



Straight A's:

A Citizen's Update on Education

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EDUCATION SPENDING BILL TOPS BUSH BUDGET **Despite Increase, Congress Fails to Meet Its Own Funding Goals**

In one of its final acts before leaving town for the new year, Congress passed H.R. 3061, the conference report of the fiscal year 2002 Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Act. The bill includes \$6.7 billion more for the Department of Education than last year and \$4.4 billion more than President Bush's budget request.

The bill falls short of the funding goals which Congress set for itself only a couple of weeks ago when it passed the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The ESEA reauthorization recommended \$28.4 billion for fiscal year 2002, but the appropriations bill only allocates \$22.2 billion for these programs, a 22 percent funding gap.

Title I: Investing in Excellence

Congress made Title I a priority and provided a \$1.6 billion increase over fiscal year 2001 for Title I in the 2002 Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations bill, a figure that falls over \$3 billion short of the funding goal set in the ESEA bill that also passed in December.

Title I is the largest program in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It works to ensure that "all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and State academic assessments."

The new funds for Title I will allow schools to increase the amount and quality of learning time, before- and after-school and summer programs, improve teacher quality, reduce class size, and help provide an enriched and accelerated curriculum for at-risk students. These efforts are proven approaches to closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children and between minority and non-minority students.

In a change from previous years, Title I funds in this year's appropriations bill will be targeted to the neediest school districts around the country. This approach is a result of a new initiative included in the ESEA reauthorization.

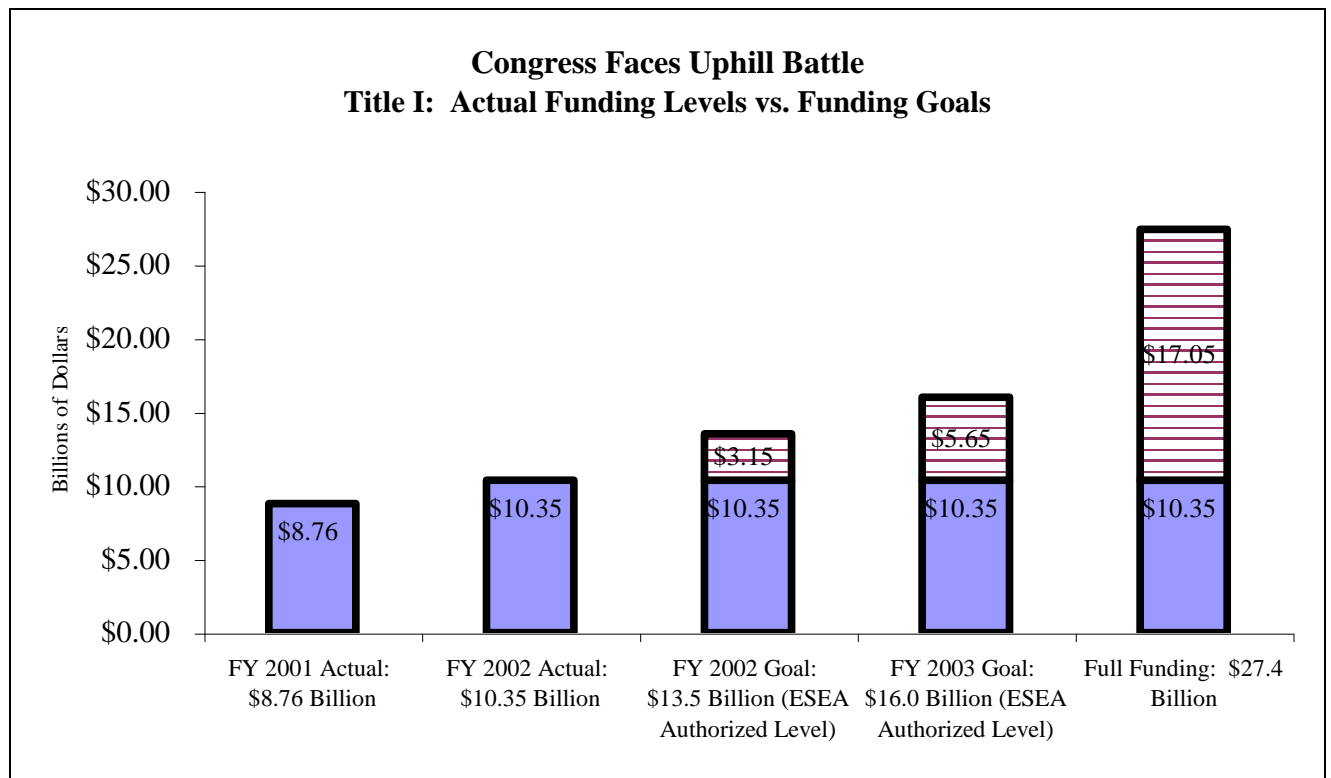
However, to fully serve all eligible students in need at all grade levels and truly guarantee that no child is left behind, *Title I* would need an increase of \$17 billion for a total of \$27.4 billion. Without this kind of investment, school administrators have to perform a form of educational triage by focusing limited resources on early education while neglecting secondary schools.

