that they can start their own private library? If somebody does not like the people who go into the public parks, should the government give money vouchers to that person so they can buy their own swing set and build their own private park? I do not think so.

America is still a country that believes in the common good and to achieve the opportunity for success and the opportunity to achieve the American dream.

Let us fix our public schools. Let us encourage competition by supporting chartered public school, but let us not pillage the public school systems in America. Hurting public schools in America will not be good for America.

Mr. ARMEY. Madam Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GOODLING), chairman of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, and, in my estimation, this government's number one expert on the subject of education by virtue of understanding and concern.

Mr. GOODLING. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

Madam Speaker, what I really want to talk about right now is, I get fed up when I hear the other side keep talking about pupil/teacher ratio, keep talking about building buildings, repairing building. For 20 years, 20 years, they had an opportunity to send 40 percent of the excess cost for special education to that school district and to every school district. They sent 6. If they would send 20, 40 percent, if they would send 40 percent of excess cost to special education to Washington, D.C., do they know what they would send them? Another \$12 million.

Put your money where your mandate was. You mandated 100 percent special ed. You do not send them the 40 percent. You were sending them 6 percent. We got it up to 9. That is a long, long way away.

If they had an additional \$11 million because you put your money where your mouth was for 20 years when you mandated special ed, they would have all the money in the world they need to deal with pupil/teacher ratio, to improve the school buildings, to build new school buildings.

So do not come here now 20 years later and somehow blame it on somebody else. It was you that passed the 100 percent mandate, and it was you that did not fund it. Now put your money where your mouth is.

□ 1300

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN), a member of the Subcommittee of the District of Columbia of the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight.

Mr. ALLEN. Madam Speaker, I rise in opposition to the bill before us today because I believe that vouchers are the wrong way to improve our public schools.

Taxpayer dollars should be spent to improve our public schools for all children, not on a \$45 million unproven program that will reach only a small minority of D.C. students. This bill will cost over \$7 million a year, and I believe that money could be used to help all of the 78,000 students in the District's public schools, rather than the 2,000 or so who may benefit from vouchers.

I believe that what we are seeing here is an effort to try out in the District of Columbia an idea that Members would like to bring and would be more appropriately dealt with around the country in other States.

I serve as a member of the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight's Subcommittee on the District of Columbia, and our subcommittee has held hearings on the state of the District's public schools. They are hurting. Serious action is essential to give the students of the District the education they want and deserve.

The District is moving ahead with an academic plan to improve student achievement, develop qualified teachers and strengthen its infrastructure.

One example is the District's new summer STARS, Students and Teachers Achieving Results and Success, program. STARS is intended to end social promotion and give students an intensive, highly-structured opportunity to gain important math and reading skills. It shows how committed the District is to improving student achievement.

Our goal is to improve the District's public schools for all children, not to weaken them for the benefit of a chosen few; and despite all of the emotion and argument around this issue, I believe this is the right course. I urge my colleagues to vote against this bill.

Mr. ARMEY. Madam Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. RIGGS), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Youth and Families of the Committee on Education and the Workforce that deals with elementary and secondary education.

Mr. RIGGS. Madam Speaker, I thank the majority leader for yielding me this time and for his leadership on this very important issue.

It occurs to me, as I have listened to the debate for the better part of this hour, that this has, unfortunately, become one of those "he said, she said" debates, where we talk right by one another with only an occasional ad hominem attack by one Member against other Members to liven things up.

But I was very moved by what the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN) had to say, and I do not think anybody can question that gentleman's commitment to the District of Columbia. I wish I would have heard a better response to his concerns from the delegate for the District of Columbia than to simply say, try parental choice in the City of Alexandria public schools.

It so happens that the City of Alexandria, Virginia, public school system is top-notch. But, by comparison, the District of Columbia public schools are in crisis, a crisis of catastrophic proportions. So why do those people on this side of the aisle, with the exception of the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN) and maybe a handful of other Democratic Members of the House, continue to stand in the way of school choice? Why?

We need it in the District of Columbia. It is the last best hope for many District of Columbia families.

And I am struck. I saw a poll conducted by the Joint Center of Political and Economic Studies last year that found that 57 percent of African Americans support giving parents vouchers which they can use to pick the best schools, the best and most appropriate education for their children, and that number soars to 80 percent, 80 percent, colleagues, for black parents with younger children.

