

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

STEWART B. MCKINNEY HOMELESS EDUCATION ASSISTANCE IMPROVEMENTS ACT OF 1999

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, being without a home should not mean being without an education. Yet, that is what homelessness has meant for far too many of our children and youth today; red tape, lack of information, and bureaucratic delays that result in their missing school and missing the chance at a better life.

That is why I rise today to introduce the McKinney Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 1999. This legislation reflects the best ideas of some of the most dedicated people throughout Illinois and nationwide: homeless advocates, educators and experts at the U.S. Department of Education.

When we say the word "student," what kind of individual do we envision? More than likely, the images of a youngster sitting at a desk, taking an exam, or sitting at the kitchen table doing his homework. What we do not imagine is a student who is homeless, living in a shelter or living in a car. Yet, an estimated 1 million children and youth will experience homelessness this year, a situation that has a devastating impact on their educational advancement.

Congress recognized the importance of school to homeless children by establishing in 1987 the Stewart B. McKinney Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program. This program is designed to ensure that homeless children have the opportunity to enroll in and attend and succeed in school, and it has made a positive difference. Yet, today, more than 10 years after the passage of that important program, inadequacies in the Federal law inadvertently are acting as barriers to the education of homeless children.

There is no better time for Congress to renew our commitment to homeless children. As the 106th Congress pushes to reauthorize our federal K through 12 education programs, we must act to ensure that all homeless children remain in school so that they acquire the skills needed to escape poverty and lead productive lives.

This legislation will incorporate into federal law provisions and practices that remove the educational barriers faced by homeless youth. Several of these provisions are derived from the

Illinois Education for Homeless Children State Act, which many consider to be a model for the rest of the Nation. This bill will ensure that a homeless child is immediately enrolled in school. Our bill helps to ensure that red tape does not make children miss school.

The bill also allows homeless children to remain enrolled in the school they originally attended or to enroll in the one that is currently nearest to them. Homeless families move frequently because of limits on length of shelter stays, extended searches for affordable housing or employment, or to escape an abusive situation. It allows the States to select a liaison to provide resource information and resolve disputes relating to homelessness. Because many schools do not currently have a point of contact for homeless students, these children frequently go unseen and unserved.

Finally, this bill strengthens the quality of local programs by making subgrants more competitive and by enhancing State and local coordination. This bill also strengthens the quality and collection of data on homeless students at the Federal level. This is particularly crucial as the lack of a uniform method of data collecting has resulted in unreliable national data and a likely underreporting of the numbers of homeless students.

Mr. Speaker, Congress must take advantage of this window of opportunity to renew its commitment to helping provide homeless children with a quality education. I am a strong supporter of local control of education and believe the McKinney Homeless Education Improvements Act of 1999 meets this principle while making the best use of limited federal resources.

Regrettably, homelessness is and will likely be for the immediate future a part of our society. However, being homeless should not limit a child's opportunity to learn.

In closing, let me take a moment to thank Illinois State Representative Cowlshaw, as well as Sister Rose Marie Lorentzen and Diane Nilan and the Hesed House in Aurora, Illinois for bringing this issue to my attention and for their tireless work on behalf of the homeless. I also want to thank Barbara Duffield with the National Coalition for the Homeless for her help in putting together this bill; and the gentleman from California (Mr. OSE), the gentlewoman from New York, (Ms. SLAUGHTER), and the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY), my friends and colleagues, for being original cosponsors.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I insert the following letters for printing in the RECORD.

MARYLAND STATE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION,
Baltimore, MD, August 20, 1999.

Hon. JUDY BIGGERT,
U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE BIGGERT: I am writing to support your efforts to strengthen the McKinney Education for Homeless Children and Youth Act by amending it to include provisions from the Illinois State Education for Homeless Children Act.

In particular, the Illinois provisions relating to the immediate enrollment of homeless children and youth, clarification of responsibilities for transportation, and the application of the Act to cover the entire duration of homelessness, would be of great benefit to homeless children in Maryland. These issues still challenge our public schools as they try to meet the educational needs of homeless children and youth. A stronger federal law based on the Illinois law would assist the efforts of schools, service providers, and families in Maryland to ensure homeless children and youth's access to and success in school.

