

than 6.2 million children, ages 3–21, with disabilities ranging from speech and language impediments to emotional disturbances, have benefitted from these services.

Within the State Grant Program of the IDEA, approximately \$240 million is sent to 407 Nebraska school districts or approved cooperatives that serve children with disabilities, ages birth to five years. About \$4.3 million supports discretionary projects to help meet IDEA requirements for children with disabilities, ages birth to 21 years, and approximately \$800,000 is available for school improvement projects. In the 1999–2000 school year alone, 43,531 children and youth in the State of Nebraska benefitted from the IDEA State Grant program.

Mr. Speaker, while this improvement is good news, this Member will continue full funding of the Federal Government's forth percent commitment to IDEA. Meeting the IDEA requirements set by Congress 25 years ago will provide relief to our local school districts and will ensure the continued success of IDEA and its goal of creating productive members of society within the disability community.

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today as cosponsor and supporter of H. Con. Res. 399, which recognizes the 25th anniversary of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA.

When the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was first signed into law on November 29, 1975, it marked an historic milestone for children with disabilities. For the first time, special needs children were guaranteed access to a free and appropriate education.

Unfortunately, since this legislation was first signed into law, the Federal government has been remiss in paying for its full share of the costs associated with educating special needs children. The original act set forth a framework whereby 40 percent of the average costs of educating a special needs child would be paid by the Federal government. To date, that level has never been reached. As a result, state and local school districts have been forced to divert money from other needed services, including school construction and teacher training, to pay for the government's share of IDEA.

Congress, over the past six years, has done incredible work to provide additional funding for IDEA over and above the Administration's requested level, doubling the amount of money the Federal government is providing to state and local school districts to pay for the costs associated with this program. Unfortunately, the funding still falls short of the 40 percent the Federal government committed to paying for IDEA.

I am pleased that the House of Representatives passed H.R. 4055, the IDEA Full Funding Act, earlier this year. However, despite the importance of fully funding our obligation under IDEA, H.R. 4055 is still pending in the Senate.

I would hope that my colleagues in the other body will take the opportunity of the 25th Anniversary of this critical education program to pass H.R. 4055, and once and for all meet the Federal government's funding obligation to IDEA.

I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. GOODLING, for introducing this legislation, and for all his hard work toward ensuring the Federal government honors its commitment to

special needs children. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to explain why I must oppose H. Con. Res. 399, which celebrates the 25th Anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). My opposition to H. Con. Res. 399 is based on the simple fact that there is a better way to achieve the laudable goal of educating children with disabilities than through an unconstitutional program and thrusts children, parents, and schools into an administrative quagmire. Under the IDEA law celebrated by this resolution, parents and schools often become advisories and important decisions regarding a child's future are made via litigation. I have received complaints from a special education administrator in my district that unscrupulous trial lawyers are manipulating the IDEA process to line their pockets at the expenses of local school districts. Of course, every dollar a local school district has to spend on litigation is a dollar the district cannot spend educating children.

IDEA may also force local schools to deny children access to the education that best suits their unique needs in order to fulfill the federal command that disabled children be educated "in the least restrictive setting," which in practice means mainstreaming. Many children may thrive in a mainstream classroom environment, however, some children may be mainstreamed solely because school officials believe it is required by federal law, even though the mainstream environment is not the most appropriate for that child.

On May 10, 1994, Dr. Mary Wagner testified before the Education Committee that disabled children who are not placed in a mainstream classroom graduate from high school at a much higher rate than disabled children who are mainstreamed. Dr. Wagner quite properly accused Congress of sacrificing children to ideology.

IDEA also provides school personal with incentives to over-identify children as learning disabled, thus unfairly stigmatizing many children and, in a vicious cycle, leading to more demands for increased federal spending on IDEA also IDEA encourages the use of the dangerous drug Ritalin for the purpose of getting education subsidies. Instead of celebrating and increasing spending on a federal program that may actually damage the children it claims to help, Congress should return control over education to those who best know the child's needs: parents. In order to restore parental control to education, I have introduced the Family Education Freedom Act (HR 935), which provides parents with a \$3,000 per child tax credit to pay for K–12 education expenses. My tax credit would be of greatest benefit to parents of children with learning disabilities because it would allow them to devote more of their resources to ensure their children get an education that meets the child's unique needs.

In conclusion, I would remind my colleagues that parents and local communities know their children so much better than any federal bureaucrat, and they can do a better job of meeting a child's needs than we in Washington. There is no way that my grandchildren, and some young boy or girl in Los Angeles, CA or New York City can be educated by some sort of "Cookie Cutter" approach. Thus, the best means of helping disabled children is to empower their parents with the resources to

make sure their children receives an education suited to that child's special needs, instead of an education that scarifies that child's best interest on the altar of the "Washington-knows-best" ideology.

I therefore urge my colleagues to join with me in helping parents of special needs children provide their children with a quality education that meets the child's needs by repealing federal mandates that divert resources away from helping children and, instead, embrace my Family Education Freedom Act.

Mrs. KELLY. Mr. Speaker, in anticipation of the 25th Anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, I rise today to urge my colleagues to join with me in acknowledging the good this program has done for our children and their future.

Almost twenty-five years ago, Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. This landmark legislation established the federal policy of ensuring that all children, regardless of nature or severity of their disability, have the right to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. Throughout the years, Congress has seen fit to update this legislation, first to create a preschool grant program and an early intervention program to serve the needs of children starting at birth and going through the age of five. Since 1990, this program has been known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Improvements made to IDEA in 1997 changed the focus of the educational process of disabled children from the procedural requirements to individualized education programs to better serve our children. In 1997, we also implemented behavioral and intervention strategies for those children whose behavior impedes the learning process.

Today, IDEA serves approximately 200,000 infants and toddlers, 600,000 preschoolers, and 5,400,000 children from 6 to 21 years old. It is through efforts of this program that we have seen a substantial increase in the numbers of disabled students graduate high school, and the number of disabled students who enroll in college.

However, much still needs to be done to make this program reach its potential. Almost twenty-five years after its enactment, this program is only being funded at 13% of the federal share. Originally Congress committed itself to covering 40% of the costs of this program. Since 1995, the funding for this program has increased by almost 115%, which is an increase of over \$2.6 billion. Yet, even after this sustained funding increase, this program is still grossly underfunded.

When I arrived in Congress in 1995, I began working with Chairman GOODLING to fight for increased funding for this program. Throughout the past six years, full funding for this program has remained one of my top education priorities. If the federal government fully funded its share of the costs of this program, my own state of New York would have received \$1.087 billion for fiscal year 2000, instead of the \$344.3 million it did get. Fully funding our part would help to ease the burdens on our local taxpayers who bear the brunt of education costs.

Mr. Speaker, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to have worked with Chairman GOODLING over the past several years. His commitment to education is clear through his long history as a school teacher, principal and superintendent and his efforts on behalf of our