So we have to choose. Where are we going to stand? Are we going to stand with our fellow Americans, our constituents who are demanding parental choice in education?

It reminds me of the saying, "When the people leave, perhaps the leaders will follow." Or are we going to remain absolutely beholden to the teachers' unions, a special-interest lobby that happens to be the core constituency of the national Democratic Party.

Show some political courage. The time and place is here and now in the District of Columbia.

This is a very modest bill, a very modest bill. It does not go nearly far enough, in my opinion, because it would only give a small number of parents versus the number of parents who have applied for these tuition scholarships, a small number of parents a scholarship up to \$3,200 so that their children may attend the public, private or parochial school of their choice. That means the decision rests not with the government, not with the public school system but with the parent. And who better to make that decision?

We heard a lot of misinformation about this bill. The facts are very straightforward. The gentleman from Virginia (Mr. DAVIS) spoke to some of the concerns. Will the scholarship bill drain the D.C. public school resources that the school system desperately needs? No. Not one dime of this money, not one dime of the money for scholarships, would come from the District of Columbia school budget.

Is \$3,200 not too little to cover tuition costs at private or parochial schools? Answer: emphatically no.

We had hearings in my subcommittee. We heard that at least 60 private schools inside the Beltway cost less than \$3,200 per student, and more than two dozen others cost less than \$4,000. These include religious and private schools and 14 schools in southeast, the quadrant of the District where the District's poorest families live.

Is the scholarship program not a violation of home rule? No. Because, as the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. DAVIS) said, the scholarships are not imposed on anyone, and no one is forced to participate. These schools already, the private schools, already accept minorities and children with disabilities, and this legislation is not unconstitutional. It is not a violation of the separation between church and State, because, as with the GI bill and early childhood educations and day care assistance, the recipient, that is the parent, makes the choice, not the government.

It is time to give those children a chance by giving those parents a choice.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume to clarify that my response to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN) was based on the fact his district spends \$2,000 more per pupil than mine; that his minority children are low achieving; and that no Member should try to put on my district what he has not already put on his own.

Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr.

SCOTT), who is a member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce as well as a member of the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. SCOTT. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to S. 1502, the D.C. voucher bill.

Madam Speaker, there are a number of reasons to vote against the bill, and let me just focus on two.

First, the bill ignores 97 percent of the students and offers just a jackpot for the privileged few. But there are not enough seats available in private schools in the Washington, D.C., area to accommodate those privileged few who might win the lottery.

A recent Washington Post article looked into the number of available seats and found that, "D.C. students would find the costs high and the openings scarce."

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, we must remember that the bill, should it pass, would be subject to an immediate court challenge over the use of taxpayer funds to go to private religious schools. Private religious schools make up 80 percent of the private schools in the Washington, D.C., area. So of those seats purported to be available by the proponents of the legislation, at least 80 percent of them may well not be available because of court challenges that would prevent their participation in the voucher program.

Madam Speaker, perhaps the most disturbing part of the bill is the provision which guts civil rights protections for the students. Although through legislative trickery the bill declares that the vouchers are not Federal aid to the school, such declaration has no purpose other than to exempt the schools from Federal enforcement of civil rights. Tragically, the bill clearly allows for discrimination against the disabled.

So while this legislation is framed as an educational bill to help disadvantaged D.C. students, in reality it is a flagrant assault by the majority on civil rights laws.

Madam Speaker, although this bill will provide no assistance to 97 percent of the students in Washington, D.C., a \$7 million federally funded education program ought to at least have full Federal civil rights protections for the privileged few it purports to help. The fact that that protection is not contained in the bill is another reason to vote "no".

Madam Speaker, we need to vote "no" and defeat the bill.

Mr. ARMEY. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume to set the record straight.

Section 7 of the bill specifically prohibits discrimination. It reads, "An eligible institution participating in the scholarship program under this subtitle shall not engage in any practice that discriminates on the basis of race, color, national origin or sex."

It also specifically states in section 8 that nothing in the bill shall affect the rights of students or the obligations of the District of Columbia public schools

under the Individuals with Disabilities Act. Nothing in the bill waives any current Federal, State or local statute protecting civil rights. In fact, private and religious schools in the District are already subject to D.C. civil rights law, among the most expansive in the country.

