goes America. Whether we are talking to a labor union in South Bend, Indiana, or a small business in Elkhart, Indiana, and with an unemployment rate of about 3 percent, everybody is saying the same thing across our State, that we need to work together in the United States Congress to improve education, not just simply improve it, but to creatively and boldly improve education for every single one of our Nation's children.

Now the new Democrat coalition, which I helped start and found, has taken the approach that we need to do a host of creative and bold new things. Certainly we all agree that parental involvement and community concern is the Number one issue, and in addition to that we need more charter schools and public school choice. This was a bill that I wrote and drafted with new Democrat help and with the help of Mr. Riggs from California, and we passed this bill in 1997. This is a bipartisan bill to provide more public choice for all our Nation's children and parents.

Secondly, we need more teachers, not just more of them, but better quality of teachers to compliment and supplement the number of teachers that are working so hard in America today, and my good friend from Florida (Mr. DAVIS) and I have introduced a bill called Transition to Teaching Act that will boldly improve on the Troops to Teachers bill to try to build relationships with the private companies and foundations to help transition people from their first career, as maybe a businessman or a businesswoman, somebody in science, somebody as a police officer or a fireman, and transition them into a second career of teaching. This is a dream for many people when they are in their 40s or 50s or 60s, to enter the teaching profession, and my colleague from Florida (Mr. DAVIS) and I will introduce this bill on Thursday, the Transition to Teaching Act.

Thirdly, we need technology. The E-rate, which I would say the E stands for equality or education, the E-rate needs to make sure that we win the battle of connecting up our schools and libraries to this exciting new technology of the Internet. It is not the answer, the panacea, to all our Nation's questions of research, but it does provide us some interesting opportunities for helping with new curriculum, helping develop role models for new teachers, helping share information from one classroom to another. The E- rate is the battle of the new century to make sure that all of our Nation's children in the inner city, in the rural communities which I represent in Indiana, that they all have access to get to this technology and that our teachers, that our teachers are equipped with the sufficient skills to learn this and teach it and convey it to our children.

Fourthly, when we just succeeded on this, and I worked closely with my good friend from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE), a Republican, on the education flexibility bill, we will give our local communities additional waivers from Federal and State regulations if they attach more success to that student, that student that gets better scores and graduates from year to year and out of high school into college.

That education flexibility is directly tied to the success of the student and not to more and more red tape, regulations, and requirements. And, Mr. Speaker, we need to do more. We need to look at bolder and newer and more creative ideas, teacher academies set up with our universities and colleges. We need to look at preschool initiatives when we are hearing that our children are learning more and more at earlier and earlier ages and they are capable of more and more.

We need to look at helping provide the resources to our local communities to stop social promotion. It does not do our children any good to be promoted from grade to grade to grade when they cannot provide, they cannot read, they cannot provide themselves with the opportunity to learn more about geography and math and science.

So, Mr. Speaker, as paraphrasing Abraham Lincoln in conclusion, Abraham Lincoln talked about making sure that we all have the opportunities not to guarantee that we will all finish the race of life at the same time. No, nobody can guarantee that, but at least we get the opportunity for an equal start in life, and that comes back to education.

Let us work together across the aisle, Democrat and Republican, for creative bold new reforms in education as the new Democratic coalition has sought to do.

WHAT WE WOULD BE DOING BY AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION TO MAKE IT ILLEGAL TO DESECRATE THE AMERICAN FLAG

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow we have on our schedule the debate and the vote on a constitutional amendment, the amendment that would make the desecration of the flag illegal. Many who support this amendment imply that those of us who oppose it for some reason might be unpatriotic. That, of course, is not true.

I would like to call attention to my fellow colleagues just exactly what I see us doing by amending the Constitution.

The very first thing that Communist China did after it took over Hong Kong was to pass legislation to make sure that it was illegal to desecrate the Chinese flag. Now let me say that one time again. As soon as Red China took over Hong Kong, that was the very first thing they did. One of the first pieces of legislation was to make sure that the people of Hong Kong knew it was illegal to do anything to desecrate the Chinese flag.

