

the Clinton administration to bar from entry any Chinese official who is directly involved in the practice of organ harvesting. Furthermore, individuals in the United States who are engaged in marketing and facilitating these transplants should be prosecuted under U.S. law.

Mr. Speaker, as President Jiang Zemin concludes his visit to the United States, let's use this opportunity to speak out on China's dismal human rights record. Nothing will change if Congress and the American people are silent. The House is commonly known as the people's House and the American people want their voices heard. They are a people of compassion and good will and will not stand for organ harvesting or any other abuse of human rights.

ON EDUCATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from New York [Mr. OWENS] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. OWENS. Madam Speaker, as a matter of practice, I never like to criticize any efforts related to the improvement of education, whether they take place here or at the local government area or in the State governments. All efforts to improve education are generally to be applauded. As I said before, we need a comprehensive approach to the improvement of our schools and almost no attention focused on schools is wasted.

First of all, it is important that the American people, the vast majority of the American people, the voters have placed education at a high priority position. They repeatedly insist that education is a high priority and that Federal aid to education is also a high priority. That is consistent and highly desirable. As a result of the general public and the voters insisting that education is a high priority, we have a lot of attention being focused on education by elected officials at every level, both in the Congress, the city councils, and the State legislatures.

A lot of attention is being paid to education, a lot of campaigns that are running now across the country for this coming election day on November 4, they are not congressional campaigns because we are not running for office this year, but municipal campaigns, campaigns for Governor.

□ 1330

Schools are in the forefront in terms of issues that voters care about and want to hear discussed. Certainly, in New York City, Democratic candidate Ruth Messinger has certainly placed great stress on school improvement. The Republican candidate incumbent mayor has answered in trying to show a thousand ways in which he helped to improve schools and education. And on it goes.

In another major contest in New Jersey, the very close contest between Gov. Christie Whitman and Assembly-

man McGreevey, education figures as a very important item.

On the floor of this House, there is hardly a week that goes by where education is not dealt with in some form in some piece of legislation. Today was one of those days when we had a discussion on education, which I must say we do not need. It was a very negative discussion. Very negative action was taken today. We focused on vouchers, and we are insisting that vouchers must be a part of the Federal effort to improve education.

School vouchers, you know, there is a group here in the Congress that insists on pressing ahead with vouchers no matter what the American public thinks of vouchers. It is like a dogma at this point. It is a religion. Dogmatically, they insisted vouchers must be placed in the forefront of any effort to improve education.

Despite the fact there is so much disagreement about vouchers, there are areas of agreement. We agree that charter schools, public charter schools, is a concept that might make a real contribution to education improvement. We agree on that. We agree that more technology in schools might make a real contribution to the improvement of education. We agree that teacher training and more funds to make certain that teachers get more training would make a great contribution to the improvement of education. We agree on quite a number of things.

Unfortunately, we do not agree on one major item that ought to be in the forefront, and that is school construction. The one item that is necessary before those other items can be really put in place is an effort to help localities and States with the construction of decent schools. It is not a problem confined to the inner-city communities like mine, the 11th Congressional District of Brooklyn. It is a problem which is pervasive all over America.

There is not a single State that does not have schools that need replacement or repair or renovation, not a single State and quite a number of school districts out there. The General Accounting Office says we need \$120 billion to deal with the infrastructure of public education. Although, America, if you really dealt with improving the infrastructure to bring schools to the point where they are adequate, they offer adequate facilities that are conducive to learning, it will cost about \$120 billion. All the President proposed in his State of the Union message was \$5 billion. We were happy to hear that because it is a beginning. Five billion dollars was proposed to help with school construction, \$5 billion to be spent over 5 years, maybe not necessarily \$1 billion a year, but over a 5-year period. That seems like much too little as far as I am concerned. But we will be satisfied that we have begun.

However, during the course of the budget discussions between the Republicans and the Democrats, that \$5 billion construction initially was taken

off the table. When they did that, they hurt the credibility of all the other efforts to improve education. Teacher training, technology, charter schools, they become a bit of a joke when we are talking to people where the schools are crumbling all around them. It is a bit of a joke to say that Washington should have 3,000 vouchers, vouchers for 3,000 youngsters, when a school system of 70-some-thousand youngsters is crumbling around us. It is a bit of a joke to talk about that solving the problem or any other effort we make now at this point in the Washington schools to talk to the teachers about the use of more technology, computers, videos, whatever; to talk to them about the use of these modern aids to education is a bit ridiculous when the schools in Washington do not have heat.

A large percentage of schools now are suffering because they have a boiler problem, a heating problem, furnaces are going bad. They open late. Three weeks late the schools in Washington open because a large number of them had problems with leaking roofs. And because so many had problems with leaking roofs, the court ruled that schools in general could not open until they were all repaired. They finally, after 3 weeks' delay, got the schools open.

Now we have a large percentage of schools that have problems with their heating systems and they are closing down the schools that opened up 3 weeks late. Every day there is a new headline in the Washington paper. I think we ought to stop for a moment and consider the fact that this is the Nation's capital. It may be overwhelmingly African American. For some reason, that leads certain people to believe that we really do not have to take it seriously, what happens here is not a mirror of America. But it is in many ways the America we do not want to admit. We do not have the high visibility in the rural schools in America that may be having leaking roofs or may be having problems with their furnaces. We do not know about them because they are off the radar screen.

