

TALKING POINTS FOR MID-URBAN CONFERENCE  
OF CITY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

- 0 THIS SPRING, SEVERAL MAJOR REPORTS EVALUATING THE STATE OF OUR NATION'S PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM WERE RELEASED, THEREBY MAKING OFFICIAL A RECOGNITION OF PROBLEMS THAT HAD EXISTED FOR MANY YEARS.
- 0 FOREMOST AMONG THESE REPORTS WAS THE ONE RELEASED BY THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION, "A NATION AT RISK." THE DETERIORATION OF THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THIS COUNTRY IS A MATTER OF CONCERN TO ALL AMERICANS, AND THEREFORE DESERVES NATIONAL ATTENTION. ALTHOUGH SOME WOULD RECOMMEND A MASSIVE INFUSION OF FEDERAL DOLLARS TO ADDRESS THE CURRENT CRISIS, INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH THIS IS NOT WHAT WAS SET FORTH IN THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS. RATHER, THERE IS AN AWARENESS THAT THE SYSTEM MUST BE RESTRUCTURED FROM WITHIN, WITH REGARD TO STRENGTHENING ACADEMIC STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS ALIKE.
- 0 LAST JULY'S GOVERNORS' CONFERENCE IN MAINE HAD STATE INITIATIVES FOR IMPROVING EDUCATION AS A TOP PRIORITY ON THE AGENDA. IN FACT, STATES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES ARE TO BE CONGRATULATED FOR THE STEPS THEY ARE TAKING TO DETERMINE HOW BEST TO IMPROVE THEIR RESPECTIVE PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEMS.

- 2 -

- 0 THE REPORT OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ALSO BRINGS INTO FOCUS THE ONGOING DEBATE AS TO THE APPROPRIATE FEDERAL ROLE IN EDUCATION. DURING THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS, COMMITTEES IN BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS HAVE BEEN HOLDING EXTENSIVE HEARINGS AS A FOLLOW-UP TO THE REPORT, AND IT IS NOT REALLY CLEAR YET WHAT THE APPROPRIATE FEDERAL ROLE SHOULD BE IN ADDRESSING THE CURRENT EDUCATION CRISIS.
- 0 PART OF THE IMMEDIATE CONGRESSIONAL RESPONSE HAS BEEN TO TAKE ACTION TO IMPROVE MATH AND SCIENCE EDUCATION. THE MAJOR INITIATIVE WHICH HAS EMERGED IN THE SENATE IS S. 1285, THE EDUCATION FOR ECONOMIC SECURITY ACT, WHICH IS EXPECTED TO RECEIVE CONSIDERATION BY THE FULL SENATE SOME TIME BEFORE NOVEMBER 18. I AM PROUD TO HAVE BEEN AN ORIGINAL COSPONSOR OF THIS LEGISLATION WHICH WOULD PROVIDE ABOUT \$425 MILLION FOR FY 1984 AND \$540 MILLION FOR FY 1985 IN ADDITIONAL FEDERAL FUNDS TO IMPROVE MATH AND SCIENCE EDUCATION THROUGH A SERIES OF CONSTRUCTIVE INITIATIVES.
- 0 IT USUALLY TAKES A CRISIS OF IMMENSE PROPORTIONS TO SHAKE US INTO ACTION, BUT, FOR ONCE, IT IS NOT SUGGESTED THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS ALL THE ANSWERS.

