

them to pick up the unfunded federal share. Proponents of this legislation will claim that this bill fully funds IDEA by 1010. This House can authorize higher spending limits for IDEA until it is blue in the face, but it doesn't mean anything to our nation's disabled school children unless we follow up and actually appropriate the money to meet these authorization levels. And that's where the problem has been.

If the Majority is really serious about fully funding special education, as it claims, why not make the funding mandatory? It is ironic that at the same time the Majority is pushing to lock in a permanent \$550 billion tax cut that chiefly benefits the very rich, it is unwilling to provide the same assurance of funding to disabled school kids. This speaks volumes about priorities around here.

I urge my colleagues to join me in opposing the rule and opposing this bill. We can do much better.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Chairman, I rise to oppose H.R. 1350, the Improving Education Results for Children with Disabilities Act. I oppose this bill as a strong supporter of doing everything possible to advance the education of persons with disabilities. However, I believe this bill is yet another case of false advertising by supporters of centralized education, as it expands the federal education bureaucracy and thus strips control over education from local communities and the parents of disabled children. 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 the unique needs of 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. In fact, the "Cookie Cutter" approach is especially inappropriate for special needs children.

At a time when Congress should be returning power and funds to the states, IDEA increases Federal control over education. Under this bill, expenditures on IDEA will total over \$100 billion by the year 2011. After 2011, congressional appropriators are free to spend as much as they wish on this program. This flies in the face of many members' public commitment to place limits on the scope of the Federal bureaucracy.

There are attempts in this bill to reduce the role of bureaucracy and paperwork, and some provisions will benefit children. In particular, I applaud the efforts of the drafters of those who drafted it to address the over-prescription of psychotropic drugs, such as Ritalin by ensuring that no child shall be placed on these drugs without parental consent.

However, H.R. 1350 still imposes significant costs on state governments and localities. For example, this bill places new mandates on state and local schools to offer special services in areas with significant "overidentification" of disabled students. Mr. Chairman, the problem of overidentification is one created by the Federal mandates and federal spending of IDEA! So once again, Congress is using problems created by their prior mandates to justify imposing new mandates on the states!

When I think of imposing new mandates on local schools, I think of a survey of teachers my office conducted last year. According to this survey, over 65 percent of teachers felt that the federal mandates are excessive. In

fact, the area where most teachers indicated there is too much federal involvement is disabilities education.

I would ask all my colleagues to consider whether we are truly aiding education by imposing new mandates, or just making it more difficult for hard-working, education professionals to properly educate our children?

The major federal mandate in IDEA is that disabled children be educated in the least restrictive setting. In other words, this bill makes mainstreaming the federal policy. Many children may thrive in a mainstream classroom environment; however, I worry that some children may be mainstreamed solely because school officials believe federal law requires it, 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 mainstream classrooms 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.

H.R. 1350 also burdens parents by requiring them to go through a time-consuming process of bureaucracy and litigation to obtain a proper education for their child. I have been told that there are trial lawyers actively soliciting dissatisfied parents of special needs children as clients for lawsuits against local schools! Parents and school districts should not be wasting resources that could go to educating children enriching trial lawyers.

Instead of placing more federal control on education, Congress should allow parents of disabled children the ability to obtain the type of education appropriate for that child's unique needs by passing my Help and Opportunities for Parents of Exceptional Children (HOPE for Children) Act of 2003, H.R. 1575. This bill allows parents of children with a learning disability a tax cut of up to \$3,000 for educational expenses. Parents could use this credit to pay for special services for their child, or to pay tuition at private school or even to home school their child. By allowing parents of special needs children to control the education dollar, the HOPE for Children Act allows parents to control their child's education. Thus, this bill helps parents of special needs children provide their child an education tailored to the child's unique needs.

The HOPE for Children Act allows parents of special needs children to provide those children with an education that matches their child's unique needs without having to beg permission of education bureaucrats or engage in lengthy and costly litigation.

Mr. Chairman, it is time to stop sacrificing children on the altar of ideology. Every child is unique and special. Given the colossal failure of Washington's existing interference, it is clear that all children will be better off when we get Washington out of their classroom and out of their parents' pocketbooks. I therefore urge my colleagues to cast a vote for constitutionally limited government and genuine compassion by opposing H.R. 1350 and supporting the HOPE for Children Act.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Chairman, none of the goals of IDEA can be achieved without full funding. Today, the majority is refusing even to allow amendments to improve the funding level in the bill.

Congress authorized full funding of IDEA 28 years ago and still has failed to deliver. In

1975, Congress authorized funding to cover 40 percent of the excess cost of educating a child with a disability.

President Bush has requested \$1 billion increases for IDEA in each of his last 2 budgets. But according to the U.S. Department of Education, providing \$1 billion increases each year will never allow IDEA to reach full funding.

When it comes to IDEA funding, Republicans are dwelling on the past, rather than focusing on the future. The majority consistently points to increases in IDEA funding in past years and this is true. However, this doesn't respond to the needs of school districts now. That is why we need to ensure full funding of IDEA over the next six years.

During debate on the No Child Left Behind Act, the majority claimed we had to reform IDEA before providing full funding. The bill before us supplies the Majority's reforms, yet reneges on full funding. What is the excuse now? Since 1977, 22 separate bills and resolutions have passed in the House and Senate calling for full funding of IDEA with support of a majority of Republicans. It is time for Congress to make good on this promise.

In recent years, the Republican majority have said that there is not enough money to appropriate full funding, however they seem to be able to find enough money to give a large tax cut to those who don't need it.

I offered an amendment in the Education and the Workforce Committee with Representative Andrews to remove the funding cap from the bill. I did so because today seven states stand to lose IDEA funding under this cap, and another seven may soon be affected. While the Chairman did agree to move the cap to 13.5 percent—and I thank him for working with us—I still believe that a cap is fundamentally unfair. Not just unfair to the 50 states but also to the American children.

Even with this cap on funding, states and schools are still required to educate students that are identified as having special need even when the population exceeds the cap. So, why not allow the funding?

While I recognize that the cap reflects an attempt to reduce inappropriate identification of students as disabled, I believe that a cap does not get at the problem. Simply setting a cap does not address the issue of how students are being identified.

I believe that states and localities should be allowed to improve this inappropriate identification through professional development.

I applaud the chairman for including increased funding for professional development and research funding to reduce inappropriate identification of children with disabilities, including disproportionate assignment of minority children. We should allow these funds to work.

Let me point out a good point of today's bill. I am glad to see that section 674(c) recognizes the continued importance of funding an organization that "provides free educational materials, including textbooks, in accessible media for visually impaired and print-disabled students in elementary, secondary, postsecondary, and graduate schools." As you may know, Mr. Speaker, Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic, located in New Jersey in my district, has received federal funding for nearly thirty years to produce, distribute and promote the use of accessible-format versions of printed textbooks free to students. During this time,