In big cities like New York, they are so big. Washington has less than, I think, about 750,000 people. That may be an optimum size for a city. After that, it may be that the cities are too big that go beyond that because the communications problems that result are horrendous.

I am a resident of the city of New York. I serve a congressional district with 582,000 people. It is one of 14 congressional districts in the city. We cannot get on the radar screen of our local television stations. We cannot get on the radar screen of our local radio stations with news that is important to my congressional district, made up of many communities, planning districts, all kinds of units in a city of 8 million people. You cannot find out in New York City which schools have problems with their furnaces today.

I would wager that there are more furnace problems today in New York City than there are in Washington, D.C. But it is not news. It does not surface. We have more than 300 schools in New York City out of 1,100 schools. I always have to clarify things when I talk about New York City's school systems and make my colleagues understand the numbers. Unlike anything else in the country, there are 1,100 schools, 60,000 teachers, 1.1 million students.

So, of the 1,100 schools, more than 300, and I was quoted a few weeks ago, I said more than 250. I have learned recently from people who are very close to the system, custodians' union, that it is more like 325 schools that have furnaces that burn coal. We still have furnaces in more than 300 schools that are burning coal. Coal makes a lot of heat. Maybe it makes more heat than oil or gas. But it also makes a tremendous amount of pollution.

New York City is also the city that has the largest number of children with asthma. We will not go into what other respiratory diseases they may have. Again, it is so big that we have thousands of cases that do not even tabulate certain kinds of diseases. Asthma is way up there. The number of children with asthma is astronomical. So children with asthma is one indication of children suffering from a pollution problem.

So just to get rid of the coal-burning schools would greatly improve the physical health of the children and probably a lot of adults, also. But that is not on the radar screen. They are not even talking about it. I assure my colleagues that schools are breaking down every day with furnace problems in New York City.

But, unlike Washington, the courts and very active parent organizations are in constant monitoring. Constant state of monitoring has been provided by the courts and the parent organizations of what is going on in the schools. They have some other problems related to health that are surfacing that may lead to some other shut-downs of schools.

I say this because here we were on the floor of the House today discussing vouchers, a rule to set the stage and parameters for discussion of vouchers next week. The Republican majority insists that we cannot discuss something sensible and something which has achieved a great deal of consensus among the Members of Congress, a great consensus among the American people as a whole, the public voters. Charter schools are looked upon as a respectable effort to improve schools. Public charter schools would provide some of what we think is needed to improve public schools.

Most of the children in America are going to go to public schools a long time to come. Over the next 20 years, I would predict at least 90 percent of the children in America are going to still be going to public schools, regular public schools, traditional public schools,

public schools controlled by some central management and governance mechanism.

There is no reason we cannot have some charter schools which offer an alternative and may, by example, lead to improvement of public schools by operating in a free environment with the ability to innovate and ability to do certain kinds of other things, including the ability to attract a group of people who are dedicated to education and will stay with it over a period of time.

There are a number of things that charter schools can show us if we had more of them. That would certainly not be a big problem. In America right now, I think about 86,000 public schools exist, not counting private schools, but 86,000 elementary and secondary schools, more than 86,000, a little more. And of that number, about 800 are charter schools. At this point, charter schools are about 800 out of 86,000.

So we are not going to be overwhelmed by charter schools, but charter schools could provide an opportunity to provide us with little laboratories of what can happen in a school to deal with the problems faced by the traditional public schools.

We will not be allowed next week to discuss charter schools separately by themselves. They must be intertwined, interwoven with the discussion of vouchers. That is the way the majority has insisted we must do it. So charter schools are going to be tarnished, tainted. The whole discussion will be adulterated and emasculated by the shadow of vouchers, which nobody really in the Congress has shown great sincerity about because they come from districts that do not have vouchers.

I would challenge every person, every Member of the Congress who really believes in the voucher system or somebody else pushing the voucher system to go back to their own school districts, the school district where their children go to school, and give us a report, conduct a survey and give us a report on whether they want vouchers, who wants vouchers in their district. In their district, have they talked to the local school board and are they in favor of vouchers in their district? Have they talked to parents? Are they in favor of a voucher system?

I have heard lately that most of our Republican colleagues come from middle-income districts where they have faith in their schools and they are not interested in vouchers. They have faith in their schools and the schools have done a pretty good job. Well, according to various reports that are made, even our best schools in America can stand a lot of improvement. Some of our best schools that are very well funded, have the best of everything, still have mediocre performances or performances that fall short of what we would like for them to be.

Certainly, we compare our best students in math and science to the students in math and science in other parts of the world. Math and science is

a good place to make the comparison. Because across the world, math and science is pretty much the same. It is not like sociology, not like literature. Literature and sociology are too complex. They take a higher order of reasoning, in my opinion, than math and science.

□ 1345

Math and science is the same everywhere. It is the same set of principles you proceed from; the logic is always the same kind of logic. The whole notion that it takes geniuses to deal with math and science ought to be reexamined. To deal with the swirling, complex nature of societies, anthropology, sociology, a number of other things out there are much more complex because they are never the same; the variables are always moving and changing.

