

I would hope that the House would overwhelmingly pass this bipartisan legislation to improve America's reading education.

Mr. GOODLING. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. PETERSON], a valuable member of the committee.

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman and commend him and the leaders on both sides of the committee for the hard work they have done on this very important issue.

I do not think there is any issue facing America that is more important to our future than to somehow improve our educational system to where every Johnny and Susie when they leave school are good readers.

I will have to be honest, I was not excited when I saw the budget agreement that called for another new reading literacy program, but I am pleased with the work that has been done with existing programs and in streamlining this one to get the money to our schools.

But I will say this: I do not think we will solve the literacy problem in this country just with Federal initiatives. We need a commitment from our school boards and our superintendents and principals that no child will leave their school without good reading skills, and, without that commitment, no State or Federal money will solve this problem. We need that commitment at the local level.

But I come to the floor today to support the Reading Excellence Act. This act brings only successful components of education together, the school, the teacher, the parents, and, most importantly, the child.

This focuses on providing teachers and tutors with better tools. The Reading Excellence Act provides parents with the ability to better their child's opportunity to make the grade in reading. Through the tutorial assistance grants, Johnny and Susie's parents will be able to pick from a list of programs in order to find the right program for the needs of their children. I think that is one of the most important parts of this bill. When we stop and think about it, where did we learn to read? It was a combination of school and home and family members.

Another important aspect of this bill is where children are having difficulties as a result of a family environment. This act provides literacy assistance to the child's parents, allowing them to become their child's first and foremost teacher. It directs the funds to the local level, where only true educational reform happens. This measure strengthens our teachers and their teaching methods.

Finally, we ensure that parents remain the key element in the education equation, providing them with literacy assistance, allowing them, the parents, the decision process for their child, ensuring that parents become the premier teachers.

With this bill we only provide tools, but we still need the commitment of the school superintendents and directors back home that no child will leave their school without good literacy skills.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from New York [Mr. OWENS], a long time proponent of reading from his library background.

(Mr. OWENS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Youth, and Families, the gentleman from California [Mr. MARTINEZ], and the chairman of the subcommittee, the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS], and the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Chairman GOODLING], and all the others who have negotiated this piece of legislation.

There were some serious differences, and for a moment I thought maybe the children of America would be denied this small effort because of those differences, and I do not think it is good to do that and wait another year while the inaccuracy of the teaching of reading goes forward.

I was shocked to learn that most of the teachers in our schools have never been trained to teach reading. There was an article on the New York Times editorial page which said the overwhelming majority of teachers have never been taught to teach reading and there is a need to have some kind of instruction on how to do that. It will improve the job.

So the children who will benefit from this need it now. We cannot hesitate and wait. We should go on and do all we can. So this is one more small effort to improve education in America.

It is just that, a small effort. This is like dipping from the lake of inequity with a teacup. This is a small program. It is \$200 million. It may sound like a lot of money out there, but a nuclear submarine costs more than \$2 billion.

If we are really going to deal with the problem of teaching reading, we ought to try to make an impact on the schools of education with some kind of Federal program in the future. I do not know whether it costs as much as a nuclear submarine or not, probably not, but it would require a bigger effort than this one.

This is a good effort. It is a good pilot program, and it ought to go forward. It brings in a lot of different elements, all of which I think ought to be brought in. Common sense dictates that you should use what you have at hand, and this is a good common sense effort.

But in order to really deal with the problem, I hope that these pilot programs and these good common sense efforts are only a prelude to this Congress going ahead in the future to deal with the overwhelming problem of in-

adequate and substandard education in America.

The war against substandard education cannot be fought by some rifle corps going out. That helps. This is a little operation where we are sending out a few platoons to deal with the problem. We need a real war on substandard education.

A real war means you deal with basic problems, like school construction. School construction is a basic problem out there. We need \$120 billion to deal with the infrastructure of schools all across America. Even if you do not get nearly that much, we ought to do better than we have done so far.