I am sure, Madam Speaker, that I will not have to address fallacy number seven in the book of complaints again.

Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF).

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of this bill. Probably none of my colleagues here send their kids to the District of Columbia schools. None of my colleagues here have probably ever taught in the District of Columbia schools.

My daughter, for 5 years, worked at 14th and Belmont, in the community of Hope, up there where most of the kids are not getting a decent education. She then taught in the District of Columbia schools for a year.

We are talking about real people's lives. I commend the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN) for what he said. I know of a young boy who left the District of Columbia schools where he was failing and then went out to the Fairfax County schools and is now getting Bs.

My colleagues say, stay with the schools. None of my colleagues would allow their children to go to the District of Columbia schools. My colleagues would take two jobs, three jobs, they would do anything they could to get their kids into another school, and now they want to deny the opportunity for parents to have that opportunity.

If I lived in the District of Columbia, I would be a revolutionary because of the way these schools are. The Arney proposal for scholarships is good. It is going to help real people to make a real difference, and I urge all the Members, all the Members to vote for this bill. Because, when it passes, and, hopefully, it will be signed, it will save lives because it will give a young man and a young woman the opportunity to go on and do things that all of us, everybody in this body, wants for their own children.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY).

(Ms. WOOLSEY asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mr. SCOTT. Madam Speaker, will the gentlewoman yield?

Ms. WOOLSEY. I yield to the gentleman from Virginia.

Mr. SCOTT. Madam Speaker, I wish to respond to the comments of the majority leader.

The fact that it is designated as not aid to the school eliminates the Federal enforcement, and there are a lot of things that can be done under Federal enforcement that are exempt because of that language.

I had an amendment in the Committee on Rules that was denied to allow that language to come out so that we could have full participation and full enforcement of civil rights. That is not in the bill because of that language.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, reclaiming my time, I say to all my colleagues that public education is the backbone of our country. Let us not forget that. It is why we are a great Nation. Public education is available to all. It does not discriminate, and it must be strengthened, not weakened. Yet this bill before us today will do just that. It profoundly harms our public schools.

This bill makes it easier for a chosen few, and the word is few, to go to private schools, schools that self-select their student body, schools that have no responsibility to special education and no concern for students with unique educational needs.

□ 1315

This is not acceptable. I am proud to speak for public education in America. Sure, it is not perfect, but the solution to any problems of our public school system will not be solved by providing vouchers to a few chosen children. The solution is to fix our public schools so that all families would choose public education unless they choose to go to a religious school that they would pay the tuition from their family.

S. 1502 hurts our kids, hurts our schools and our country, and it must be defeated.

Mr. ARMEY. Madam Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from Colorado (Mr. BOB SCHAFER).

Mr. BOB SCHAFER of Colorado. Madam Speaker, the Constitution of the United States in article 1, section 8, gives Congress the authority to exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever over such district as may, by cession of particular States, and the acceptance of Congress, become the seat of the Government of the United States.

And there are other sections in the Constitution as well that give the Congress the authority and, in fact, the obligation to be concerned about the children of the District of Columbia public schools.

But it is more than just a constitutional authority. We have a moral obligation to treat these children like real Americans. It is interesting when we read the newspapers here in Washington about how voucher opponents send their own children to private schools. Now, these are people over here who understand the difference between bondage and liberty.

John Milton, British poet, in the poem *Samson Agonistes*, said, "But what more often nations grown corrupt than to love bondage more than liberty, bondage with ease than strenuous liberty."

Some people understand the difference between bondage and liberty

and send their children to the schools of their choice. Let us treat children in the District of Columbia like real Americans as well, so they might one day learn the difference between bondage and liberty.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

This Member reminds the Member that I represent people who ask that they be treated like real Americans, that their home rule and self-government be respected, and that the vote which this Member won on the House floor, as a real American, not be taken from my taxpaying residents.

Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. LOWEY).

(Mrs. LOWEY asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. LOWEY. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to this legislation.

