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October 6, 2009

The Honorable George Miller
U.S. House of Representatives
2205 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Representative Miller:

The California Small School Districts' Association (SSDA) appreciates your support for education funding. SSDA is concerned, however, that the investment made in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) may not be able to be sustained if the House Appropriations Committee report (HR 3293) is adopted. SSDA does not support the cuts and redirections to education programs that are incorporated within HR 3293.

Specifically, SSDA has concerns with the following three provisions:

- Educational Technology Funding Cut
- Safe and Drug-Free Schools Elimination
- Level of Funding for Ongoing Special Education Program

Cut in Educational Technology

SSDA believes at a minimum, education technology funding needs to be retained at the \$269 million dollar level; else the ARRA investment could be lost. The budget proposal reduces Educational Technology from an ongoing \$269 million to \$100 million. This has the effect of not only reducing funding, but causing all the funds to be used for competitive grants.

Small school districts do not have grant writers. Large school districts have grant writers. When funds are allocated on the basis of competitive grants, rather than formula grants, funding shifts from small districts to large districts. If the federal government believes there needs to be a shift to competitive grants, SSDA urges that competition be among similar-sized districts, rather than districts without a grant writer competing against districts with grant writers on staff.

Elimination of Safe and Drug-Free Schools

HR 3293 proposes to eliminate the almost \$295 million for Safe and Drug-Free Schools. The reasoning behind the elimination is that school districts would receive only approximately \$10,000, rendering the amount useless.

This raises the questions of: 1) why not increase funding for Safe and Drug-Free Schools in order to have a more appropriate amount of money so schools can do something; or 2) why not allow school districts more flexibility in the use of these funds in order to make them more effective?

Level Funding Special Education.

SSDA appreciates the significant funding for special education that is in the ARRA. This ARRA funding, however, is effectively one-time money and cannot be used to build ongoing programs.

HR 3293 contains an ongoing program funding level. Not increasing the ongoing program funding level means school districts cannot risk using the ARRA funds for ongoing programs because there is no assurance that the program level can be continued. Consequently, the proposed special education funding level could have the unintended consequence of undermining the investment made in the ARRA.

SSDA believes that the federal government should be moving toward its commitment to fund 40% of special education excess cost, rather than moving away from that commitment.

Conclusion

SSDA requests you support the maintenance and expansion of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, as well as Education Technology funding. Finally, SSDA requests that Congress increase the ongoing funding commitment for special education.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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