

Signed, Donald E. Francis, Superintendent, Bismarck R-V Schools.

North Mercer District R-3 Public Schools:

. . . As the system now works we are overwhelmed by federal and state forms and regulations. We also sacrifice many dollars to support federal and state bureaucracies that compound the forms, rules and regulations.

We encountered one program this school year with in excess of 150 pages of instructions. We would like to bring dollar, services and equipment directly to children for their educational benefit.

And one more. The Webb City School District R-7:

. . . Those of us who have spent a career in education have repeatedly experienced the jubilation of anticipation that arose from promises made by the Federal Government toward education. Unfortunately, however, excitement was then always tempered by the reality of the red tape that accompanied the promise. As the result, frustration was generally the only product forthcoming.

Signed, Ronald Lankford, Superintendent of Schools, Webb City School District R-7.

Mr. President, that is just a very small sample of the kind of response we are getting from our schools. I challenge any one of you here, any one of our colleagues, to go home and ask the educators who have the job—it is a wonderful opportunity, it is the most important job that we have in this country—of educating our students: Are the 763 different Federal education programs we have right now improving education? I get an overwhelming no. We have to worry about the Washington bureaucracy rather than the needs of the kids in our classrooms.

This reality has been recognized. The Nation's Governors—Democrat, Republican, and Independent—50 to 0, said, "We want to expand Ed-Flex; we want the opportunity in all of the schools in this country to get rid of and cut away some of the bureaucracy and some of the redtape and put that money directly back to education."

There is bipartisan support for this bill. The bill has been supported by the President, by the Secretary of Education, both of whom were former Governors. I am a former Governor. I served with both of them, and we know the importance of education. But the decisions on how we spend the last dollar of Federal aid are not best made here, they are best made at the local school district level.

I really hope we can move forward and get this money directly to the schools, giving them the flexibility to use those funds where they are most needed. I urge our colleagues to allow us to do so and pass this bill and go on to the many other important issues involving education that we will be facing later this year.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and reserve the remainder of the time.

Mr. CRAIG addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ENZI). The Chair recognizes the Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I associate myself with the remarks of the sen-

ior Senator from Missouri. He speaks so clearly about the frustration that exists at local levels today of decision-making for education, in that sometimes what might work in New York City just does not seem to fit down on the farm or near the farm in Missouri or in a rural school district of Idaho, and that is the reason for a demonstration program of 12 States. That is why we have determined that a greater amount of flexibility is necessary in the area of education.

For the life of me, I cannot understand why Democrats want to block this bipartisan bill in the name of education. There is adequate time to debate other issues in education. I hope they will work with us. Coming out of the impeachment process I thought we were going to get a bipartisan environment from which to move the Nation's business forward. The Nation, I hope, is listening today. The Nation's business is education. And it isn't moving forward. It isn't moving forward not because of Republicans but because of some folks on the other side of the aisle who think their agenda of larger Federal involvement and greater Federal control is an approach to educate our young people. Let the parents, the educators and the school boards decide.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I rise today to express my support for the Kennedy/Murray class size amendment. As we know, Mr. President, education is serious concern for people across the country, and I am pleased to see an education bill as one of the first priorities in this Congress.

Mr. President, last year Congress provided a one-time appropriation in the omnibus budget bill to hire approximately 30,000 new teachers across the country. The Kennedy/Murray amendment we are considering today authorizes a continuation of this effort for the next 6 years. This sends the signal to local school districts that Congress understands the importance of smaller classes and is committed to funding for class size reduction. This amendment takes a positive step toward helping school districts reduce class size as part of an overall effort to improve education and ensure that our children have the best chance to excel and reach their full potential.

As my own state of Wisconsin can attest—smaller classes make a difference in student's lives. Wisconsin's Student Achievement Guarantee in Education or SAGE program, now in its third year, continues to be a model for the nation in how to implement successful education reforms in our public schools by reducing public school class size in the earliest grades. I am very proud that Wisconsin's SAGE program is leading the charge to reduce public school class size across the nation, and pleased that this amendment will help keep SAGE thriving in Wisconsin.

The recently released second year SAGE evaluation again empirically demonstrates what we instinctively

know; students in smaller classes get more attention from teachers and teachers with fewer students have more time and energy to devote to each child. Specifically, the first and second year evaluations confirm the achievements of SAGE students in all tested areas: mathematics, reading and language arts. The report shows total scores for SAGE students were significantly higher than those students at comparison schools.

The evidence shows that teachers in small classes can provide students with more individualized attention, spend more time on instruction and less on other tasks and cover more material more effectively. Again, Mr. President, SAGE has shown conclusively that the significance of small class size should not be underestimated and cannot be ignored.

Class size should be at the forefront of the education agenda because there is a great national purpose in helping local schools reduce class size for children in the earliest grades. I would like to state Mr. President my strong belief that education should remain solidly a state and local function. However, I believe the federal government can have a constructive role supporting local efforts. Kennedy/Murray class size proposal is a perfect example.

Finally, Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to reach across the aisle to ensure that education is a top priority in the 106th Congress. I look forward to working in a bipartisan manner to reach consensus on these important issues to ensure that our children receive the highest quality education possible.

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REPORT OF THE 1998 TRADE POLICY AGENDA AND 1997 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE TRADE AGREEMENTS PROGRAM—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT—PM 13

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was referred to the Committee on Finance.

*To the Congress of the United States:*

As required by section 163 of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended (19 U.S.C. 2213), I transmit herewith the 1998 Trade Policy Agenda and the 1997 Annual Report on the Trade Agreements Program. This report includes the Annual Report on the World Trade Organization, as required by section 124 of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act (19 U.S.C. 3534).

WILLIAM J. CLINTON.

THE WHITE HOUSE, March 9, 1999.

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REPORT OF THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS FOR CALENDAR YEAR 1996—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT—PM 14

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message