To deal with literature, the message that literature brings about to a particular culture, all those things require a much more complex set of reasoning and higher ordered thinking, but I will not get into that debate at this point.

Math and science comparisons are made, and some of our best students from our best schools are falling short. I say to every Member of Congress, no matter how good the schools are, they would, I think, agree they could be improved.

Would having vouchers improve them? It probably would, according to your reasoning. If you say the best schools are the private schools, then the best schools in your neighborhood, I guess, are private schools, too. The best schools in your State, the best schools in your school district, are they private schools too and if that is the case, are you pushing vouchers in your district? And what is the reaction of your school board? What is the reaction of your constituents? Come tell us. Do not tell us that this is a solution for inner city schools, this is a solution for disadvantaged African American communities. We are going to push this solution down your throat, because we believe that this is the way it should go and we are going to make you take it.

The Washington, DC, appropriation bill that is still in the hopper, they are still negotiating and in conference on the Washington, DC appropriation bill. What is one of the biggest hang-ups in the Washington, DC appropriation bill? The biggest hang-up is the fact that the Members of the House of Representatives who believe in vouchers have insisted that vouchers must be instituted in the Washington, DC schools. Vouchers must be put in whether you like it or not. The people of Washington, DC had a referendum, they voted, they do not want vouchers. They voted not to have vouchers. This same Washington, DC decided to set up a charter school board. I think probably there is no other city in the country that has a board for charter schools. They do want charter schools. They are going ahead. There are very

complex guidelines, and they are now in the process of examining applications for charter schools. So why not support them wholeheartedly with charter schools, members of the Republican majority, why not leave them alone and stop trying to impose your dogma, impose your religion on the people of Washington, DC, your educational religion? Your dogma does not work if people do not want it. It is not going well even in your own districts. So why are you going to impose it on Washington, DC? Why are you going to offer it to frustrated parents in the inner-city communities as a solution when you know that only a tiny percentage of the youngsters at best could be placed in voucher programs? And when you do that, you are mixing up church and State because most of those schools that they find places in are church-related schools, and that whole debate and the conflict.

In New York City it might seem easy as long as you are placing children in schools that are Christian schools. But there are also Muslim schools there. What about them? There are also Jewish schools. What about them? What kind of tensions are you going to create when you wade into that problem of replacement of students with public funds into religious schools? Are you not going to create a problem which is greater than the problem you solve? Those are some of the questions. What I want to dwell on here is the fact that this Congress, the 105th Congress, with a golden opportunity to really do something meaningful about education, is frittering it away, has frittered away an entire year around the edges with concepts like vouchers and education savings accounts and things that really, if they have any meaning at all that might be worthy of consideration, they ought to be referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce for further study and deliberation.

The voucher bill that was presented here for a rule today has not been discussed in the Committee on Education and the Workforce. We have not even gone through the regular democratic process. It was just brought to the floor because the people, the fanatics who believe in it, said this is our religion, this is our dogma, we are going to introduce it whether you like it or not and we do not need to take it through the democratic process while we are frittering away at the opportunity really to do something quite significant in the area of education. With so many Americans on board, the electorate saying we want more attention paid to education, why do we not do something really meaningful, why do we not start with construction? Why do we not start with a program that the Federal Government can offer that nobody else can offer? We are not interfering with the State and local governments if we offer assistance with construction. They all need it. There is not a single State that cannot use some funds for some school in the

State with respect to construction, renovation or repairs. So why do we not focus on that? Why are we focused on testing?

The White House unfortunately has gotten locked into its own dogma. Testing is the answer, testing above all. I am not among those people who say we should never have a national testing system. That is not my reason for opposing testing. My reason is that testing is not a priority. Testing ought to come in sequence. Testing should be further down the line. What are you going to say, Mr. President, to the parents of the children whose schools have been shut down for 3 weeks in Washington and they started 3 weeks late when they go to take the test? What are you going to say to the parents of these same children who not only had to start school 3 weeks late but they also have a problem now with the boilers and they face shutdowns and busing around, all kinds of interference with their schooling since school opened finally and the weather began to turn cold. What are you going to say when it comes time for them to take the test? Are you going to give them an excuse?

As I said, in Washington, DC we have a high profile area, a high visibility area. We know that large numbers of schools in Washington have a problem with the roofs leaking. We have been looking at that for some time over the past few months and we hope they have gotten the roofs fixed now. We know now that they have a problem also with the boilers not working, the furnaces are not working.

We know that in Washington, DC. What we do not have is a tabulation of how many schools across the Nation are also in trouble and they are having their youngsters bundle themselves up in the classroom, which is not conducive to learning. I assure you, but an invitation to lowering their immune systems and bringing on other kinds of problems as a result. How many schools are having children bundle up with classrooms that have inadequate heating? How many schools out there across the country have actually had to shut down for several days, starting with New York City? As I said before, you would not know it out of our 1,100 schools if there were some that shut down yesterday because the heating systems were not working. The news is not generated. I do not get that news. I do not get any information. The papers do not think that is worthy of reporting. It is a humdrum part of the routine. But I am sure if I go check today and yesterday, there were schools that had heating problems in New York City. How many of those coal burning furnaces, furnaces that still burn coal, how many of them are working today, spewing their pollutants into the air, causing more children to have asthma?