Dateline: Mount Vernon, New York 01/02/2002

A recent *Washington Post* story provided a perfect example of educational triage when it reported on a school district in Mount Vernon, New York. Thanks to new programs targeted to each of the city's 11 elementary schools, Mount Vernon has seen remarkable increases in test scores among its fourth graders. Last year, 74 percent of Mount Vernon fourth-graders met state standards in English, a 39 percent increase from 1999. In math, the percentage of fourth-graders passing the state exam went from 51 percent to 79 percent between 1999 and last year.

Yet at the same time fourth grade scores were soaring, only 19 percent of Mount Vernon eighth graders passed the state English test, and just 12 percent passed the math test. The superintendent called 8th grade the "next frontier," but was dismayed that funds were not available to serve both cohorts of students.

Link: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A49521-2002Jan1?language=printer>



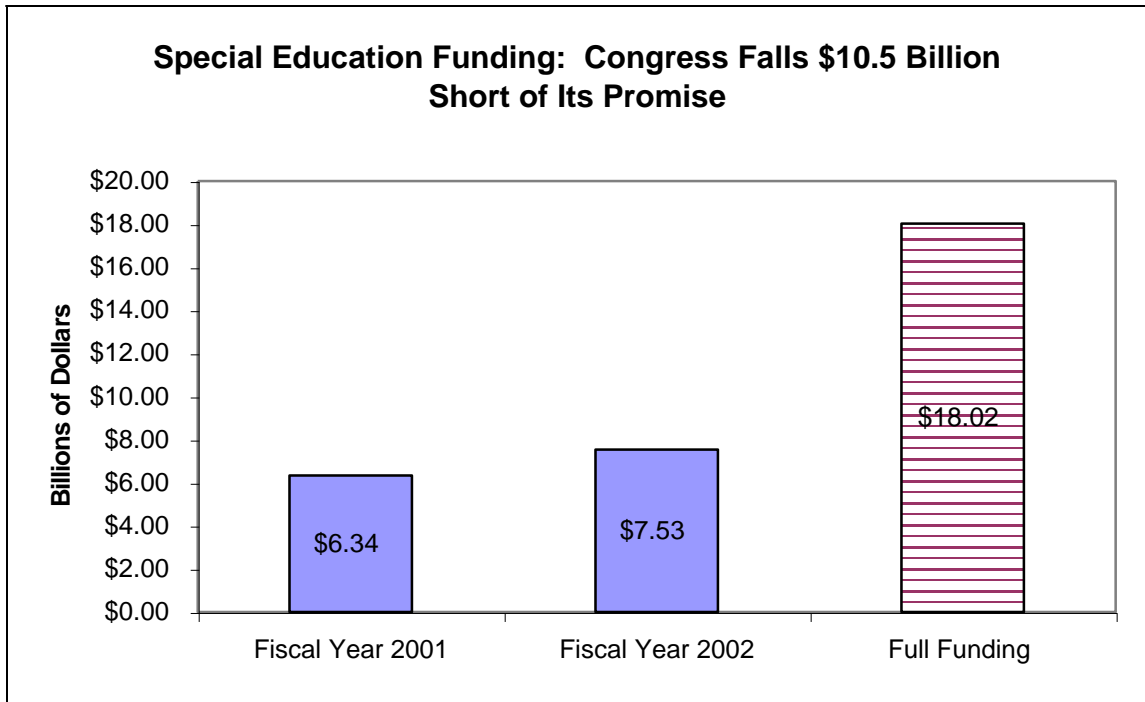
Despite a \$1.6 billion increase, the 2002 Labor, HHS, Education appropriations bill falls \$3.2 billion below the recommended funding level for Title I as set in the ESEA reauthorization. Rather than meeting the ESEA level of \$13.5 billion for Title I, the appropriations bill only provides \$10.35 billion for fiscal year 2002. This shortfall only creates further challenges for Congress as it considers whether to add the additional \$5.65 billion necessary to meet its \$16 billion funding goal for Title I in 2003.

Congress Punts on Guaranteed Special Education Funding

After Members of Congress engaged in a lengthy debate on mandatory funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), they ultimately failed to include this popular provision in the Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Act of 2002. In lieu of guaranteed funding, for a total of \$18 billion over seven years, Congress allocated a one-year increase of \$1.19 billion for a total of \$7.529 billion. **Sens. Tom Harkin (D-IA)** and **Chuck Hagel (R-NE)** have resolved to revisit guaranteed special education funding in the new year.

The Individual with Disabilities Education Act began in 1975 as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. The Act helps school districts ensure free and appropriate public education meets the unique needs of students with disabilities. Increased funding helps schools with the early and accurate identification of students with special needs and allows them to adequately serve these students.