My colleagues, there are several important educational initiatives before this Congress that would benefit millions of students across our Nation, not just the chosen few. There is the President's proposal to help schools hire 100,000 new teachers to reduce class size in the lower grades. There is also the President's school modernization and repair initiative. I introduced one version last year, the Rebuild America's Schools Act, that has attracted nearly 120 cosponsors. And a new proposal introduced by the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL), myself, and others would offer tax credits to help local schools eliminate overcrowding, finance roof and window repair, and invest in computers and technology. These measures have the support of the American people. But are they being considered by the House? No.

Madam Speaker, Democrats believe the Government should work to strengthen public schools, not undermine them. Unfortunately, that is exactly what this proposal is designed to do. Of course, there are problems, serious problems, with the schools in this district and other districts. One problem that I find particularly serious with this proposal is funding religious schools. I believe in government-church separation, and providing public vouchers for religious school costs would clearly violate this important constitutional principle.

A potential lack of accountability to the taxpayer is another problem.

Madam Speaker, the bill before us authorizes enough money next year to provide vouchers to roughly 7 percent of D.C. children. What about the rest? What message does this educational sweepstakes send to our youth? It says, "Your future is based on the luck of the draw, not your effort and ambition, and not equal opportunity for all."

Madam Speaker, D.C. public schools are in trouble. We need to invest in them. The Republicans want to tear them down brick by brick. The answer is not a limited voucher program that

will weaken our public schools. It is tougher academic standards, safer school buildings, smaller classes, more teacher training. We have to invest in our public schools and make sure that every youngster has the opportunity to get an outstanding education.

Mr. ARMEY. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Indiana (Mr. SOUDER).

Mr. SOUDER. Madam Speaker, I want to thank the majority leader for his efforts in this and leading the way to give opportunity to those who may not have it.

As I have, basically, understood much of the debate today, I am sure there were some survivors on the Titanic who were glad that the minority Members were not making the decisions on whether to use the lifeboats, because the decision would have been, since everybody cannot be in the lifeboat, nobody should be in the lifeboat.

I am glad that the Members of the minority party who have spoken out here are not in charge of IDEA, because apparently the rule would be if we cannot fully fund IDEA, nobody should get the money.

The question here is should those who are reaching out get some opportunity. But the underlying fundamental question here, and I want to make it clear on the RECORD here, because I have taken some criticism because I supported the High Hopes initiative in the committee, because I think we need to reach out in multiple ways, in public schools, in private schools, in charter schools, every way possible to increase the opportunities for all minorities, whether they be Hispanic, African American, Asian, rural white. We need to make sure that everybody has the opportunity to succeed in America.

One of the things that this bill does is it empowers parents and children to vote with their feet. We keep hearing the word "lottery" like it is some kind of a gambling thing when, in fact, it is not. Maybe only 2,000 will get in, but many more will want to get in. Those who do not get in will still have the incentive to push in their schools, because their schools, in order to keep them from applying, presumably will start to listen to parents, presumably will start to respond.

In fact, if what the people want, because they are clearly spending more dollars in the public schools than they are in these private schools, if what the people want is discipline, if what the people want is better basic education, if what the people want is to get the things that they are getting out of the private schools, the public schools where they have choice start to respond.

We have an excellent public school in Southeast Washington and Anacostia, the Thomas Jefferson School, that does not have the crime problems, where they have more excellence going on. And we need to encourage those public schools that are reaching out and doing that; and one way to do that is to give

the parents the ability to say, "If you do not respond to us, if you do not listen to us, we will vote with our feet." And that is what we are doing here is empowering the poor like the rich are.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I want to put this civil rights issue that the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) raised to rest by asking unanimous consent that the response of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the coalition of the Nation's civil rights organizations, be admitted into the RECORD. The Leadership Conference opposes the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. EMERSON). Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia?

There was no objection.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS).

(Mr. DAVIS of Illinois asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I rise today in opposition to this bill, for three reasons. First of all, it is undemocratic in that it ignores the will of the people of the District of Columbia. They have already spoken and overwhelmingly rejected vouchers in a recent referendum.

Secondly, I oppose it because it is simply another attempt to dismantle public education in America. Public education has been the cornerstone of democracy and must remain so. This bill would divert \$7 million from private schools to public schools to help only a few students. And we are not even sure that vouchers will improve achievements anyway. Evidence suggests that it need not necessarily do so.

