

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION AND REPUBLICANS:

Failing to Fulfill Education Reform



DEMOCRATIC RETREAT



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UNDERMINING THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT

A year ago, President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) into law. NCLB's enactment was supported through bipartisan efforts to improve the quality of elementary and secondary education and close the achievement gap between disadvantaged and nondisadvantaged children. Throughout the long, bipartisan effort, President Bush and congressional Republicans pledged that adequate funding would be there to implement the reforms and mandates in the new law.

Unfortunately, the Bush Administration and Congressional Republican leadership have dropped the ball by failing to match their landmark reforms with adequate resources promised to America's school children only last year.

The backpeddling goes beyond the question of funding. The Administration is undermining the school reforms themselves by:

- creating a loophole in the crucial requirement that all teachers be highly qualified,
- eviscerating critical drop-out prevention efforts,
- giving vendors of education services the green light to discriminate in hiring based on race, national origin, and religion, and
- failing to act expeditiously on implementing the new law.

Uncertified Teachers Who Are "Highly Qualified." The No Child Left Behind Act requires schools to ensure that all teachers are "highly qualified" within four years. By law, highly qualified teachers must have state certification. However, the Education Department permits states to define teachers who are only in the process of obtaining alternative certification as "highly qualified." It does our children a disservice to call a teacher who does not even have state certification -- and may never get it -- "highly qualified."

Evisceration of Drop-Out Prevention Provisions. Recently released Department of Education regulations allow schools to "achieve" adequate yearly progress (a key goal of the law) even as graduation rates for the lowest performing students decline. These regulations directly contradict language in the statute and eliminate a central component of accountability. These regulations establish an incentive for schools to ignore high rates of dropout and focus only on test scores, a consequence Congress explicitly sought to avoid.

Allowing Discrimination with Federal Funds and Denying Basic Civil Rights Protections for Children. Under NCLB, federal education programs can directly fund

religious organizations for the first time. The Act prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, and sex (except as otherwise permitted under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972). Contrary to the plain language of the statute, however, the Department of Education proposes to permit organizations to discriminate on the basis of religion, race, and national origin when hiring employees for positions paid for with federal funds.

An “Unfunded Mandate” to Build Schools and Hire Qualified Teachers. Education Department officials have said that the Department expects school districts and States to build more schools and hire and train more qualified teachers to comply with public school choice capacity requirements in the regulations. However, the Administration has consistently opposed federal assistance for school construction, despite growing state and local budget crises. Nor has the Bush Administration provided additional funding for schools to hire and train qualified teachers.

Missed Deadlines. The Department of Education did not issue final regulations and guidance to implement the No Child Left Behind Act until November 26, 2002, nearly 11 months after the law was enacted. This failure to complete its work before the start of the school year forces school districts to adopt wholesale changes mid-year.

FAILING TO FUND THE ACT AS PROMISED TO IN ORDER TO PAY FOR MORE TAX CUTS TO THE WEALTHY

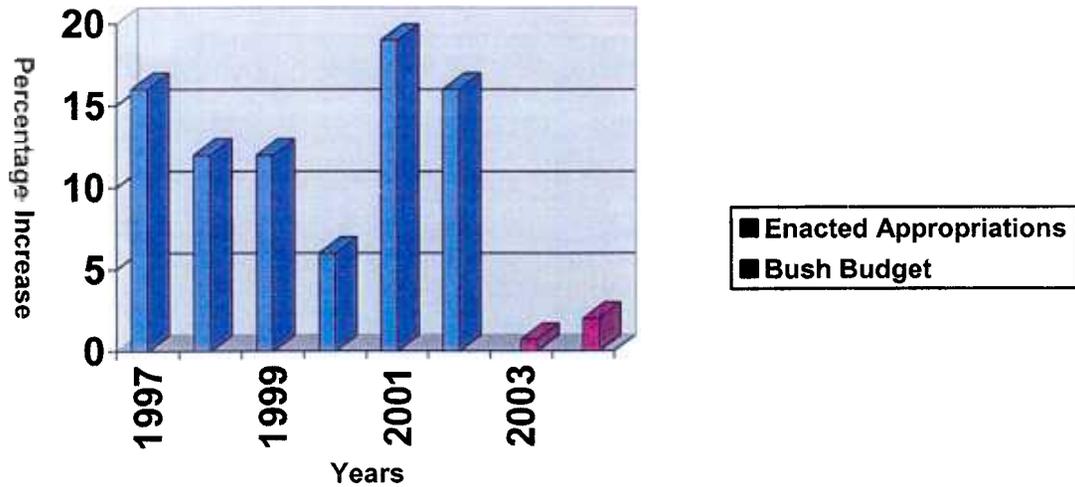
Covering up Real Cuts in Education Spending. Secretary Paige and the Bush Administration continue to mislead the American people about what resources they have committed to education.

