

(February 12, 2007) Cheers for Catholic Schools

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Nowadays the mood in Congress is so partisan that a unanimous action, even on a minor matter, is hardly more likely than the appearance of a whooping crane in the chambers. All the same, on Jan. 23 the House by a vote of 428 to 0 passed a resolution praising Catholic schools "for the key role they play in promoting and ensuring a brighter, stronger future for this nation." The resolution also noted that more than a quarter of the students in Catholic schools are from minority backgrounds and 14 percent are non-Catholics.

This tribute was prompted by the annual observance of Catholic Schools Week, which was celebrated this year from Jan. 28 to Feb. 3. Representative Daniel Lipinski, a Democrat representing Illinois's Third Congressional District, which includes large portions of Chicago, was the principal sponsor of the resolution. When the 40-year-old congressman, who was first elected to the House in 2004, was growing up in Chicago, he gained firsthand knowledge of Catholic schools. He attended St. Symphorosa's parish school and St. Ignatius College Prep. He then went on to acquire bachelor's and master's degrees in engineering from Northwestern and Stanford, respectively, as well as a doctorate in political science from Duke. He also taught American politics at the University of Tennessee and served on the staffs of five congressmen. Looking back on his school days last month, Mr. Lipinski said, "My 12 years of Catholic education in the Chicago Archdiocese provided me with the knowledge, discipline, desire to serve and love of learning that enabled me to become a teacher before I was elected to Congress."