

them safe. We need a program just to build new schools because some are so old that you cannot do anything with them. It is more efficient to just tear the schools down and build new schools.

Now this is the big city of New York that has this problem. I am here to talk about it. I assure you it does not take much imagination to know that Chicago, St. Louis, Los Angeles, the problem exists in most of our big city districts. Large numbers of young people, we have a million students in New York City, and as of last September, 91,000 of those students did not have a place to sit.

So I thank the gentleman and I just wanted to highlight, we are moving into the process now where we are going to talk in detail about this comprehensive agenda of the President. Construction is on the agenda. I understand certain proposals have been made that a certain percentage of the money go to inner city districts. Some people are worried about too much going into inner city districts. It cannot be too much. The problem is grave. The problem is an emergency.

If we are going to do anything about young children, the first thing we should do is think about safe places that are conducive to learning. Physical facilities are basic, and I hope they get a lot of support from the President's construction program in his comprehensive education program.

Mr. PALLONE. I want to thank the gentleman from New York [Mr. OWENS], and I again assure him that what he is talking about in New York City is throughout the country. We had some statistics about the General Accounting Office that says one-third of the Nation's schools needs major repair, outright replacement, 60 percent need work on major building features, sagging roof, cracked foundation, 46 percent lack even the basic electrical wiring to support computers, modems and modern communication technology.

My colleague talked about the magnitude in New York, but it is true throughout the country. I think that is why the school construction program the President is talking about has so much appeal because it really affects every district, every congressional district in this country, as do so many of these proposals the Democrats have put forward on education.

So I am just hopeful that our colleagues on the other side, the Republican leaders, who are in the majority, take heed of this because I think there is no question that education is a priority and that there is a lot more that can be done on the Federal level, and we as Democrats have put forward those proposals and we would like to have our Republican colleagues join us in passing those in this Congress before we adjourn. So thank you again, I appreciate the gentleman's comments.

THE AFRICAN GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. JEFFERSON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1432, the African Growth and Opportunity Act, on which the Trade Subcommittee of Ways and Means Committee conducted hearings yesterday. I am a proud co-author and original cosponsor of this important and historic legislation which will start the process of bringing African and United States economic interests together in the global marketplace.

The African Growth and Opportunity Act has been coauthored and received in an enthusiastic bipartisan spirit, led by our distinguished chairman of the Subcommittee on Trade, PHIL CRANE, as well as Congressmen RANGEL, MCDERMOTT, HOUGHTON, MATSUI and many others.

Yesterday we heard declarations of support from the Clinton administration, Speaker GINGRICH, former House Secretary Jack Kemp, former Mayor Dinkins and a host of other trade, investment, development, and diplomatic officials for this landmark legislation. It was, Mr. Speaker, an exciting day and exhibited the great inspiring unity the Congress is capable of when it puts aside party and strife and employs the talents of all of us to deal with national and international issues.

Mr. Speaker, the African Growth and Opportunity Act would establish as U.S. policy the path from developmental assistance to economic self-reliance through trade and investment for African countries committed to economic reform, market incentives, and private sector growth.

In addition, H.R. 1432 will establish several new initiatives to promote trade and investment in Africa, a few of which I will briefly outline. First, H.R. 1432 would direct the President to develop a plan for trade agreements to establish a United States/sub-Saharan Africa free trade area by the year 2020.

Second, H.R. 1432 would establish a United States/Africa economic forum to facilitate annual high-level discussions of bilateral and multilateral trade and investment policies modeled on the highly successful APEC forum that has worked so well to spur U.S. trade and investment in Asia.

Third, it directs OPIC to create a \$150 equity fund and \$500 million infrastructure fund for Africa, which will help lay the groundwork for private sector development. And fourth, H.R. 1432 proposes a market access initiative which would redirect an enhanced generalized system of preferences program to qualifying African countries, assisting the least competitive countries in Africa to access United States markets.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this legislation is important for four principal reasons. First, the development of a trade

policy with sub-Saharan Africa is important because the United States does not currently have a trade policy with this part of the world. So while many Asian and Latin American economies have flourished as a result of the influx of private investment and international trade, Africa has been almost exclusively relegated to developmental assistance.

Thirty years ago, the standards of living of Korea and Ghana were nearly equal. Today, Korea is a vibrant, industrial powerhouse, while Ghana is still a nation very much in economic transition. While there are numerous reasons to explain this difference, the critical distinction between Asia's and Africa's development has been Western investment and trade.

H.R. 1432 places our Government's imprimatur on trade and investment in Africa, a crucial catalyst for attracting further private sector investment in the region and on the continent.

Second, this bill lays the groundwork for enhanced private sector and infrastructure development in Africa, which will improve standards of living for the people of sub-Saharan Africa. Mr. Speaker, this is in the interest of our country, the United States.

Africa represents 10 percent of the world's population and possesses enormous untapped natural and human resources. Amid a dizzying array of mining, petroleum, and agricultural resources are an industrious and entrepreneurial people who yearn to compete in the global marketplace and represent an important future market for U.S. exports and thus for the creation of U.S. jobs.

But right now, many people in sub-Saharan Africa lack the basics: telephone and electricity service; clean running water; and essential medical technologies. Fortunately, we can help, and H.R. 1432 takes a giant step, through infrastructure development, free trade agreements, and market access initiatives, toward improving the standard of living for millions in sub-Saharan Africa.

It would promote foreign, direct investment in Africa through the two funds that I mentioned earlier. These funds are vital to Africa's development because of the 1,160 privately financed infrastructure projects around the world, only 6 percent occurred in Africa. And between 1984 and 1994, only 2 percent of the world's foreign investment was made in Africa.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues, Democrat and Republican, to support the African Growth and Opportunity Act, a bill that is good for America, good for Africa, and good for the cause of international economic development.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 2.