Finally, I oppose this bill because we should focus on putting our resources where they are really needed. We should use the money to fix up the crumbling schools, wire schools for the Internet, provide textbooks and other learning aids for students to learn.

So I urge my colleagues, let us not do the political thing, let us do the real thing, let us do the meaningful thing, let us support public education and vote this bill down.

Mr. ARMEY. Madam Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS).

Mr. PITTS. Madam Speaker, I rise to urge my colleagues to support the D.C. Opportunities Scholarship Act.

We have a moral responsibility to put children first in education, including inner-city children in D.C. All children should have the opportunity to attend school where they are safe, in a classroom where their teacher is qualified, and where their parents are involved in their education.

According to a Washington Post article I recently read, about 40 percent of second- and third-graders tested in D.C. public schools last spring read too poorly to meet the new proposed standard for promotion to the next grade.

This would mean about 5,000 of Washington's 13,000 second- and third-graders might have to repeat their grade for some reason. Five thousand Washington D.C. kids are simply not being taught basic reading skills. I wonder how many of these students will slip through the cracks and graduate in high schools without ever being able to read a newspaper.

Right now, many of their parents are helpless to take action and provide a good education for their children. Let us give them a choice to respond to the educational needs of their children. Let us support this D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Act.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, may I inquire how much time I have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) has 22 minutes remaining. The gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY) has 23½ minutes remaining.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from Colorado (Ms. DEGETTE).

Ms. DEGETTE. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia for yielding and also for her inspired leadership on this issue.

Last night we began debating a higher education bill that will significantly help students who go on to get a postsecondary education. As I stand here today, I think, what good is that bill, what good is this bill if we cannot even give an elementary or a secondary education to a kid? What good is legislation for postsecondary education if we sabotage the public school system in this country and if we undermine the future of millions of kids in this country?

And this legislation is just the first step. Public schools in Washington and all over the United States face very real and serious problems. But we do not solve them by funneling money away from them. If we begin instituting voucher systems, we might as well just say, let us walk away from our public schools. And none of us are ready to do that.

Let us talk about this lifeboat analogy we heard about. Imagine there is a ship that is about to sink. We know the ship is going down. We have the chance to do something about it. The Republican response is, let us make sure that we have lifeboats for 3 percent of the passengers on the ship. The rest of the passengers, let us hope they can swim.

What we need to do to effectively address the problems that our public schools face is to fix our crumbling inner-city schools, reduce our classroom size, train qualified teachers, modernize our classroom, and connect our kids to the Internet. Let us look at competition, but within the public schools.

Mr. ARMEY. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my friend, the distin-

guished gentleman from Florida (Mr. WELDON).

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Madam Speaker, I am a product of the public school system. I went to primary and secondary, as well as college and medical school, through public schools. Indeed, my mother was a public school teacher. But yet, I support this bill, and I think this bill is a very good bill. And, frankly, I am appalled at the kind of language that people are using to describe this concept.

I mean, this is a very, very limited, small scholarship program; and to use this kind of language that I think incites fear in people, frankly, I just do not understand it.

We have a very serious problem in the D.C. public school system. Sixty-five percent of D.C. public school children test below their grade level, this despite spending about \$7,500 per student.

The Washington Post, not exactly a Republican newspaper, reported that 85 percent of the D.C. public school graduates who enter a university need remedial education. Forty percent of the high school students either drop out or they shift over to a private school.

Now let me tell my colleagues something: Rich people have school choice in the city of Washington. Indeed, the President, the Vice President, how many Members of this body send their children to the D.C. public schools? We are talking about giving a limited number of students a scholarship and to see how well it goes over, to see if the families like it, to see if the children like it. And they use this language like we want to destroy public education all across America.

□ 1330

In my opinion it is an outrage to use these kind of terms to describe a simple, very limited scholarship program. I think what you fear most is that this is going to be a success and the parents in the Washington D.C. area will ask for more of it. That is what you really fear.

In my opinion, this piece of legislation is something that everybody should support, particularly those who are really interested in education. Let us put the issue to rest. If this is such a bad idea, will we not find out with this scholarship program? You will be able to stand up and say, "I told you so."

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW).

