



HOUSE BUDGET COMMITTEE

Democratic Caucus

The Honorable John M. Spratt Jr. ■ Ranking Democratic Member

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Opening Statement Rep. John M. Spratt, Jr. Supporting the No Child Left Behind Act July 18, 2003

I'd like to thank Senator Dorgan for cosponsoring this important event, and to thank our colleagues, the witnesses, and the audience for coming.

Education Funding Gap in the Billions

The No Child Left Behind Act establishes new, important goals to improve student achievement in the country's public elementary and secondary schools, authorizing more than \$32 billion for 2004. That funding will provide extra educational assistance to economically disadvantaged children, help train teachers, reform failing schools, fund vital after-school programs, keep students safe, and much more.

When the No Child Left Behind Act became law, the Bush Administration and Congressional Republicans promised to support the funding necessary to help schools implement required changes. But they have not kept their promise.

President's Budget Cuts NCLB

The President's 2004 budget request actually *cut* funding for No Child Left Behind Act programs by \$1.2 billion below this year's enacted funding level. The President's budget would *eliminate* 26 NCLB programs entirely, including four teacher quality programs that currently receive \$101 million, five education technology programs that receive \$112 million, the Comprehensive School Reform program that gets \$233 million, and the rural education program that receives \$168 million, to name just a few.

Republican Congress Fails Education Pledge

In April, the congressional budget resolution promised to increase funding for the Department of Education by \$3 billion. Now congressional Republicans are not living up to that pledge. The appropriations bill that House Republicans passed last week fails to boost Education funding by

\$3 billion. It increases funding for No Child Left Behind Act programs by only 1.6 percent, which provides about \$8 billion less than what Congress said was needed to support No Child Left Behind in 2004. The Senate bill passed by the Appropriations Committee is even worse.

The No Child Left Behind Act promised to help raise student achievement by training teachers and reducing class size. This is what we need to do.

Instead, because of lack of funds, across the country schools are closing early, cities are eliminating summer school, and principals are firing teachers and staff. This is not the prescription for helping children to learn. Most of the funding for elementary and secondary education comes from states and localities, but at a time when they are struggling with their own budget crisis, the least the federal government can do is to provide what we said we would.

At a bare minimum, we need to provide *at least* the \$3 billion increase for Education that we promised in the budget. More responsibly, we need to provide the funding we authorized for schools to meet the goals of No Child Left Behind.

As we move through the annual budget and appropriations process it is vital that we examine our priorities when we open the purse strings. On our first panel, we have the two people primarily responsible for federal education reform efforts today. Senator Kennedy and Congressman Miller have led the effort to improve the nation's public schools, culminating in President Bush signing the No Child Left Behind Act last year. They know more than anyone else on this topic, and have done more than anyone else to work towards the goal of providing all children with a good education that puts them on a path of productive, life-long learning.

Our second panel has three witnesses who will address the effects of Republican under-funding of the No Child Left Behind Act. We have Wendy Puriefoy of the Public Education Network to speak from the perspective of public education across the country, John Porter of T.C. Williams High School to speak about the reality in his high school, and Krista Kafer of The Heritage Foundation to round out the discussion by providing the conservative viewpoint.

Senator Dorgan's Remarks

Now I'd like to turn the microphone over to Senator Dorgan before we turn to our witnesses.