This is not news, not being discussed, but Mr. President and the people who advocate national testing, are you

going to take into consideration the fact that this is going on? Are you going to have a system for excusing the children who have experienced all these problems in our school? Not at home. They may have problems at home with heating. They may have problems at home with broken families, low incomes that cannot afford to provide nutritious food, all kinds of problems may exist in a poor neighborhood that we have been talking about for ages which impede the school's ability to educate the children. But let us put that aside and say that the school ought to be an oasis, at least when they come to school they ought to be warm. When they come to school, they ought to drink water that is not possibly tainted with lead. We have not gotten into that.

There is a lead poisoning problem in many big cities because the older the school is, the more likely it is to have lead pipes and the water that children drink every day is flowing through lead pipes. We do not even raise the subject officially in New York because we know if you go looking, you are going to find too much lead in a lot of the pipes. It ought to be examined, it ought to be put on the radar screen, we ought to not jeopardize the health of children, because the younger you are, the more devastated your brain may be by lead poisoning.

This is happening, Mr. President, advocates of testing. How are you going to compensate for it? How are you going to adjust for it? Why do you not take into consideration the fact that this is happening and say to yourselves, let us make construction a priority. Let us put the full force and weight and credibility of the Federal Government behind a program to guarantee every child across the country a decent physical facility, a physical facility which is not injurious to their health, a physical facility which is secure, a physical facility which is conducive to learning. The lighting system, the ventilation, whatever is necessary, let us at least provide that. Let us provide them with laboratories in those schools which are able to conduct science experiments. Let us have every school have adequate laboratories. Let us provide them with library shelf space and books in those schools which will give them a chance to really study seriously in up-to-date books.

There are still many books in the libraries of New York City high schools that are 30 and 40 years old and they are history books and geography books totally inadequate, dangerously inaccurate, but they are still there. If they took all the old books off the shelves of the libraries in New York City's schools, we would have a lot of empty spaces that are not going to be filled up soon. But I am not into my bill on the Federal Government aiding libraries in schools and elsewhere. I just want construction at this point. Let us deal with making construction a priority and really be serious about the first

priority. If you really care about education, if you really think our Nation is at risk, if you really believe that an educated society ought to be our first priority in terms of national security, an educated people, the one way to guarantee that our economy will continue to go forward and prosper, an educated people is absolutely necessary in order for our democracy to work appropriately. Democracies cannot work without educated people. The people must be educated. Even when you have educated people in certain societies, they still do not work if they do not have democracies.

As we learned from the Soviet Union, a highly educated society, a highly educated people, probably in terms of science and math, there is no group of people on the face of the Earth more educated than the citizens of the Soviet Union, but an educated people operating in the framework of a totalitarian society where they are not able to utilize their education fully. You cannot have open exchange, you cannot have a utilization of really what is known. If it is bottled up by Neanderthal thinkers at the top of the structure, you have a command and control society, it does not matter what the truth is. The command and control society and the people at the top will issue their own truths and they blockade the progress of the society. A total collapse resulted from the fact that you had a highly educated society able to produce hydrogen bombs, missiles, able to match us in the area of defense hardware to a great degree, but the system was no good.

Democracy first. Nothing works in this modern complex era without democracy, the openness and the back and forth, the churning process of people who are educated bouncing off each other, the trial and error method that takes place in a complex society, all that is inevitable. You can almost put it down now like a law. It is going to happen and the only way to have it happen productively is to have a maximum number of people educated so that what happens is among educated people. They will sometimes err temporarily and do strange things, elect inadequate, incompetent leaders, even elect demagogues. Occasionally they really go off the deep end but the correction will be there as long as it is democratic. There was no way to correct what was happening in the Soviet Union. No way to correct it, because of the fact that the closed society did not allow the churning back and forth and no matter how much education the people have, it would not have mattered as long as the parameters are set from the top.

If you really believe in having maximum education in our democratic society, then the first thing you ought to put on your agenda is construction of schools. Not tests. Not tests. Not yet. Testing might make sense 5 years from now; a national test might make sense, but not now. Here are some headlines

that appeared in the Washington Post about D.C. schools October 30, yesterday: "Anger over Schools Suit Gets Personal, Attacks on Parent Leaders Expose Racial Tensions."

□ 1400

The back and forth discussion over what is happening in the schools and the embarrassment has led to an upheaval that is affecting race relations in this city.

October 30, yesterday also, there was another article about tests which indicates that many students in D.C. would not be promoted.

There is a lot of talk at the White House and our committees about social promotion. Everybody is against social promotion. We are for motherhood and apple pie and against social promotion.

Let's be against social promotion, but for the national discussion to get off into a discussion of social promotion, of uniforms, of what kind of reading approach to use, phonics versus whole words, I think that is premature. Let us focus on what the Federal Government can do best before we get off into those kinds of micromanaged details.

We know they need decent places to study, to assemble. We know that. So why not focus instead on tests, rather than other problems.

October 29, Wednesday, Washington Post reports, Washington school leaders close minds, close schools. School leaders, parent advocates and a Superior Court judge, who together are keeping the D.C. public school system in turmoil, are becoming public laughingstocks.