To say we are going to teach reading better and make efforts to teach reading or to improve technological instruction or provide more technology in the schools, when the kids are still up against the problem where the boilers are breaking down in the schools and they have to go to school and bundle up in order to stay warm, and that does not just happen in Washington, D.C., there are a number of schools all across America that have problems in terms of heat.

So we should see this as a wonderful prelude, as an indication that the Congress cares. But we are just beginning to deal with the bigger problem. We are just beginning to fight the war. These are little patrols that we are sending out to reconnoiter, to scout out the problem. The problem is much bigger, and beyond this program on reading, which is about \$200 million, \$210 million, we need to have a comprehensive approach to education, stimulated and guided by the Congress of the United States, despite the fact that the primary responsibility for education is at the local level.

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Mr. Speaker, we can provide the leadership, we can provide the stimulation. We will never be responsible for education. That is a matter for the States, but we can go beyond the 8 percent of education expenditures and move on to a more important role in leading the fight to really wage a war against substandard education in America. This is the beginning, but let us get ready to fight a bigger war next year.

Mr. GOODLING. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. PAUL], another important member of our committee.

(Mr. PAUL asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to express my opposition to the Reading Excellence Act, which creates yet another unconstitutional, ineffective, \$260 million new Federal education program.

I do not challenge the motivation of those who today bring this bill to the floor. The supporters of this bill claim that by passing the Reading Excellence Act, the Federal Government will, quote, enable every child to learn to read, end of quote.

Now, this is certainly a noble goal, but before Congress creates yet another Federal program, perhaps we should consider that over the past 60 years Congress has created a plethora of social programs, each one promising to bring to an end all the social ills. These programs have not only failed to create the promised utopia, but in many cases worsened the very problems they were created to solve.

Nowhere is the Federal Government's failure to improve the lives of the American people through the welfare state more dramatically illustrated than in education. In 1963, when Federal spending on education was less than \$900,000, the average Scholastic Achievement Test score was approximately 980. Thirty years later, when Federal education spending ballooned to \$19 billion, the average score fell to 902.

Furthermore, according to the National Assessment of Education Progress Survey, only 37 percent of America's 12th graders were actually able to read at a 12th grade level. Despite this history of failed Federal programs, Congress is once again planning to solve a social problem it helped create through an increase in Federal power.

Mr. Speaker, it is ironic that the reason we are considering this bill is because the budget agreement, which was supposed to end the era of big government, calls for the creation of a Federal literacy program. Obviously, the budget does not end big government, but preserves and expands unconstitutional State interference in areas where the Federal Government has neither legitimacy nor competence.

Rather than returning money and authority to the States and the people, commensurate with the 10th amendment, this bill creates another complex bureaucratic process, laden with rules, regulations, and State mandates. Under this bill, States receiving a literacy grant must establish a reading and literacy partnership, the markup of which is dictated by the Federal Government. The partnership must then apply for a grant to the Secretary of Education, explaining how they would comply with all of the bill's mandates. The grants are then approved by a Peer Review Panel, a group of experts chosen by the National Institute for Literacy and other federally funded organizations. States receiving grants under this program would then have to distribute those grants to Local Education Agencies [LEA's] who submit a plan to the States' reading and literacy partnership. Among the information that States would be required to submit is a description of how subgrants made by the partnership would achieve the goals of the act, a description of how the partnership would evaluate subgrantees, and a description of how states will guarantee that a portion of the funds will be used to provide tutorial assistance grants.

Those receiving Federal literacy funds may only use them for federally defined purposes. Thus, this legislation creates another bureaucratized program rooted in pseudo-federalism, whereby States have the right to spend money on federally defined goals and within the limitations set by Congress—provided, of course, they jump through all the congressionally constructed Federal hoops.

Recipients of Federal literacy funds must base their programs on reliable, replicable research, defined as research meeting scientific standards of peer-review. While none question the value of research into various educational methodologies it is doubtful that the best way to teach reading can be totally determined through laboratory experiments. Learning to read is a complex process, involving many variable, not the least of which are the skills and abilities of the individual child. Many effective techniques may not be readily supported by reliable, replicable research. Therefore, this program may end up preventing the use of many effective means of reading instruction. The requirement that recipients of Federal funds use only those reading techniques based on reliable, replicable research, which in practice means those methods approved by the federally funded experts on the Peer Review Panel, ensures that a limited number of reading methodologies will, in essence, be stamped with Federal approval.