Now another interesting thing about the Chinese and their flag is that we monitor human rights in China. As a matter of fact, the State Department is required to come before the House and the Senate and report to us about the violations of human rights in China. The purpose is to find out whether or not they qualify for full trade with us, and the argument comes up every year. Some say, well, they violate civil rights and human rights all the time; therefore, we should not be trading with Red China, which is an argument that can be presented.

But in this report that came out in April to summarize last year, our government lists as a violation of human rights that we are holding them accountable for that we want to use against them so that we do not trade with them is the fact that two individuals last year were arrested because they desecrated the Communist Chinese flag.

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I think that is pretty important. We should think about that. First, the Chinese Government makes it illegal to desecrate a flag in Hong Kong, and then they arrest somebody and they convict them, and they want to hold it against them and say we do not want to give them Most Favored Nation status because they are violating somebody's human rights.

Mr. Speaker, my point is obviously that why do we want to emulate them? There are other countries around the world that have similar laws: Iraq, Cuba, Haiti, Sudan; they all have laws against desecration of the flag. But in this country we have not had this. We have never put it in the Constitution. This debate would dumbfound our Founders to think that we were contemplating such an amendment to the Constitution.

We have existed now for 212 years since the passage of our Constitution, and we have not had laws like this, but all of a sudden we feel compelled. What is the compulsion? Do we see on the nightly news Americans defying our flag and defying our principles of liberty? I cannot recall the last time I saw on television an American citizen burning an American flag or desecrating our flag. So all of a sudden now we decide it is a crisis of such magnitude that we have to amend the Constitution; at the same time, challenging the principles of freedom of expression.

There is one State in this country that has a law which they have the right to, a law against desecration of the flag. And the flag police went to a house to find out what was going on because they were flying their flag upside down. What is going to happen when we try to define ''desecrate''? Desecrate is usually something held for religious symbol. Have we decided to take the flag and make it a holy symbol? But will a towel that is in the shape and the color of a flag that somebody is

lying on at the beach, is that going to be a reason to call the FBI and call the flag police in to arrest someone for this desecration? Because we do not define the desecration, we just say we will write the laws to police this type of activity.

Mr. Speaker, in recent weeks we have had many Members in this Congress cite the Constitution. As a matter of fact, the Constitution is cited all the time. Sometimes I see it inconsistently cited, because when it pleases one to cite the Constitution, they do; and when it does not, they forget about it. But just recently we have heard the citing of the Constitution quite frequently. In the impeachment hearings: We have to uphold the Constitution, we have to live by our traditions and our ideals. Just last week we were citing the Constitution endlessly over the second amendment which I strongly support, and which I said the same thing. We must uphold the Constitution to defend the second amendment. But all of a sudden here we have decided to change the Constitution that we are in some way going to restrict the freedom of expression.

We say, well, this is bad expression. This is ugly people. These are people that are saying unpopular things, and they are being obnoxious. But, Mr. Speaker, the first amendment and the freedom of expression was never put there for easygoing, nice, conventional, noncontroversial speech. There is no purpose to protect that. Nobody cares. The purpose of freedom of expression is to protect controversy, and if somebody is upset and annoyed, the best thing we can do with people like that is to ignore them. If we pass a constitutional amendment and people are so anti-American that they want to display their anti-Americanism, they will love it. They will get more attention because we will be sending in the Federal flag police to do something about it.

Some will argue the Constitution does not protect freedom of expression; it protects freedom of speech, and this is not speech, this is ugly expression. But the Constitution does, does protect freedom of expression. That is what speech is. What about religion? To express one's religious beliefs. What about one's property, the right to go in and express what one believes? That is what freedom is all about is the freedom of expression and belief. I do not see how this country can become greater by having an amendment written that is in some ways going to curtail the freedom of Americans to express themselves. We have not had it for 212 years, and here we are going to change it.