- 3 -

- 0 IN FACT, THE REPORT OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON EXCELLENCE EMPHASIZES: "STATE AND LOCAL OFFICIALS, INCLUDING SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS, GOVERNORS, AND LEGISLATORS, HAVE THE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR FINANCING AND GOVERNING THE SCHOOLS, AND SHOULD INCORPORATE THE REFORMS WE PROPOSE IN THEIR EDUCATION POLICIES AND FISCAL PLANNING." THIS IS A VERY REFRESHING PERSPECTIVE.
- 0 THERE IS A ROLE FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN EDUCATION, BUT IT IS PRIMARILY TO ASSURE EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL AMERICAN CHILDREN. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SUPPLEMENTS APPROPRIATELY STATE AND LOCAL EFFORTS BY HELPING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF SPECIAL GROUPS OF STUDENTS -- THE SOCIOECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED, THE HANDICAPPED, AND THE GIFTED AND TALENTED.
- 0 ONE OF THE ROOT PROBLEMS IN OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM IS THE LACK OF PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION THAT TEACHERS RECEIVE WITHIN OUR SOCIETY FOR THE IMPORTANT ROLE THAT THEY PLAY IN DEVELOPING THE MINDS OF OUR CHILDREN TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE. IT IS A WELL-KNOWN FACT THAT TEACHERS ARE UNDERPAID. PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT THIS COUNTRY ARE BEGINNING TO WAKE UP TO THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS FACT. IT IS TRUE THAT EDUCATION IS ONE OF THE BEST INVESTMENTS THIS COUNTRY CAN MAKE IN ITS FUTURE, AND THIS IS A WIDELY RECOGNIZED PRIORITY, BUT IT MUST BE RECOGNIZED AND SUPPORTED AS A PRIORITY BY THOSE PEOPLE WHOM THE EDUCATION PROBLEMS DIRECTLY AFFECT.

- 4 -

- O INCENTIVES FOR TEACHERS TO REMAIN IN THE FIELD, OR TO EVEN BECOME INITIALLY DRAWN TO TEACHING AS A CAREER HAVE GRADUALLY BEEN ERODED. OUR COUNTRY'S SCHOOLS ARE NO LONGER ATTRACTING THE TALENTED, WELL-TRAINED INDIVIDUALS WHO PREVIOUSLY WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR DEVELOPING THE YOUNG MINDS OF AMERICAN CHILDREN. TEACHERS ARE PROFESSIONALS WHO DESERVE TO BE PAID WHAT THEIR SERVICES ARE WORTH, BECAUSE THEIRS IS A VERY IMPORTANT RESPONSIBILITY.
- O IN MANY INSTANCES, PARENTS EXPECT TOO MUCH OF TEACHERS. QUITE OFTEN, SCHOOLS ARE VIEWED AS CHILD CARE CENTERS THAT SHOULD ASSUME ROLES THAT HAVE NOT TRADITIONALLY CENTERED AROUND CLASSROOM LEARNING. IMPROVING OUR NATION'S EDUCATION SYSTEM FROM WITHIN INVOLVES THE NECESSITY TO ADDRESS MANY COMPLEX SOCIOLOGICAL FACTORS THAT HAVE AFFECTED THE EDUCATION PROCESS. THE INCREASED DIVORCE RATE HAS LEFT MANY CHILDREN WITH BASIC INSECURITIES THAT HINDER THEIR ABILITY TO LEARN IN THE CLASSROOM, REGARDLESS OF THE QUALITY OF OPPORTUNITIES EXTENDED TO THEM. THE GRADUAL DISINTEGRATION OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY HAS HAD A VERY SERIOUS IMPACT ON WHAT GOES ON IN THE CLASSROOM. CHILDREN NEED SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT FROM HOME IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO FULLY TAKE ADVANTAGE OF AND APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITIES EXTENDED TO THEM.

- 5 -

- 0 PARENTS ARE OUR CHILDREN'S FIRST AND PERHAPS MOST INFLUENTIAL TEACHERS. THE VALUES THEY INSTILL IN THE HOME WILL HAVE A PROFOUND IMPACT ON THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR CHILDREN, AND NO GOVERNMENT POLICY CAN OUTWEIGH THIS INFLUENCE. PARENTS' ATTITUDES CONCERNING THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION CARRY THROUGH A LIFETIME. AT AN EARLY STAGE, CHILDREN, AS STUDENTS, MUST BEGIN TO REALIZE THAT THEY FORFEIT THEIR CHANCE FOR A SHARE OF THE AMERICAN DREAM BY WITHHOLDING THEIR BEST EFFORTS IN THE LEARNING PROCESS. OUTSIDE INFLUENCES HAVE THEIR EFFECT, BUT, ULTIMATELY, IT IS THE STUDENTS THEMSELVES WHO HAVE THE CAPABILITY TO OPEN THE DOORS TO THEIR OWN FUTURES AND CONTROL THEIR OWN DESTINIES BY THE QUALITY OF THEIR OWN WORK AND THE LEVEL OF THEIR OWN COMMITMENT TO THE LEARNING PROCESS.
- 0 CONCEPTS SUCH AS MERIT PAY FOR TEACHERS AND THE MASTER TEACHER PLAN, ENTHUSIASTICALLY ENDORSED BY PRESIDENT REAGAN, DESERVE OUR ATTENTION, IF ONLY BECAUSE THEY REPRESENT INNOVATIVE WAYS TO ADDRESS SOME OF THE PROBLEMS AFFECTING OUR SCHOOLS. HOWEVER, THERE ARE MANY DETAILS THAT REMAIN TO BE WORKED OUT, SUCH AS ENSURING FAIRNESS IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS.
- 0 OUR NATION'S EDUCATION PROBLEMS DIDN'T DEVELOP OVERNIGHT AND WE CAN'T EXPECT THEM TO BE SOLVED OVERNIGHT. RECOGNIZING THIS, ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT HAVE TURNED THEIR ATTENTION TO

