

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the coach from Georgia for sending me in.

Mr. Speaker, it is great to be here today. Except the problem I have is that we were supposed to be finished on October 3. This Congress has provided billions and billions of dollars for projects all over the country. And yet, what is holding us up? Education funding.

I want to congratulate my Republican colleagues for saying, we will do something for school construction around the country. But what about smaller class sizes?

Five years ago, when the Republicans took control, they wanted to eliminate the Department of Education. In fact, they have candidates all over the country saying that is what they want to do.

They are willing to now, instead of abolishing it up here, they just want to transfer funds to private schools. Over 90 percent of our children get their education through public schools. Let us do not take the funds away from them.

My children went to public schools. They graduated. They went to college. They had a great public education. My wife teaches math in a public high school in Houston, Texas. We have great public schools. But we do not do it by taking money away from them and sending dollars to private schools like my Republican colleagues want to do.

We need smaller class sizes. We need help with buildings. We need to work with our local school boards and our State legislators to say, okay, what works in Texas, we can help and we will send them funds to do it.

EDUCATION IS FIRST, LAST AND ALWAYS ABOUT CHILDREN

(Mr. TIAHRT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Speaker, education is first, last and always about children. The education debate is not about money. It is about Federal versus local control of schools and our children's future.

Republicans emphasize local education flexibility, not a Federal strait-jacket so parents and teachers can decide if they need to hire more teachers or upgrade skills of their existing teachers. We promote basic academics and encourage parental involvement, not replace the role of children's parents in their lives. We support locally designed accountability standards, not mandated Federal testing.

We have tried to drive at least 95 cents of every Federal dollar directly to the classroom, not bureaucracies bloated by expanding the Federal role in neighborhood schools.

Mr. Speaker, the liberals have made it clear that in a Democrat Congress the education focus would once again shift back to the vision of big govern-

ment, Washington-knows-best approach to dealing with local education issues.

Americans know better. They care about education and they are concerned about whether students are learning, whether they can read at grade level, and whether they are learning to add and subtract.

Under Republican leadership, we have placed the focus and quality on results with parents and teachers in control.

EDUCATION IS AN AMERICAN PROBLEM

(Mr. FORD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. FORD. Mr. Speaker, to all of my colleagues, it is interesting when I hear and all of us in this debate about Federal versus local. Let us just deal with the facts for one moment.

Ninety-four cents of every dollar raised and spent for public education is raised and spent at the local level. Virtually all the policy setting authority for all of our schools across the country, in my district in Memphis and in districts all across this country, is done at the State and local level.

If we want to point fingers or blame people, we have to blame locals for our problem. But I am not in the business of blaming. What my local school districts suggest they want, Democrats, Republicans, conservatives and liberals, big government people and little government people, are actual solutions. They want help.

They have problems because kids are learning in trailer homes in my colleagues' districts and in our districts all across the country. They have problems because they have kids learning in closets and bathrooms in schools all across this country.

Now, we can sit here and pretend that this debate is meaningful and useful about Federal or local, liberal or conservative, Democrat or Republican. Reality is that there are kids that are not learning, there are kids that are caught in bathrooms and closets and trailer homes all across this country, because we would rather debate whether it is a local or Federal problem.

This is an American problem. I hope all of my colleagues will do the right thing and pass the education bill.

SAVING SOCIAL SECURITY

(Mr. STEARNS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, Republicans will honor and strengthen Social Security. We will protect all benefits for today's seniors and ensure that Social Security is available for their grandchildren.

The administration has done nothing to save Social Security in the last 8 years even though the massive baby

boom generation will begin drawing benefits 8 years from now.

When Social Security first started, there were 42 workers to support each retiree. In a few decades, there will be only two workers per retiree. As a result, Social Security benefits will exceed contributions beginning in the year 2015 and the system will go bankrupt in the year 2037.

The Vice President touts his plan for Social Security, but his plan would do nothing to improve the program's long-term solvency and will lead to higher taxes or cuts in benefits. In fact, the Vice President's plan would leave the basic structure of Social Security untouched, essentially gambling that future generations would be able to pay the bills when the baby boom generation begins to retire in full force. This is not good. Help is on the way with a Republican White House and a Republican Congress.

GOVERNOR BUSH'S TAX PROPOSAL

(Mr. SHERMAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, we are engaged in a great fiscal debate, a debate that is clouded by fuzzy fiscal figures. We are told by the Governor of Texas that he will provide tax relief to every American who pays taxes. This is simply not true.

Fifteen million Americans pay FICA tax that is pulled out of their wages, and these 15 million Americans who pay FICA tax but do not pay income tax will not get a single penny of relief from the Governor's proposal.

Second, he tells us that he will provide only \$223 billion of tax relief to the richest one percent of Americans. He does this by ignoring his own estate tax repeal, which will cost \$50 billion a year, \$500 billion over 10 years, meaning that his plan will actually provide well over \$700 billion to the wealthiest one percent of Americans.

Mr. Speaker, this debate is important. We need to look through the fuzzy fiscal facts and see it clearly.

BALANCED BUDGET SURPLUS

(Mr. CHABOT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, for 30 years when Democrats controlled the House of Representatives they talked about a balanced budget. But it was only talk. The debt continued to rise and we did not have a balanced budget.

For many years they talked about welfare reform. But it never happened. For years Democrats talked about middle class tax relief. But they raised taxes on everybody in America, not just the middle class, but everybody.