This article starts by blaming the courts and parents for trying to do something about the D.C. schools, because they insist the kids ought to go to warm schools; furnaces ought to be fixed. Every day it seems they find new ways to resemble the children they are supposed to be helping. The consequences of their behavior are no laughing matter, however.

Don't laugh. Because of their failure to reach in the court on how schools should be maintained, something as ordinary as opening all buildings in the system simultaneously has gotten beyond their reach. That is disgraceful. On it goes discussing the fact that even now, after D.C. schools are finally open, 3 weeks late, they are having a big problem.

October 29, same day, article, "Fire Marshal Finds Leaks and Closes Eighth D.C. School." Garnett-Patterson Middle School students to move to facility in Columbia Heights. The D.C. fire marshal closed Garnett-Patterson school yesterday afternoon because of multiple roof leaks, bringing to eight the number of schools closed because of a judge's concern about school safety.

Do you want to have kids in schools where the roofs are leaking and furnaces don't work? I don't think any of us want that to happen. So why do we not talk about how we move to fix

that? There was a discussion about the large amount of money spent on D.C. schools. The statement I heard on the floor today made was \$10,000 per student is spent on the D.C. schools. That is pretty high. I heard somebody say that is the highest in the country. Well, that is not true. It may be the highest of any big city in the country, but there are districts in New York State where \$20,000 is spent per youngster, per student, and there are probably districts across the country that are equally as high.

They are not big city districts. Maybe the Speaker, and it was Speaker GINGRICH, I think, who said Washington, DC., schools spend more than anybody else in the country on their schools per pupil. It is not true, Mr. Speaker. The number may be true for big city schools like Los Angeles and New York, Philadelphia. New York certainly is not at the \$10,000 mark. It may be something like \$7,000 per child.

Nevertheless, the governance and management of Washington schools have been so terrible until they have all of these problems, despite the fact they have been spending a little higher than most cities. In those cities, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, I assure all of you, they also have problems with their roofs leaking, with their furnaces. It is just not on the radar screen.

On Tuesday, the 28th in the Washington Post, "Battle over Boilers Leaves D.C. students Out in the Cold." "Children Bussed to Other Sites as Judge Keeps Schools Closed."

October 27, "Students at 5 Schools to be Bussed to Sites."

October 26, "Contest of Wills Contributes to Chaos in D.C. schools."

October 26, "Warm Wishes Not Enough." Warm wishes are not enough, as several D.C. public schools are being shutdown because of boiler repairs last week. I found myself thinking about the Daughters of Dorcas, a special group of women in Washington who make quilts. I just wished they could sew something for all of those children who are being left out in the cold by closed school buildings, as well as for those shivering students who will be attending schools that still do not have adequate heat.

I think I made the point, I do not want to go on, but I am highlighting what is going on in Washington, DC., because I want you to know it is not an isolated case. This city is not alone in facing humongous problems with respect to their physical facilities. We ought to understand that and move forward to deal with it in this Congress.

We are irresponsible by insisting on expending a great deal of time and energy on peripheral, marginal issues. Education savings accounts are marginal, peripheral items. Vouchers are marginal peripheral items. They may have some use somewhere, some time, but they certainly do not deserve to be discussed in this state of emergency that we are facing with our schools.

We must go forward in the 105th Congress next year. I understand we are closing out on November 7 or 8 probably, and it is just as well, if this is the way we are going to approach a basic problem like education. We might as well close up the place and get out of town.

I hope we come back with a different attitude in the second year of the 105th session of Congress. I hope the attitude of the 105th Congress matches the attitude of the people out there in the communities. Our constituents are way ahead of us in feeling that there is an education emergency, in feeling that their children deserve the best. Our constituents know that their children will not pass this way but once. You do not go through schooling but once. You are in elementary school, junior high school, high school, college, only once. Your life is going on. Your children will not have a second chance.

So for every parent or grandparent, anybody who cares about children, there is an emergency. If your child is not getting the very best education they can get, there is an emergency. We ought to feel the same sense of emergency.

I was quite gratified at the way parents responded when I issued the call for volunteers to come out on last Saturday, October 25. Saturday was Net Day. Net Day was a day set aside for the whole country. This was a time to appeal to volunteers to come in and voluntarily wire five classrooms plus the library. The wiring is to help set up the possibility that the schools' computers can be linked to the Internet. So wiring for the Internet of five classrooms plus the library is a goal of each set of Net Day volunteers.

We wired 11 schools in my district. We had a real significant response. It was quite inspiring to see how parents responded. We were told at first that this wiring is a very simple matter. You show up on Saturday and in a day volunteers can wire five classrooms and a library.

It is not that simple. I don't want to discourage anybody, but you better have some people that know what they are doing at each school. You have got to have somebody who is an electrician or telephone repairman, somebody who knows how it is done.

The parents came out for training. Volunteers were asked to come to a 2-hour training session sponsored by the local phone company, Bell Atlantic. I must say that the wiring of schools in our area was a combination of volunteers in the community, the principals, the teachers, the parents, and the private sector. The private sector was key to our success.

There was a group called New York Connects in New York City, which organizes private sector response to communities that want help for the volunteer wiring of schools.

New York connects did a great job in providing the kind of help we needed. Bell Atlantic and Apple Computer

trained some of the teachers. Bell Atlantic provided a place to train and the trainers and training sessions for parents. Various other companies supplied volunteers who came out and helped providing pieces of equipment.