Ms. STABENOW. Madam Speaker, I come to the floor today as a parent of two children who have gone through an urban public school, a good public school in Lansing, Michigan, who I am very proud of. We have had our challenges. Contrary to what this bill suggests, we have rolled up our sleeves and this year alone we have been able to recruit 1,100 new volunteers to work one-on-one with our students. We have through NetDay been able to bring to-

gether business and labor to wire 29 schools without taxpayers' expense, to be able to improve opportunity for technology and the Internet for every child in the Lansing public schools.

What this bill does, it talks about a legitimate concern for children in Washington, D.C. and proposes exactly the wrong solution. It proposes taking \$7 million out of a precious budget where there is not enough money and saying that 2,000 children will have the opportunity for a voucher, 76,000 children will be left with a system that does not have the investments it needs. Those 76,000 children could have in fact 65 schools wired for the Internet, 460,000 new textbooks in those schools, if instead of this bill we would in fact invest that \$7 million to affect every child in Washington, D.C.

Last fall literally the roofs were falling in on D.C. children. The response of the other side was to say 2,000 of the children could go to a different school and leave 76,000 children I suppose with buckets to catch the water. Our response is fix the schools, modernize them, improve them, and invest in every single American child in this country.

Mr. ARMEY. Madam Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. MCINTOSH).

Mr. MCINTOSH. Madam Speaker, I rise in full support of this legislation. I think it is a wonderful opportunity to truly serve those who are most needy, the young in this country.

I am reminded of a student in Indianapolis, Alphonso Harrell, whom I met. He was from a disadvantaged family and trapped in a public school that was not serving him, he was not doing well, and on his way to possibly a career of crime and terrible life. He had the advantage of a privately funded scholarship that allowed him to go to a local high school run by the Catholic religion. Alphonso has turned around. He now is a very good student, on the student government, captain of the football team and on his way to college, because of that opportunity.

This legislation makes those opportunities available for the least advantaged here in the District of Columbia. I applaud it wholeheartedly.

Unfortunately, many of the outside groups who are opposing this legislation are special interests who want to see the monopoly of the public school system maintained in the District of Columbia even when it does not serve the students. I rise in full support of this legislation and urge my colleagues to vote for it.

I strongly support this bill.

The fact is scholarship programs like this literally change lives of nation's youth. I was moved by the story of young Alphonso Harrell of Indianapolis, Indiana.

Alphonso has turned his life around dramatically since enrolling at Cathedral High School. Beforehand, he was underachieving in public school, and could easily have ended up in jail or worse.

However, a privately funded scholarship program changed all that. Alphonso had a chance to escape a terrible school

Now, Alphonso is an honor student, captain of the football team, on student govt, and will be attending college soon.

Opponents of D.C. Scholarships represent a narrow, selfish special interest who want to keep the monopoly of failed public school systems. They would have you believe that Private Schools are not a viable option for the poor and downtrodden of the District of Columbia.

While many of the opponents, themselves, send their children to private and parochial bastions of privilege, they would deny even the most modestly priced private education to the children of hard working residents of the District.

Mr. President and my fellow Members, I beseech you to set these children free. Set them free of the uncaring bureaucrats and special interests who rule their lives.

Why should families of limited means be reduced to the edges of financial ruin in order to provide their children with a \$2500 private school education, when at the same time the District of Columbia is spending an average of \$9000 per student annually and providing, as far as the parents are concerned, virtually nothing in return?

It is heartless for opponents of this bill to rob the children of the District of Columbia of a good education.

Parents know best what is good for their children, and deserve the right to choose where to educate their children.

My fellow members of the House, I urge you to vote with parents and vote in favor of the D.C. Scholarship Bill.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ).

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Madam Speaker, I rise in opposition to the so-called Student Opportunity Scholarship Act, another voucher proposal. Vouchers are not the answer to the many problems that confront our schools. It is seen as a panacea but it is a scapegoat to our existing situation. Yes, it might help some of the youngsters that are out there and it might be beneficial, but it is going to be at the expense of all the other youngsters that are out there. In fact, the vouchers take away tax dollars from public schools where our children have the greatest need.