Furthermore, this bill mandates that schools participating in the Federal literacy programs must make available to parents assurance of teacher qualifications. It is probably a good idea that local schools make this information available to parents, but it not the role of the Federal Government to dictate local schools implement everything we in Congress think is a good idea. In addition, this provision seems to have been motivated by a desire to start Congress down the road to establishing a national system to certify teachers.

Due to the unfortunate influence of the Federal Government, the teaching methodologies funded under this program will become the methodologies used in every classroom in the Nation. Thus, this bill represents another step toward imposing a national curriculum. Supporters of this bill will respond that the Federal Government is merely encouraging the use of sound instructional techniques. Setting aside the question of whether or not techniques based on reliable, replicable research can really lead one to discover the best means of educating children, the Constitution prohibits the Federal Government from any interference in the methodologies by which children are educated. This constitutional prohibition on Federal interference in education contains no exception for techniques based on reliable, replicable, research.

Mr. Speaker, another indication that this bill will move America toward a national curriculum is that the bill creates a Federal definition of reading, thus making compliance with Federal standards the goal of education.

Furthermore, the Reading Excellence Act requires each grantee to evaluate the success of their programs. Of course, the most effective way to evaluate the success of the various literacy projects reviewing Federal funds is to administer a uniform test to the students participating in those programs. Thus, despite the overwhelming congressional rejection of national testing just last month, Congress is now considering authorizing the creation of a de facto national reading exam.

Another reason to oppose this bill is that it increases Federal support for a so-called family literacy services. One of the hallmark of totalitarianism is State-control of child rearing. Despite the language that participation in these programs is voluntary, these programs enable government-funded social workers to subtly coerce parents to cede control of their child to the State.

Mr. Speaker, the Reading Excellence Act represents another unconstitutional intrusion on the rights of States, local communities, and parents to educate children free

from Federal interference. It also takes several large steps down the dangerous road toward a national curriculum. Therefore, I urge my colleagues to reject this bill, and instead support measures such as educational tax credit that will empower parents to provide effective literacy instruction for their children.

Mr. GOODLING. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Delaware [Mr. CASTLE], another important member of the committee, who helped turn things around in Delaware.

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, let me thank all of those who worked on this legislation.

I am pleased to see almost near harmony with respect to support of this. I cannot imagine anything as important as teaching young people, and even older people for that matter, how to read. It is significant, be it the simple act of being able to read traffic signs or being able just to get around, to reading manuals, to higher education, or the simple pleasures of being able to read a book and to escape to some fantasy as a result of that reading is one of the tremendous necessities and pleasures in the life of anybody in this world, and we want our American citizens to be able to do it.

The President, I think, was on the right track to recognize the power and importance of literacy when he announced his literacy initiative, but I think his focus was a little bit misguided in terms of having volunteers, who are certainly a very important component in ascertaining a level of reading in children, but we have to go beyond that, I believe. My office indeed has been involved as volunteers in the Everybody Wins program, where staff go to Tyler Elementary right up the street here and read with their children to whom they are assigned once a week, and it makes a huge difference as far as the kids are concerned.

But the problem is more fundamental than trying to get children to like reading. It rests in the fact that many children simply cannot translate the written word into the spoken word. They lack basic decoding and literacy skills. Scarce Federal dollars should be focused on the most basic solution to the literacy problem.

For a problem like this, I think teacher training is imperative. Reading teachers need to learn the best methods for teaching reading based on reliable, replicable research. By giving children the basic building blocks of literacy, learning how to sound out the written word, they will be well on their way to becoming literate adults, and that is exactly what this legislation does, as has been described today.

Under this bill, States, through reading and literacy programs, will compete for literacy grants to use for innovative, in-service reading programs for classroom teachers and related reading activities based on the best research available, and I cannot think of anything which is better to do.

Instilling in our young people the ability to read is absolute. This legislation helps do that, and I am again very