The process showed that even in an inner-city community, you can have a response by both the volunteers in the community and the private sector which can produce great results, if you focus on a task and a mission. I was quite impressed with the fact that the volunteer sessions, and the first session I went to, we expected 20 parents to show up. There were 45 or 50 parents there. The room was crowded. The people up front conducting the training session were white executives and technicians who had driven from Long Island through heavy traffic to get to the session to train the inner-city parents and volunteers. It was a coming together which nobody planned, but as a result of focusing on a task which is worthwhile, to carry our schools forward, it happened.

Those kinds of positive things are happening at many of the schools where we conducted the wiring. We heard the complaints that we had to be asbestos-certified, make sure that the asbestos problem is not so great that the boring of the holes would be a problem. Some schools where we were wiring for the Internet, some of the principals were complaining about the fact they are worried about the old pipes that may have led poisoning problems. On and on it goes with top floors having indications that the roof is leaking, et cetera.

Nevertheless, I am here to celebrate the good news, and what I am saying is the responsiveness of our constituents, the responsiveness of parents for an exercise like Net Day, demonstrates they are way ahead of us in terms of believing that makes a difference.

While inner-city parents in my district, the poorest—some of these schools were in our poorest sections, where they are excited about wiring the schools so the kids can have the benefits of being linked to the Internet. Why? Because their kids excite them. When the kids hear about the computers and Internet, the students get excited and the parents know it is important.

The children want to go into the 21st century. There are some people who said to me why are you concerned, and Congressman OWENS, why are you wasting your time and energy for technology for inner-city schools? Why are you concerned about the fact that in January 1998, the FCC has mandated that the Universal Service Fund go into effect and \$2.2 billion will be available to public schools and libraries. What does that have to do with inner-city schools that are suffering from a lack of books? They do not have enough books. They do not have enough chalk sometimes. Teachers complain about basic supplies. So why do we not focus on basic supplies and

chalk and books instead of worrying about the Internet?

My answer to people who approach me that way is that what if every city in the United States had said we are not going to deal, until we fix our sidewalks, until we repair all of our roads, we are not going to build airports. If every city in the country said we are not going to deal with airports until all the sidewalks and all the roads are fixed, we would not have modern airports and modern transportation systems. It would come to a halt.

There are still roads and sidewalks out there that are not repaired and in constant disrepair, but we go forward, and our schools have to go forward. Our inner-city schools should be no less than schools anywhere else, and that is the way I see it, and a lot of the children see it that way, and it caught on, because their parents are also beginning to see it that way.

Here is an effort that was not unique to Brooklyn. We wired 11 schools in my congressional district, but there were other schools wired in other parts of New York City on Net Day, and across the country we had schools wired on Net Day, and there are other schools across the country being wired at other times.

My colleague, the gentlewoman from Michigan [Ms. STABENOW] is involved with the wiring of schools and acquisition of technology. She is one example of how Members of Congress want this to go forward.

Again, we would have more credibility and our effort would have a greater result if we had a new initiative to guarantee that the school buildings are sound buildings. The wiring is not too old to take the new linkages, the phone systems are not too old that we are not going to encounter large quantities of asbestos problems, et cetera.

In keeping with that whole volunteer spirit, I want to announce again that I am supporting, and quite happy to be one of the people who are spearheading another National Education Funding Support Day. I am holding a copy of our poster for this year.

National Education Funding Support Day is November 19 of this year. Republicans, Democrats, everybody is invited to join us in trying to demonstrate to the public at large that we are going to provide leadership in improving our schools in every way.

□ 1415

We want to emphasize technology this year. We have chosen to emphasize technology this year. We chose that because this is the prelude to the opening of the universal service fund for schools and libraries. That is going to happen in January 1998. We want schools to start getting prepared, and understand that they cannot wait to be in on this.

National Education Funding Support Day is sponsored by the National Commission for African American Education. This year's poster has a basketball star, Patrick Ewing, of the New

York Nicks. Patrick Ewing happens to be from this area, the star of Georgetown University in Washington, who also now is the president of the National Basketball Association, Patrick Ewing.

I hope next year we can get lots of stars, so in local areas we can have different posters with stars of baseball, football, basketball, women and men, appealing to youngsters and their parents to look at education as belonging to them. We need changes to go forward from the masses. Whatever we do as leaders needs to be complemented by mobilization in our communities. Our communities need to get more involved.

We have seen this happen in the area of crime. The National Night Out Against Crime, for example, is an idea that caught on in our communities. Every community has some activities on the National Night Out Against Crime. The reason crime is going down across the country, there are many factors, but one of the factors is that more ordinary citizens, ordinary people, have understood that they should get involved in trying to get rid of crime. Crime-fighting is not a professional activity that ought to be left to the police and judges and the criminal justice system, but every citizen has a role, too.

Every citizen has a role in education. We are saying that on November 19 every group should go out and do something in connection with the promotion of education, either at day care centers, the public school, if you want, at your college, but do something on November 19 in connection with National Education Funding Support Day.

We would like to have two things resonate. One is opportunities to learn in the area of technology, and that is what this message is. It is Patrick Ewing standing in front of a computer with some schoolkids. We want to emphasize that we are on the edge of a great jump start in technology for schools. That is going to be provided by the FCC mandate for a universal fund for libraries and schools, so technology is important.