It is expected that this will be passed overwhelmingly, and in the Senate possibly as well, and then throughout the country, but I do not see this as a positive step. We here in the Congress should think seriously before we pass this amendment.

NEXT STEPS FOR REDUCING GUN VIOLENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, we first need to go back to the American people and ask them to speak to their representatives. We will work with mothers, fathers, advocates, and I won't stop until 13 children don't die every day.

I will be at front lines as we figure out every strategy open to us to pass real gun violence legislation.

First, we will work with the House and Senate conferees on the Juvenile Justice bill.

Secondly, we don't yet have a date when the conference will be appointed. The Senate first decides to appoint their conferees.

The next big litmus test for the American public to watch is the Motion to Instruct the Conferees. That motion will consist of the House asking the Conference Committee appointees to keep the Senate language on the Gun Show Loophole Amendment.

We will attempt to attach the Gun Show Loophole language to the Treasury Postal bill and Commerce/State/Justice, which both oversee some gun laws. In addition, some of my colleagues have discussed attempting to attach the language to every appropriations bill, including this week's Transportation bill.

I still believe that we need freestanding gun legislation. That's why I will continue to ask that my bill—the Children's Gun Violence Prevention Act—be given a hearing. We will work to include the bill—or pieces of it—in any gun violence legislation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES of North Carolina addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

GUN SAFETY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DeLauro) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, last week the House had the chance to do the right thing and pass common-sense gun safety legislation, that, in fact, the American people support overwhelmingly. But the House leadership chose instead to cave in to the wishes of the NRA, the National Rifle Association. It was outrageous. House leaders actually chose to respond to the tragedy at Littleton by trying to weaken gun safety laws.

Never before have I seen the will of the American people so totally ignored.

The House last week failed to take reasonable and needed action to reverse the tide of youth violence, but that will not and must not be the end of the story. The tragic shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, claimed 15 lives and brought sharply into focus the crisis of youth violence afflicting our country.

When 13 children a day die from gunfire, we have a crisis that the Congress of the United States should respond to.

We know that there is no one solution to the challenge of youth violence. We need to encourage stronger relationships between parents and children. We need to make sure that schools have the resources that they need, resources to reduce class sizes so that students get individual attention, and that teachers can handle and keep a handle on their classes. We need resources for counselors and for mental health professionals, and we need to lessen the negative influence of violence in our media. All of these things we need to do.

But we cannot ignore the fact that angry and troubled youth exact the horrible price that we saw in Littleton only when they can get their hands on dangerous firearms. Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold used firearms that were purchased at a gun show. T.J. Solomon shot his classmates in Conyers, Georgia, after taking guns without child safety locks from his parents' house. Sensible gun safety measures must be a part of a comprehensive approach to youth violence.

Our colleagues in the Senate did the right thing to respond to our country's crisis of youth violence. They passed limited, but needed, measures to keep guns out of the hands of children and criminals. The bill passed by the Senate would close the loophole that allows criminals to buy weapons at gun shows; close the loophole that allows importation of high-capacity ammunition clips, and require that child safety locks be provided when handguns are sold.

The measure passed the other body, by the other body are not radical, and they were passed in a bipartisan way. They will not take away anyone's guns. They will not keep any law-abiding citizens from buying a gun. They will simply put in place a few needed protections to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and children.

This House should have passed these measures last week when we had the chance, but we did not. Why did the House refuse to take such a basic step as to close the gun show loophole? I heard a colleague of mine say that closing the loophole would create too much paperwork, that it would be an inconvenience. Imagine that. An inconvenience. Tell that to the parents of a murdered child. Tell them about paperwork. Tell them about the annoyance of waiting 3 days to buy a gun. Compare the hardship of waiting 3 days to buy a gun to the hardship of endless days of agony and mourning the loss of a murdered child.

This Congress should be ashamed for caring more about reducing paperwork than reducing gun violence.

I am disappointed that the House failed to take steps that we needed to last week, but that is not the end of the story. We are here tonight to make clear that we are determined to see