

surplus. Puerto Rico has also initiated a privatization strategy, which is expected to save the government \$1 billion over a period of 10 years.

It is grossly unjust and undemocratic to bind the people of Puerto Rico to a colonial economy and then deny them the right to self-determination, giving as a reason the fact that the Island territory has not thrived fiscally as well as the equal partners, the 50 States. Let us not revive the practice of democracy for the rich and by the rich, but rather let us extend the right of self-determination to the American citizens of Puerto Rico, no matter the size of their bank accounts.

We discarded the poll tax as unfair and undemocratic. It should not be revived to deprive 4 million U.S. citizens of the right to self-determination.

THE WEED AND SEED PROGRAM WORKS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, Members often take to the floor to talk about our government, how it is working or not working. In fact, I have done that myself occasionally.

Today, my colleagues, I will talk about a government program that does work. My colleagues will hear about how a little funding in the hands of a caring and committed group of individuals can make a huge difference in the lives of hundreds of young people. I want to share with my colleagues today a story about the Weed and Seed Program that has helped transform the Howard Middle School in my hometown of Ocala, Florida.

In 1993, I contacted the Attorney General, Janet Reno, in support of bringing the Weed and Seed Program to Florida. Since then, communities near and about my district, including Gainesville, Jacksonville, and Ocala have received funding through this program.

The Weed and Seed Program coordinates the use of law enforcement and criminal prosecution to weed out criminal offenders in the targeted neighborhoods and "seeds" the community with housing employment and various social programs. I have long supported the goals of the Weed and Seed Program because, Madam Speaker, it is community based and not an entangling government bureaucracy.

The Howard Middle School in my home town of Ocala, Florida, has nurtured this seed into a wonderful product. The school has developed creative after-school activities that keep the students positively engaged. This is important because, as we all know, Madam Speaker, nearly 5 million school-aged children spend time without adult supervision during a typical week. Research indicates that during these unsupervised hours, children are

more likely to engage in at-risk behavior, such as crime and drug use. In fact, the FBI reports that most juvenile crime takes place between the hours of 3 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Unfortunately, 70 percent of all public schools do not offer after-school programs. Howard Middle School is one of the valuable exceptions. Last week I visited this school to witness firsthand the community services it has developed. I was greeted by the principal, Scott Hackmyer; Joan Spainhower, public relations officer; Dan Greer, safe and drug free school specialist; and Ms. Myers, the comprehensive health coordinator.

I was escorted to a small conference room where the principal gave an overview of the program. During this briefing a student, Sharika Palmer, an 8th grader in the Hair and Nails Program, instructed me on how a manicure program is implemented. Miss Sharon Samuels is one of the teacher assistants hired using Weed and Seed money, and she created the Hair and Nails Program. Coach Ron Nealis is another caring individual who was hired using these funds.

The principal has staffed the school with dedicated individuals who give unselfishly with their time and talents, including Barbara Flemming, who coaches "The Steppers," dancers; and Ms. Weaver and Ms. Faso, who coach the cheerleaders. Together they have created an after-school support group, rich with instruction in many studies and activities, and providing supervision during those critical hours when most parents are at work.

There are sports, cheerleading, dancing groups, chess clubs, and the Hair and Nail group. Unique to this program is a "neighborhood mentor," a program designed solely for those children who ride the bus to school and, consequently, must leave school at the normal time. Instead of depriving them of these special programs, arrangements were made with two neighborhood churches to allow a teacher to accompany these children and use the building for these programs. The principal has received a commitment from six churches to participate next year, meaning that after-school mentoring will reach into virtually every student's neighborhood.

The coach told us an example of a young person, a young man, who was getting D's and F's in school until he got into the coach's fitness and basketball program. Now, I am happy to say this student is an honor roll student. This last semester there are 436 students on the honor roll, and that is nearly double the numbers before this after-school program was instituted.

Not only have the students become better students, but vandalism and police calls in the area have greatly diminished. The principal is to be commended and his caring faculty and staff have indeed put the Weed and Seed money to exceptional use. I congratulate him, the staff, the faculty, and,

most importantly, the students of Howard Middle School in Ocala, Florida for a job well done. Keep up the outstanding work.

LEADERSHIP OF USPS FUMBLING ONE OPPORTUNITY AFTER ANOTHER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, I came to Congress as somebody predisposed to support our Postal Service. I believe we have some of the finest men and women in the world delivering the mail, playing an important part in communities in many small and important ways. But the leadership and management of the Postal Service is fumbling one opportunity after another.

One example is their years of insensitivity to relocation issues. Because of the tremendous concern expressed by people in communities across the country, I have introduced legislation to prevent the Postal Service managers from unilaterally abandoning historical buildings and moving to strip malls at the edge of town; that they must obey local land use planning and building codes and give local citizens as much say in how the post office relates to their community as which Elvis stamp we are going to have.

If I ever needed additional evidence that the management of the Postal Service is out of touch with America, the evidence was delivered to my office last week. The Postal Service notified me that it is going to get tough with the Portland Marathon, the largest volunteer marathon in America, which raised over \$600,000 last year to benefit the special Olympics, schools, service groups, the Leukemia Society, and many other charities.

By letter, the Postal Service said that it has decided, despite a perfect record on the part of the Portland Marathon, no prior violations or complaints, despite an illegal search of the Marathon files by its postal inspectors; despite the preapproval of all the Marathon's mailings by representatives of the Postal Service, that the Portland Marathon, this group of dedicated volunteers, must pay a \$5,000 fine or face Federal trial.

What terrible scheme inspired the Postal Service to clamp down on the Marathon? What scheme so horrible that the Postal Service will pursue a case while paying many times the cost it will ever recover from the Marathon if it wins? What terrible scheme requires the Postal Service to bring down its full force on this dedicated volunteer organization without so much as a warning, with no exceptions or adjustments?

The Portland Marathon offered T-shirts and other memorabilia to some