



NEWS from

U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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DOLE, SHRIVER GET HEW TO REVIEW FUNDING POLICY

Washington, D. C. -- Senator Bob Dole and Congressman Garner Shriver advised today that officials of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare have agreed to review the regulations which could reportedly threaten funding of Wichita school programs by as much as \$2 million.

Following their request for action by both the White House and HEW Secretary, Dole and Shriver were assured that the matter "was being discussed at the highest level" with the hope of resolving any conflict and that "something meaningful would be forthcoming by the end of next week." That would be in advance of the Board of Education's scheduled June 7 session with its attorneys.

Dole and Shriver noted that the Wichita problem -- which arose out of question eligibility standards governing the use of so-called "Title I" monies -- was being given "top priority consideration" because it could conceivably apply to any other area in the country where some kind of busing plan is in effect. Wichita is particularly significant in that regard since it is still the largest school district out of the South to have gone through the complete administrative hearing process with HEW, culminating in a desegregation order.

While Title I itself is not directly related to busing, it is designed to help those economically disadvantaged children who are frequently the ones transported away from their neighborhood schools in an effort to achieve racial balance. For the past six years in Wichita, approximately 1800 black students have continued to receive that aid wherever they go, and Title I has shared with other HEW activities the common goal of improving their educational attainment.

Now, however, according to Dole and Shriver, there appear to be policy differences over how that goal should be reached. The Office for Civil Rights still maintains that it requires busing students from low-income families to schools in more affluent areas -- usually black children to formerly predominantly white facilities -- but the Title I people say that if that is done, they can no longer provide financial assistance to those individuals. The Emergency School Assistance Act (ESAA) administrators are in the middle, since they approve grants of federal dollars to help school districts comply with desegregation orders. The Title I director has suggested that money as a source of aid to those students being disqualified, but that recommendation only complicates the issue further because Wichita's current entitlement is on both a legal and fiscal hold.

"The latest word from Title I," Dole said, "is that no overall loss of funds to Wichita was ever contemplated -- only a redistribution among qualified schools. If that is true, however, we would have equally objectionable policy questions of giving aid to those who need it less than others, just because those otherwise entitled are being forced to attend an ineligible school."

"The whole situation is confusing at best and may have to be cured up legislatively," Dole added. A provision is already included in an education bill -- expected to be debated on the Senate floor in about three weeks -- which would statutorily authorize the "follow the child" concept for Title I assistance.