- 6 -

POBBIBLY LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS. ALTHOUGH MANY WOULD LIKE TO  
LOOK TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FOR THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION,  
THE TRADITIONAL ROLE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN EDUCATION  
IS INHERENTLY LIMITED.

### TUITION TAX CREDITS

- o Tuition tax credit legislation has always been controversial. Both proponents, and opponents of tuition tax credit legislation have strongly-felt views, on all of the critical issues this proposed legislation raises.
- o Tuition tax credits are championed, and challenged, on educational policy grounds. They are championed, and challenged, in terms of their relationship to the first and fourteenth amendments to the Constitution. They are championed, and challenged, in terms of their impact on tax policy. And they are championed, and challenged, in terms of their overall budgetary impact.
- o One thing is certain: As the old adage goes, "If you think education is expensive, try ignorance.": Or, as the National Commission on Excellence in Education put it, "Excellence costs...but in the long run mediocrity costs far more."
- o Recently, a broad spectrum of groups supporting tuition tax credits has endorsed a proposal to expand tax credits to public school tuition and expenses. The groups include the U.S. Catholic Conference and the Council for American Private Education (CAPE), an umbrella group representing most of the secular private schools, mainstream church related and Jewish schools, and military schools.
- o I have supported the President's proposal to provide Federal income tax relief for lower and middle income families who carry the additional burden of supporting the public schools while sending their children to private schools. The Supreme Court's recent decision upholding the Minnesota Tuition Deduction Statute, noted that alternatives to public education contribute to the pluralism that help make our society strong. Alternatives to public education can also help stimulate improvements in our public schools through the competition those alternatives present. A strong system of private schools available to all income classes should contribute to a better education for all of our children. Moreover, an educated skilled populace is an essential ingredient in maintaining this Nation's technological industrial prominence.

**LEGISLATION REQUESTED BY THE ADMINISTRATION  
CURRENTLY BEFORE THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

1. Extension of Federal Supplemental Compensation Program (H.R. 3929)

The Finance Committee conferees have been working closely with the Department of Labor and OMB to obtain an 18 month extension of the FSC program at a cost close to the Senate \$3.7 billion bill. The House bill would cost approximately \$6 billion.

2. Extension of General Revenue Sharing Program (H.R. 2780)

The Finance Committee conferees will support the President's desire to have level funding of the general revenue sharing program. The House bill would increase funding of the program by an additional \$1.3 billion over the next 3 years.

3. Increase in Public Debt Limit (H.J. Res. 308)

The Finance Committee will shortly take up the Administration's request to increase the limit on the public debt needed to operate the Federal government.

4. Tuition Tax Credits (S. 528)

Because of the Administration's interest, the Finance Committee earlier reported out a highly controversial bill to provide tuition tax credits for private primary and secondary education. The President has requested that we schedule this bill for floor action this fall.

5. Enterprise Zone Tax Act (S. 863)

The Finance Committee last May approved the Administration's enterprise zone proposal and it passed the Senate this summer. Although the House conferees would not accept the proposal in conference, the Finance Committee conferees obtained a commitment for House hearings on the Administration bill.

6. Child Support Enforcement

The Finance Committee has already had one day of hearings on the Administration's CSE proposal and has scheduled a second day of hearings for public witnesses.

7. Women's Pension Equity (S. 19, S. 888)

The Finance Committee has been working closely with the Administration to develop a compromise package that can be moved forward quickly this year.

8. ITC, USTR and Customs Service Authorization . Bill (S. 1295)

The Finance Committee bill authorizing funds for these three trade agencies will be shortly taken up by the full Senate.