If we are going to commit to helping, we ought to be out there providing the resources that are needed. At this present time there is a press conference out there because there are being cuts right now at teacher training, there are some cuts that are being put out in terms of not allowing sufficient resources to be able to build our classrooms. There are also some proposed cuts that would not allow for construction of schools. There are some cuts that will also have some direct impact in terms of wiring our classrooms. We should be adding additional resources instead of taking existing resources from the youngsters that are now out there, instead of coming up with this program that is only going to be responsible for only impacting a few at the expense of all the rest.

Let us not be fooled into believing that this bill is for the benefit of our

students and for our parents. In fact, most parents will not have a say-so in terms of who will be able to get in there. In fact, one of the difficulties about the voucher system is that it does not allow the opportunity for youngsters to participate. If you have any type of difficulties, any kind of handicap, those youngsters will not be included. So yes, it is very exclusive. It is only for those individuals that will be able to get in there, again at the expense of all the others.

Public policy should respect the parental choice but the choice of benefit of all the students, not at the expense of the rest. Let us not abandon our public schools. I would ask and look at what has happened. There is a direct correlation between the proposals and the individuals supporting this proposal and the lack of commitment to fund our particular classrooms out there, lack of commitment to support public education as a whole. That is where it is needed.

Mr. ARMEY. Madam Speaker, I should just like to observe that it is generally advisable when one speaks of a direct correlation to offer empirical data rather than bias and opinion.

Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA).

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for yielding time. As the previous Member may have talked about, there is a direct correlation that when you send money to Washington, it does not make it back to the child and it does not make it back to the classroom. This current system gobbles up money and it hurts kids and it hurts our public schools and it hurts our children. We have taken a look at it: 760 programs, 39 agencies, \$100 billion. It does not work. You send a dollar to Washington for education, maybe 60 to 70 cents actually makes it back to a child in a classroom. Yes, we do not support that kind of a system.

We have gone to 17 States, we have taken a look at what works in education. We have gone to lots of great schools. When you empower parents, when you focus on basic academics, when you get dollars back into the classroom, it works. We are not in the process or the need to focus on a particular system. We need to start taking a look at the kids.

We have been in Cleveland, we have been in Milwaukee, we have been in all the places where education is progressing and where change is taking place. And every place where education is improving, it is moving power to parents and it is moving it to the local level and not moving more of it back to Washington.

This is not the answer to all of the problems we face in education, but it is definitely a step in the right direction. It is a step that we ought to take. And it is a step we ought to take here in Washington, D.C. because it is not an issue of money. We spend roughly

\$10,000 per child in Washington and we get some of the lowest results of any public school in the country. It is not fair to those kids.

Another few million dollars to improve these schools is not going to make the difference. We need radical change. We need to help the 7,573 students who tried to apply to get these scholarships who are not going to have that opportunity.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN).

Mr. GREEN. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia for yielding me this time to speak in opposition to this bill. Let me quote some of my colleagues from the other side.

The gentleman from Florida (Mr. WELDON) said that rhetoric and the destroying of public education is not the intent. I sat on this floor and heard one of my colleagues a few months ago say that public education is a legacy of the Communist revolution. And so maybe that is not the intent of this bill, but it sure gives that intent when you hear some of the rhetoric from the other side.

My colleague from Indiana talked about the Titanic, that nobody would get on the lifeboat. Those of us who saw the Titanic will remember how those gates were closed for those people in steerage. Those 7,500 children may be able to get out and get that lifeboat, but we are leaving thousands and tens of thousands still in steerage with the gates closed and without the opportunity that fixing public education really needs to be done.

Public education is available for everyone. It is irresponsible to have a voucher bill that takes scarce public funds and uses it for private schools, to only educate those few who maybe will make it out of steerage and maybe break down that gate or sneak around that gate, but not break the whole gate down so everyone can have that opportunity. That is what public education is about.

The tuition costs in private schools in the D.C. area is far greater than the value of the vouchers. So we are only going to be able to help those few students, Madam Speaker, who will be able to have their parents to match that, because the tuition is going to be so much more. Again, we are throwing up barriers. We really ought to fix the D.C. schools, and not only fix it for 10 percent of the students.

Madam Speaker, I hope this bill will be defeated.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. EMERSON). The Chair would like to ask those in the gallery to refrain from any audible conversation.

Mr. ARMEY. Madam Speaker, I yield myself 3 minutes.

Madam Speaker, I have here a book that I prepared in anticipation of this