“The president's recommendations in the president's achieved budget have resulted in a 49 percent increase in spending over the last two years.” Secretary Paige, January 8, 2003, CNN

This is false. These numbers include funding provided during the Clinton Administration and before NCLB became law. President Bush's most recent budget (FY 2003), issued less than one month after the NCLB became law, ***actually cut funding for NCLB by \$90 million.***

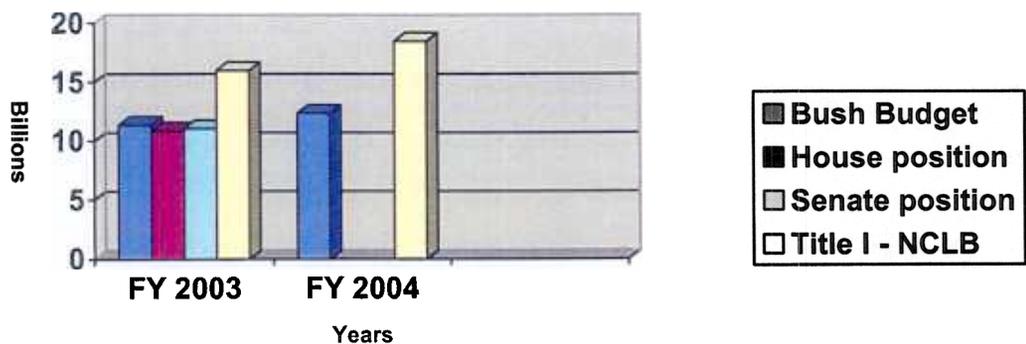
Lowest Education Budget in 8 years. President Bush's FY 2004 budget is again going to shortchange critical education priorities. *The Washington Post* reported on January 22 that education spending was only likely to increase by \$1 billion. This would mark the second year in a row since enactment of NCLB that the Bush Administration cut growth of education funding. The Bush FY 2003 Budget contained the lowest increase in education funding in 7 years -- only a 0.7 percent increase for education, in comparison to the 13 percent increase over the 5 years prior to President Bush's taking office.

Bush Budget - Shortchanging Education



Shortchanging 1/3 of our Disadvantaged Children. President Bush's FY 2004 budget will provide \$12.3 billion in funding for the Title I program that serves our most disadvantaged children in math and reading. **This level is one third less than the amount the President and Congress agreed to provide in NCLB.** In addition, both the House position and the Senate bill in the FY 2003 Omnibus Appropriations conference significantly underfund Title I.

Bush and Republican Title I Funding Continues to Shortchange Disadvantaged Children



Republican Leadership Cut Funding for Key Education Reform Programs. In December, the Republican Leadership introduced their education spending bill – this bill essentially froze education funding at the FY 2002 level by not providing enough

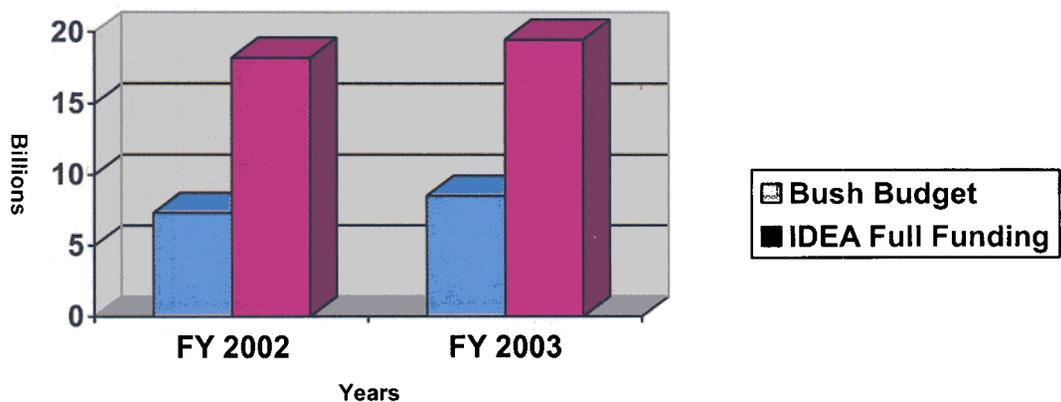
resources to make up for increases due to inflation. This shameful House action was followed by cuts to key programs by the Senate. Due to Senate action on the FY 2003 Appropriations bill, funding for key education reform programs, such as Title I, Teacher Quality, 21st Century Community Learning Centers (After School), and IDEA (Special Education) were slashed below the education funding levels approved when Democrats controlled the Senate, and even below the levels recommended by the President. Due to this action:

- Title I was cut by \$800 million;
- Teacher Quality funding was slashed by \$333 million; and
- After School programs (21st Century) were cut by \$119 million.

Cutting Pell Grants for Needy Students. President Bush's FY 2003 budget would *cut* the maximum Pell grant to \$3,600 -- \$400 below the amount Congress funded in FY 2002 year. Unemployment climbed to 6 percent in December -- the highest since 1994. Increased unemployment will encourage more individuals to seek Pell grants to acquire new skills and training. Additionally, this effort to reduce Pell grants for our neediest college students comes at a time when states are scaling back their own state-based aid for higher education.

Failing to Fully Fund Special Education (IDEA). Since President Bush took office, his budget has failed to live up to the commitment made in 1975 to fully fund special education, affecting over 6 million disabled children in America. Unfortunately, the Bush FY 2003 budget further exasperates the gap between what the Federal government provides for special education and full funding of IDEA. Under the FY 2003 Bush Budget, the gap between actual Federal spending on special education and full funding of IDEA widened by \$100 million.

Bush Shortchanges Special Education



Slashing Dropout Prevention Funding. The Harvard Civil Rights Project recently

reported that America's schools are becoming increasingly segregated and dropout rates among African-American and especially Hispanic children are soaring. Unfortunately, the Bush Administration has sought to disregard these alarming statistics by ending funding for the source of sole funding for dropout prevention. This program was funded at \$10 million in FY 2002. **The Bush Administration proposed no funding for this initiative in their FY 2003 request.**