The other thing we want to resonate is that construction is important. Technology, the training of teachers, charter schools, nothing that we do is going to succeed unless we have buildings and facilities that are adequate for schools across the country. Every State has a problem that would be helped if the Federal Government were to take the initiative.

Let us stop our waste of time on vouchers, on testing, on education savings accounts. Let us put them on the back burner, and when we open the second year of the 105th Congress, let us look forward to focusing on funding for education which provides more technology in our schools and also provides for adequate physical facilities for all of our schools.

The National Commission for African-American Education has a little

brochure. If Members are interested, I think their phone number and their address is in the brochure. The chairman of the National Commission for Education, for National Funding Support Day, is Dr. Edith Patterson, a former school board president in Charles County, MD. The number they give, if Members want to contact them directly, is 301-753-4165 and 301-870-3008. Those are two numbers.

For more information, the brochure talks about some of the activities that Members can sponsor on National Education Funding Support Day. The National Commission for African-American Education is located in Silver Spring, MD. I do not see the address here. Call the number and you will get, certainly, information. Certainly my office is able to give more information. It is a way to mobilize the general public. It is a way to take advantage of the fact that there is a good feeling out there about doing something about our schools.

In the past we have had all kinds of activities launched by some Members of Congress. I think the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia, [Ms. EL-EANOR HOLMES NORTON] conducted lectures on that day last year. Last year we decided to launch an effort on National Education Funding Day called NetWatch. NetWatch was designed to wire schools in our area, in our district.

NetWatch proposed at that time to wire 10 schools in 10 weeks, but because of the teachers' processes, because of all the complications that you run into when you try to wire schools for the Internet, it took us until October 25. National Education Funding Support Day last year was October 23. We did not get a single school wired until 12 months later, on October 25.

The NetWatch activities that were launched on National Education Funding Support Day resulted in our Net Day wiring of 11 schools in central Brooklyn, my 11th Congressional District. But we are now in a position, we have a group of people we are forming called NetWatch Fellows. All those volunteers who came out and supported us, parents and local residents, we are asking them to stay with us and form a group called NetWatch Fellows, so we can move the process from the wiring of the school for the Internet right through the process of getting more computers, of getting all the connections they need, of getting software, of getting program materials, and of helping teachers get the training, so that the final result of our efforts are not in vain, the final results are that in the classroom the curriculum is effective and youngsters will find a more exciting way to get knowledge, to be inspired, and to learn whatever they have to learn. That is our goal. Our NetWatch Fellows will carry us to that process.

We had 11 schools in the 11th Congressional District, and we had great cooperation from the principals. There

is an organization called the Hussein Institute of Technology, founded by a gentleman who, in private industry, does computer networks. He has founded a school for free to train people on how to use computers, both adults and youngsters. Mr. Hussein and the Hussein Institute of Technology has sort of been the backbone of the effort of NetWatch in the 11th Congressional District.

Again, we had at the top level the New York Connects, a similar organization, private entrepreneurs and technicians and executives in the area of technology who provided invaluable assistance in the effort to wire schools on October 25. The board of education is to be commended because it cut through a lot of the usual problems that you encounter in a large organization like the board of education, and they provided us with the personnel, help, and they attended the meetings. They made things happen.

The board of education, New York Connects, NetWatch, all came together with the volunteers in our community to make things happen in terms of wiring 11 schools on Net Day.

There are many schools that have contacted my office and said, when is it my turn? My answer is that we hope to provide a movement. We have started a process. This core of volunteers in some cases will be able to go to other schools and volunteer and help them move forward. In all cases we are trying to change policy, routines, management practices in the board of education which will accelerate this.

There is a technology plan. The board of education has a technology plan. What we want to do is accelerate the implementing of the board of education's technology plan so our schools are not waiting 10 years from now for the technology that many suburban schools enjoy today in great abundance.

In summary, what I am saying is that testing, for all of those who think that testing is important, testing may be important 4 or 5 years from now. Let us put it on the back burner and deal with it then. Vouchers may have some merit, but they are only a tiny pebble when it comes to dealing with the problem of improvement of education in America.

It may be that vouchers should be left to private industry. New York City has a model. The mayor of New York got scholarships for 1,000 youngsters, vouchers for 1,000 youngsters, by raising money in the private sector. Private industry, private people, donated money, so they have 1,000 youngsters who have vouchers to go to nonpublic schools.

That is 1,000 youngsters out of 1.1 million. We have 1.1 million students in New York City schools. I am happy for the 1,000 if it leads to success, and I see no reason why private industry cannot supply the money. Many of them will be going to parochial schools. Many of them will be learning religion as well

as other things. That is all right with private money. Their parents took the private voucher money, they decided to send them, and that is quite all right. Parents have that right. We do not get into a debate about church and school.

I would say to those who want to push vouchers, why not let the private sector raise the money for the vouchers and demonstrate the utility of vouchers in solving problems, if that is the case. If we are going to launch a voucher program to demonstrate that it can help solve the problem, then let us use private sector initiatives and private sector money for vouchers.

Let us return to charter schools as another clear way to offer an alternative to traditional public school education. Charter schools can offer competition. Charter schools can develop innovations that might be replicated in the public schools. Charter schools can offer a great deal.

