



September 8, 2004

U. S. House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the more than 1.3 million members of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), I urge you to oppose H.R. 5006, the Fiscal Year 2005 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, unless significant funds are added for education. The bill in its current form does not provide the level of resources required for our schools to continue to raise student achievement and narrow the achievement gap between low- and high-income students.

Funds for Title I and IDEA are well below the amount promised to districts when the No Child Left Behind Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act were both enacted into law. Similarly, the increase slated for the Pell Grant program does not allow for a raise in the maximum award for a third consecutive year. Yet, during this same timeframe, students in four-year institutions have seen their tuition and fees rise by 26 percent. A number of critical education programs -- such as comprehensive school reform and technology grants - - are also slated for devastating cuts.

I urge you to support amendments that provide additional resources for these programs yet do not come at the expense of other important education initiatives.

Finally, I urge your support for an amendment to be offered by Rep. David Obey (D-Wis.) that bars the Department of Labor from implementing new rules that deny workers the right to be paid for overtime work. Without such action, millions of Americans will lose their right to overtime pay for extra work. Left unchanged, the new rules will result in serious economic hardship for their families as these workers will be left working longer hours for less money.

Thank you for considering our views on H.R. 5006.

Sincerely,

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