



Education Watch

Enhancing Flexibility & Accountability ■ Leaving No Child Behind

U.S. House Education & the Workforce Committee ■ John Boehner, Chairman
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Growing Chorus Stresses Need for Special Education Reform

The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* has joined a growing chorus of voices calling for reform of America's special education system and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In an editorial this morning, the paper hails President Bush's formation of an IDEA reform commission and blasts a mandatory spending amendment attached to the education reform bill by the Senate that the paper's editors warns would "do an end run around any accountability attempts" in Congress.

"IDEA comes up before Congress for reauthorization early next year. It should be examined closely to make sure children who don't qualify aren't being mined for the special education dollars. Unfortunately, the Senate is trying to ramrod massive new funding into special education that would do an end run around any accountability attempts. The Senate wants to reauthorize the program prematurely by tacking higher funding on to the president's current 'No Child Left Behind' legislation."

During floor action in the House on the bipartisan education funding bill, senior House Appropriations Committee Democrat David Obey (D-WI) noted that the bill includes \$7.7 billion for special education, adding an additional \$375 million on top of President Bush's request for a \$1 billion increase in IDEA funding. "In two years we will have increased the federal share of the cost of providing special education by 50 percent," Obey noted. Early and accurate identification of students with learning disabilities is critically important as Congress moves to reform the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) next year. The education funding agreement provides a substantial boost in IDEA funding for states and local school without jeopardizing the drive for meaningful reform of the program.

Message of the Day

America's special education system is in need of reform.

- *The Bush Reading First initiative will reduce the cost burden on all levels of government as fewer children are diagnosed as needing IDEA services simply because they did not receive proper reading instruction.*
- *President Bush has proposed a billion-dollar increase in IDEA funding, and the House added another \$375 million to that request when it passed its education funding bill.*
- *However, IDEA must be reformed so that this money is spent effectively for those disabled children who need it most.*

DAILY EDUCATION FACTS

- President Bush recently established a national commission to study ways to improve and reform special education programs.
- The commission will study how federal resources can best be used to improve educational results for students with disabilities as well as how early intervention in reading instruction impacts the referral and identification of children for special education services.
- The commission will report its recommendations to Congress by April 30, 2002.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Our system fails to teach many children fundamental skills like reading and then inappropriately identifies some of them as having disabilities. Not only does this hurt those children who are misidentified, it also reduces the resources available to serve children with disabilities. If we provide all children with scientifically-based reading instruction delivered by well-trained teachers, many will never need special education." Education Secretary Rod Paige, October 4, 2001