In New York City, we have something else called the alternative public schools. Alternative public schools fall in between charter schools and traditional schools. Alternative public schools are basically run and controlled by the central board of education, but they allow a great deal of leeway and latitude in the local group that wants to operate that alternative school. That is another possibility.

Of course, as I said before, we cannot let up on the process of hammering away at the big school systems in our big cities. They are going to be the system that provides most of the education for inner-city children for a long time to come. We cannot let them off the hook with governance, management.

The scandal in Washington, DC, that a command and control system, a centralized system, has allowed to happen should not be allowed to happen again. We should keep a vigilant watch on all of our school systems, but most of all, the Federal Government should send a message across America that where it hurts most, or where we can be most helpful, in the area of school construction in 1998, we are going to come together and make that the backbone of the effort to improve education in America, the Federal aid effort to improve education in America. Construction comes first.

UPCOMING TOPICS OF CONCERN FOR THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COOKSEY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. NEUMANN] is recognized for 30 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. NEUMANN. Mr. Speaker, we are nearing the end of our session. I rise today to talk about a couple of topics that are still pending out here, and that will be dealt with in the upcoming session next year. I thought we ought to kind of summarize a little bit about

them before we close out the year. A lot of us here are hoping next week is the last week we are out here.

There have been a lot of accomplishments. I am going to spend some time talking about those accomplishments, and how far we have come, and I am going to conclude with a little discussion about where we might go to, and what our hopes and dreams are as we move.

There are a couple of issues pending. I am going to start with one that is current and that we may also have some discussions on in the next week. That is national tests. We are hearing a lot about this idea that Washington somehow is prepared to develop this national test to test our students to see whether or not they get the education that Washington thinks they should get.

I want to bring this up to discuss a little bit, because as a former teacher I was actively involved in developing tests, but it was not a national test, it was a local test. When I was teaching math, I used to go to some of the folks in town. They would say some of my kids did not know, and I call them my kids because we really got pretty close in our classroom, some of my kids did not know what they expected them to know on math, how to balance a checkbook, count change, some of the elementary things. I said, yes, they do. They graduated from my math class, so therefore my kids know this stuff.

People uptown said, no, they don't. We took a survey of the people uptown, and we found out what it was that our people in Milton, WI, thought our Milton High School graduates should know, and then we developed a test to see whether or not our Milton High School students knew what the people uptown expected them to know when they graduated from high school.

Is this not how it should be done, the local community, the parents, teachers, school board, working together to decide what it is that the students in Milton, WI, should know, or in the local communities should know?

□ 1430

That is how the test should be developed. The concept of Washington, DC, deciding what the students in Milton, WI, should know, instead of the parents and the teachers in the community, is just the wrong concept. That is one of the issues we still have pending before us out here during this session, and it may be dealt with before we adjourn for the year, but possibly will be put off until next year.

There is another one that we have had a vote on and it is actually one of the most difficult discussions that we have to have, and I cannot believe that we have discussions on this topic in America, and that is on partial-birth abortion.

One of the things that happened in 1997 is that the House of Representatives passed a bill that said there will be no more partial-birth abortions in

America except when the life of the mother is at stake. The Senate passed the same bill. It was sent to the President and it was vetoed.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important that we understand what a partial-birth abortion is, and I think this practice, hopefully, can be eliminated in the next session in 1998. But if not, the people that are preventing it from being eliminated should simply be replaced in the upcoming election cycle.

In a partial-birth abortion, a doctor literally reaches into the womb of a pregnant woman, grabs the ankle of the baby, and literally pulls the arms and legs of that baby out of the womb. At the last second, just before the baby's head is delivered, the doctor sticks a scissors in the back of the head and kills the baby.

It is interesting when I talk about this, people have a tendency to tune out. It is like they do not want to talk about that. We cannot even discuss that in America. And they are right; we should not be discussing this in America.

How can any citizen of our great Nation possibly justify a nearly born baby having a scissors stuck in the back of its head and being killed? This is something that is so outrageous. What amazes me most about this discussion is not that it is very difficult to discuss, because it is very difficult for me to discuss, but what is amazing is that when I do discuss it, people call me radical. They call me radical because I do not think that when a baby's arms and legs are literally delivered and moving that it makes sense in our great Nation to stick a scissors in the back of that baby's head and kill the baby. It is outrageous.

The status of this bill, it was sent to the President after passing both the House and the Senate. I am happy to say that the Wisconsin delegation from the House of Representatives, that all of our delegates, Republican and Democrats, pro-choice and pro-life, all of the people from the great State of Wisconsin voted to end this practice in the House of Representatives.

The bill was sent to the President. The bill was vetoed, and we would expect in 1998 that bill will be brought back to the House of Representatives and in the House of Representatives we will override the President's veto, because this practice is so outrageous and so wrong in this great Nation.

I hear when I talk about this to our constituents, "Mark, you have no business talking about it. That is not government's role to talk about this sort of thing. It should be up to the doctor and it should be up to the mother." Mr. Speaker, I will tell my colleagues that when I took my oath of office, I swore to uphold the Constitution of the United States of America. The Constitution of our great land guarantees life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It does not guarantee life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to all those