Then, 6 years ago, Republicans took over the House and we finally saw a balanced budget, we finally saw welfare reform, even though the President vetoed it twice before finally signing it

into law and taking credit for it. And we have seen welfare rolls come down across country.

Now that we have a balanced budget, we have a surplus. Republicans want to use that surplus to save Social Security and Medicare and give prescription drugs to seniors, to pay down the debt, and to cut taxes on everybody, especially the middle class.

That is the right thing to do for America.

CALLING ON PUBLIC RADIO TO DISCONTINUE POLITICAL ADS

(Mr. TAUZIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TAUZIN. Mr. Speaker, Americans were shocked this morning to realize that today public radio is beginning to air political advertisements. It seems that public radio has interpreted their mandate to include reasonable access to Federal candidates to allow the placement of Democratic political advertisements on public radio.

Now, I think they have interpreted the law wrong. But I am calling upon public radio to immediately take those political ads down. The law requires, in effect, that they cannot charge for political advertising.

The Democrat candidates are apparently taking advantage of tax-free paid support to public radio by placing their ads free of charge on public radio. That ought to end today. If it does not end today, I will call upon every candidate in political elections to bring their ads to public radio and next year we will think about taking away their mandate entirely.

SOCIAL SECURITY PENSION AND VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION CHECKS

(Mr. HILL of Montana asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HILL of Montana. Mr. Speaker, last week we passed a continuing resolution for 1 week. The purpose of that continuing resolution was to keep the Government going for another week while we negotiated some thorny issues over how much we are going to spend and what tax relief was going to be for the American people. But that resolution had a very important provision because it authorized the Clinton administration to prepare the November 1 Social Security pension checks and the Veterans' Administration checks.

□ 1030

It is very important for those seniors and those people who are reliant on those checks to know that they are going to be there on November 1. What is important is that the majority of the Democrats, and virtually all of the Democrat leadership, came to this floor and voted against the resolution

to keep those checks going. What that means is that the Democrats want to make Social Security a political issue, and it is the Republicans who are saying we are going to make sure that the people who are dependent on those checks have the security they are intended to provide.

Mr. Speaker, today we will vote again on a continuing resolution. It will be interesting to see whether the Democrats really care about security, or they are after a political issue. I ask my colleagues to support this continuing resolution.

BIPARTISAN SPIRIT CAN MAKE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFITS A REALITY

(Mr. ROGAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROGAN. Mr. Speaker, House Republicans are committed to achieving results, not setting up roadblocks. Already we have passed a plan to provide prescription drug coverage that is voluntary, affordable, and available to all. When we tried to work with Democrats on this issue, they got up and walked out of the Chamber.

It is time to put partisan politics aside and work to get a prescription drug plan signed into law. Vice President GORE campaigns for a plan to force seniors into a one-size-fits-all, government-run HMO. Recently, Mr. GORE told seniors a phony story about his own mother-in-law to win their support for this flawed drug plan. Now he and his friends in this Chamber are inventing stories about Medicare to frighten seniors.

Mr. Speaker, the Republican Congress has put the Nation's financial house in order, we stopped the raid on Social Security, and we are paying down the national debt. Now a prescription drug benefit is possible. If the President and our friends on the other side of the aisle would adopt a bipartisan spirit, we would be able to offer these benefits next year.

SENIORS DEMAND GUARANTEED MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, there is a difference, and I am glad my colleague just called for a bipartisan approach to solving the problems for all Americans.

Mr. Speaker, I would just ask my colleague to pose the question to senior citizens throughout this country: Do they want the opportunity to dial up their HMO or pharmaceutical company and beg for an opportunity to buy low-cost prescription drugs, or do they want a guaranteed benefit by Medicare? I venture to say that my seniors

who have seen HMOs close their doors in their community, who are crying out for health care, would argue: "Give me a guaranteed Medicare prescription drug benefit. One that allows me to get the same cost and prices that are given to our hospitals and other large institutions."

Mr. Speaker, it is very simple. Give them an opportunity to pay their rent and buy their food and still have good health care. I hope my colleagues see the light and are willing to pass a real prescription drug benefit, a real Patients' Bill of Rights that allows the patient-physician relationship to be restored and for HMOs to find their place.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, it is a shame, too, that we cannot pass a hate crimes bill.

LISTEN TO OUR SENIORS

(Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I say to the President, "Listen to our seniors." My seniors are being hurt by their Medicare+Choice plans leaving the market. They are hurt because through these plans they get better benefits than Medicare offers, and millions of seniors in these plans are sicker and poorer than most of our senior citizens and can't afford Medigap prices.

You are closing down their plans, by having increased their reimbursements 2 percent a year for 3 years, and now offering 3 percent when costs are trending up at 8 to 10 percent, as well as giving every single Medicare provider a bigger increase. Your policy is simply forcing them out of the market.

Mr. Speaker, I would say to the President that the plans have already left the less densely populated areas and in the next round are going to leave areas like New York City and its boroughs, leaving millions of seniors stranded. And, cruelly, these seniors cannot buy Medigap insurance either, because they cannot afford it or they would be excluded because of pre-existing conditions.

Mr. Speaker, I again say to the President, "Mr. President, help our seniors by giving the managed care plus choice plans a decent increase this year. And next year, let us reform Medicare so that the benefits are better for all seniors and the reimbursements fairer and simpler."

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). The Member is reminded that remarks in debate are to be addressed to the Chair.