In Maryland, The State Board of Education will publish on August 27, 1999 in the Maryland's Register, a set of regulations to cover programs for Homeless children. These regulations provide a standard that all school systems in Maryland must follow.

I thank you for your leadership on this critical issue. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or need more information.

Sincerely,

WALTER E. VARNER,
Specialist, Homeless Education and Neglected
and Delinquent Programs, State Coordinator
for Homeless Education.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION,
Des Moines, IA, August 17, 1999.

Hon. JUDY BIGGERT,
U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE BIGGERT: I am writing to support your efforts to strengthen the McKinney Education for Homeless Children and Youth Act by amending it to include provisions from the Illinois State Education for Homeless Children Act.

In particular, the Illinois provisions relating to the immediate enrollment of homeless children and youth, clarification of responsibilities for transportation, and the application of the Act to cover the entire duration of homelessness, would be of great benefit to homeless children in Iowa. These issues still challenge our public schools as they try to meet the educational needs of homeless children and youth. A stronger federal law based on the Illinois law would assist the efforts of schools, service providers, and families in Iowa to ensure homeless children and youth's access to and success in school.

Presently, Iowa is experiencing just over twenty-six thousand homeless individuals per year and 53% of those are children. We do not have enough support under the McKinney Act to assist all the communities wanting to improve services for the homeless. We are now very busy trying to assist schools to develop school improvement plans that address the homeless. More and more needs are surfacing as we work on this issue. We are trying to direct existing resources to assist the homeless and also develop new resources.

I thank you for your leadership on this critical issue. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or need for more information.

Sincerely,

DR. ROY MORLEY,
Iowa Dept. of Education.

TEXAS HOMELESS NETWORK,
Austin, TX, August 18, 1999.

Hon. JUDY BIGGERT,
U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE BIGGERT: I am writing to support your efforts to strengthen the McKinney Education for Homeless Children and Youth Act by amending it to include provisions from the Illinois State Education for Homeless Children Act.

Texas has significantly strengthened its state laws regarding the enrollment of children in homeless situations, but we believe there is still room for improvement. In particular, the Illinois provisions relating to the immediate enrollment of homeless children and youth, clarification of responsibilities for transportation, and the application of the Act to cover the entire duration homelessness, would be of great benefit to homeless children in our state. These issues still challenge a number of our public schools as they try to meet the educational needs of homeless children and youth. A stronger federal law based on the Illinois law would assist the efforts of schools, service providers, and families in Texas to ensure homeless children and youth's access to and success in school.

The Texas Homeless Network is actively involved in helping local homeless service providers across the state form active, effective coalitions that meet the needs of those experiencing homelessness. In my work with both established and forming coalitions, I have seen and heard reports that homelessness is on the rise for families and unaccompanied youth, in spite of Texas' robust economy. A recent estimate by the Texas Office for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth puts the number of school age children in homeless situations at over 125,000 per year. A little over \$2 million in McKinney funds is available to assist these children, but it is simply not enough.

I thank you for your leadership on this critical issue and applaud your efforts to assist children and families in the most dire circumstances. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or need more information.

Sincerely,

KATHY REID,
Executive Director.

COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS
AND HOUSING IN OHIO,
Columbus, OH, August 19, 1999.

Hon. JUDY BIGGERT,
U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE BIGGERT: I would like to take this opportunity to voice support for your efforts to strengthen the McKinney Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Act, by amending it to include provisions based upon the Illinois State Education for Homeless Children Act. Homeless children's access to education has significantly improved as a result of the McKinney EHCY program, however, many obstacles persist. Obstacles to the enrollment, attendance, and success of homeless children in school still exist, nearly twelve years after the EHCY Act was established.

The provisions of the Illinois law relating to the immediate enrollment of homeless children and youth, clarification of responsibilities for transportation, and the application of the Act to cover the entire duration of homelessness, would be of great benefit to homeless children in the State of Ohio.