Many policymakers believe IDEA needs to be overhauled. For example, minority students are often over-identified for special education and are sometimes subjected to double standards for student discipline. But classroom teachers and others argue that at-risk students should not be removed from special education classes without an acceptable alternative and that a workable discipline policy should enhance student learning for all students in the classroom. During 2002, Congress is scheduled to reauthorize IDEA. These issues and many more will certainly be part of the debate.



Teacher Quality Undergoes Huge Transformation, Receives Small Funding Increase

During the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, several programs were consolidated into a new Teacher Quality program designed to allow greater flexibility for local school districts. The new Teacher Quality program includes the former Eisenhower Professional Development program and the Class Size Reduction program.

This new consolidated initiative helps local school districts meet the new ESEA requirement of placing a highly-qualified teacher in every classroom within the next five years. The Teacher Quality program allows local school districts to use funds for professional development, recruitment, and hiring of teachers based on a school district's individual needs.

Teacher and Principal Training Funds Fail to Add Up

During fiscal year 2001, teacher quality programs received \$2.19 billion split among Class Size Reduction, Eisenhower Professional Development and the Eisenhower Regional Mathematics and Science Education Consortia.

The ESEA reauthorization combined these programs and set a goal of \$3.375 billion for teacher and principal training and recruiting grants to states. The appropriations bill fell short of this amount and allocated only \$2.9 billion.

21st Century Learning Centers: After School Opportunities for a New Generation

21st Century Learning Centers received \$845.6 million during fiscal year 2001. The appropriations bill provided \$1 billion for fiscal year 2002. This amount marks an 18.2 percent increase over 2001, but still remains \$500 million short from the funding goal Congress set for itself with the ESEA reauthorization.

21st Century Learning Centers offer students a broad array of supplemental services that are designed to reinforce and complement their regular academic program. The increased appropriation for 21st Century Learning Centers means that school districts will be better able to provide tutoring and mentoring for at-risk students, and activities such as youth development, drug and violence prevention, counseling, art, music and recreation programs, technology education programs, and character education programs.

TRIO and GEAR UP: Assisting Students Through the Academic Pipeline

TRIO and GEAR UP are unique programs that work with students in their middle and high school years with a goal of preparing students for success in postsecondary education. In fiscal year 2001, the TRIO program received \$730 million in federal funding. Appropriators allocated \$802 million, a 9.9 percent increase, for fiscal year 2002. GEAR UP received \$295 million in 2001, but saw its funding cut by 3.4 percent, to \$285 million, for fiscal year 2002.

The Federal TRIO Programs are educational opportunity outreach programs designed to motivate and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds. TRIO includes six outreach and support programs targeted to serve and assist individual low-income, first-generation college, and disabled students. These programs work to give eligible students the help they need to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to post-baccalaureate programs.

GEAR UP works with an entire class or grade level to significantly increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. Beginning when a student is in seventh grade, GEAR UP funds partnerships that provide tutoring, mentoring, information on college preparation and financial aid, an emphasis on core academic preparation and, in some cases, scholarships.

Both TRIO and GEAR UP are due to be reevaluated in 2002 when Congress is scheduled to reauthorize the Higher Education Act.

For more information on the application process: GEAR UP: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/gearup/>
TRIO: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/HEP/trio/>



CONGRESS TAKES A WALK ON SCHOOL RENOVATION AND REPAIR

During the last few weeks of 2001, Congress failed to act on several opportunities to include additional funding for school modernization and repair. Despite strong urging from their Senate colleagues, House conferees failed to include a \$925 million school renovation program in the final version of the Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Act of 2002. Congress lost another opportunity to fund school construction it failed to reach an agreement on the stimulus package.

While the House of Representatives passed a stimulus package to create jobs and help the economy, it failed to include any money for new construction and school renovation. House Democrats included a provision in their version of the stimulus package that would have created \$11 billion in interest-free financing for school construction and repair. (**Reps. Charlie Rangel (D-NY)** and **Nancy Johnson (R-CT)** have sponsored this initiative for each of the last three years.) Ultimately, the House voted to exclude the school repair provision by a vote of 166 to 261 and produced a stimulus package that largely focused on tax cuts.

The President will once again ask Congress for a stimulus package when Members reconvene on Jan. 23. President Bush is scheduled to give his State of the Union address the following week on Jan. 29.

President's Reading First Initiative Seeks to Make All Children Skilled Readers by Grade Three

In a key victory for the President's No Child Left Behind plan, Members of Congress included \$975 million in the Labor, HHS, Education spending bill for the Reading First initiative. This program encourages states and local schools to establish reading programs based in scientific research for all children in kindergarten through Grade 3. The initiative only covers preschoolers and grades K through three, potentially leaving millions of children behind who are at-risk in grades four through 12.