

fit, and the District of Columbia ought not to be an exception.

The challenges that have faced the city's public schools are well-known and extensively documented. Congress needs to pass this legislation promptly to ensure these reforms can be in place before school begins again next August. Changes in educational procurement are particularly important. Recent reports of failing boilers and high levels of lead in school water fountains lend a sense of urgency to this bill.

I wish the mayor and the city council well as they assume enhanced responsibility for public education. They have asked through this legislation to be held to a much higher level of accountability, and I commend them for stepping up to the plate on this core function of local government.

This does not obviate the continuing need to provide an alternative to underperforming neighborhood schools. That is why the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program is so vital. Today, the program gives approximately 1,800 low-income students access to schools of their choice. Reauthorization of this excellent program, which will be required by 2008, is necessary as part of our vision to expand and improve opportunities for D.C. students.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume to close.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2080 repeals sections 452 and 495 of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act and permits the District of Columbia Council to establish the District of Columbia public schools as a Cabinet-level agency.

Under H.R. 2080, the mayor and the council will be held accountable for the management of the District's public schools. Section 452 describes the role and responsibilities of the mayor and council with respect to the annual budget process for the District of Columbia public school system. Section 452 provides the mayor and the council authority to establish the maximum amount of funds which will be allocated to the District of Columbia's Board of Education, but they are not allowed to change how the funds are used for educational programs.

H.R. 2080 will eliminate section 452 and allow the mayor and council to determine the level of funding allocations that each program receives. The money for this budget is entirely local money.

Section 495 established the D.C. Board of Education. H.R. 2080 would repeal the powers of the board and gives the mayor and council authority over the District's public schools. Mayor Fenty has been seeking the authority to reform the D.C. public school system since earlier this year.

On January 5, 2007, the mayor submitted the District of Columbia Public Education Reform Amendment Act of 2007, the act, to the D.C. council for

their consideration. The act transfers management and oversight authority for D.C.'s public schools to the mayor.

It transfers all State education agency responsibilities from the Board of Education to the State education office; creates an Interagency Collaboration and Services Integration Commission; establishes an Office of Ombudsman for public education; and a Public Education Facilities Management and Construction Authority.

The D.C. council has held over 70 hours of hearings and heard the testimonies of residents, teachers, students, parents and leading educational experts on the mayor's proposal. The mayor believes that giving him control of D.C. public schools will lead to a dramatic improvement in the District's school system.

The District of Columbia Public Education Reform Amendment Act of 2007 passed the District of Columbia council on April 19, 2007, by a vote of 9-2. H.R. 2080 will allow the mayor to implement his initiatives to reform D.C. public schools.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend Representative ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON and ranking minority member, Representative TOM DAVIS, for introducing this legislation. It is important to note that if D.C. had home rule, this legislation would not be necessary.

I urge all my colleagues to support this legislation because, in effect, what we are really doing is giving certification, in a sense, to actions that have been taken by the District of Columbia's city council and giving them the authority to exercise responsibility for their own public school system, which is obviously the right thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of our time.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I would urge passage of this legislation, and I yield back the balance of our time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2080.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

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

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

FORMER U.S. BORDER PATROL AGENTS RAMOS AND COMPEAN

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. Mr. Speaker, today is the 112th day since a great injustice took place in this country.

On January 17, 2007, two United States Border Patrol agents entered Federal prison to begin serving 11- and 12-year sentences respectively.

Agent Compean and Agent Ramos were convicted last spring for wounding a Mexican drug smuggler who brought 743 pounds of marijuana across our borders into Texas. These agents never should have been prosecuted. Yet, the U.S. Attorney's office prosecuted the agents and granted immunity to the drug smuggler. The illegal drug smuggler received full medical care in El Paso, Texas, was permitted to return to Mexico, and has sued the border patrol for \$5 million for violating his civil rights. And he is not an American citizen.

The American people have not forgotten Agents Ramos and Compean, who should have been commended instead of indicted. I encourage citizens across this country to continue calling the White House and ask the President to use his authority to immediately pardon these two heroes.

Members of Congress and the American people are outraged and concerned with this administration's indifference to the plight of two honorable men who have been crucified unfairly by a Federal prosecutor. These two agents have given years of their lives in service to this Nation; yet they have been unjustly punished for doing their job to protect the American people.

By using the power of his office to pardon these two agents, the President has the opportunity to reverse a grave injustice.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to share part of the comments made by Chairman JOHN CONYERS on the floor last week following my remarks on these two border agents, and I quote the chairman: "It's important that the kinds of concerns you have raised are known to all of our men and women who carry badges and weapons defending us, not just at borders, but in every State in the Union." Again, that is a quote from Chairman JOHN CONYERS.

I want to thank Chairman CONYERS for his interest in this issue, and I am encouraged that the Senate Judiciary Committee and the House Judiciary Committee will soon move forward with hearings to investigate the injustice committed against these two border agents.