The aforementioned issues continue to challenge our public schools, as they try to

meet the educational needs of homeless children and youth. A stronger EHCY Act built around the Illinois law, would go a long way toward assisting the efforts of schools, service providers, and families in Ohio to ensure that homeless children and youth have access to a quality education.

In Ohio, as in most other states, children are by most accounts the fastest growing segment of the homeless population. The State Department of Education estimates that in 1998, some 27,000 children in the twelve McKinney funded districts experienced homelessness. The numbers for the non-McKinney funded school districts are just as staggering. It is estimated that as many as 90,000 school-aged children in these districts experienced homelessness in 1998. In the coming years, these figures are likely to increase if proactive steps are not taken now. This is why your efforts to strengthen the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Act are of the utmost importance. "School is one of the few stable, secure places in the lives of homeless children and youth; a place where they can acquire the skills needed to help them escape poverty."

Again, thank you for your leadership on this critical issue. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or require additional information.

Respectfully,

RICK TAYLOR,
Supportive Housing Director.

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HURRICANE FLOYD

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ADERHOLT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCINTYRE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Mr. Speaker, eastern and southeastern North Carolina have been decimated by the recent hurricanes which have come through our area. Thousands of homes are under water as we speak right now, or have been destroyed. Roads are closed. The State's agriculture industry has been severely hit, and our beautiful beaches have been eroded.

Congress' help is greatly needed in order for the citizens of our State to begin rebuilding their lives once more. I urge my colleagues not to delay in working with us from the North Carolina delegation and our colleagues up and down the East Coast to pass a relief package.

Let me give the Members a sense of what has happened alone in my district, the Seventh Congressional District of North Carolina, the southeastern part of our State where this terrible storm came ashore, Hurricane Floyd, last week when we adjourned to go and work with our citizens in this part of our country.

Brunswick County has estimated damage amounts of more than \$100 million for the 200 homes along the ocean. Local landfills have been closed. Piers have been destroyed.

In Columbus County, 2,300 homes have water and septic problems. There has been extensive damage to sweet potato and corn crops.

In Duplin County, millions of hogs, turkeys, and chickens have been lost, creating severe environmental concerns. The southern area of this county has had several incidents of stranded persons requiring helicopter and boat assistance. Rescue workers have been working around the clock, and are experiencing danger to themselves. There have been reports of persons in the flood area with guns threatening others. Two thousand acres of the tobacco crops for our farmers have also been lost while still in the field.

People's homes have become islands in all three of these counties, Brunswick, Columbus, and Duplin, that I have just described.

In New Hanover County, Wilmington, North Carolina, near where the storm came ashore at Cape Fear near Bald Head Island, contamination of surface water has occurred from the heavy rainfall. The county in that area recommends no swimming or other bodily contact with all coastal and inland water areas until further notice. Residents in many areas have to boil or drink bottled water. There have been contaminated wells.

People have been stranded in rural areas. Even Interstate 40, one of our premier new superhighways in eastern North Carolina, has been closed because of heavy flooding. Eighty feet of beach have been lost in areas such as Bald Head Island near Cape Fear.

In Robeson County, my home county, and in my hometown, Lumberton, North Carolina, damage estimates have been at \$20 million.

Bladen and Pender Counties have suffered almost immeasurable damage with regard to people's homes, businesses, farms, and livestock. The Black River has caused extensive flooding from this terrible storm.

Sampson and Cumberland Counties have also suffered from this vicious storm, especially with regard to agriculture.

Other needs throughout this area include more than 400 roads that have been impassable due to flooding, nearly 600 sections of highway washed out, ten bridges and drainage systems destroyed, many more under water and not yet accessible, and 600 pipelines damaged.

Water and sewage systems have bacteria, nitrates, and other pollutants that have contaminated them and many wells in the area. We are facing agricultural losses of more than \$577 million in crops and \$230 million in rural development needs. Forestry, 40,000 acres of trees have been blown down or destroyed, and 400,000 acres of our forest area is flooded. More than 30,000 homes have been flooded. Nearly 6,500 people are still in shelters.

The problems for health include raw sewage and animal waste. We have found dead animals on dry land attracting diseases and attracting flies,