

November 22, 2010

VOTE AGAINST ELIMINATING CRITICAL FUNDING FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES: VOTE NO ON THE COBURN AMENDMENT

Dear Senators:

As non-profit education organizations representing millions of students, families, teachers and principals, we respectfully ask that you **VOTE NO** on Coburn amendment #4697 to S. 510 that would ban all congressionally directed spending in FY2011, FY2012 and FY2013. We expect a vote to be held on this amendment on Monday, November 29, 2010.

The broad definition of congressionally directed spending currently reflected in Senator Coburn's amendment would have the effect of eliminating funding for the following well-established, effective national programs: Center for Civic Education, Close Up Foundation, Communities In Schools, Cooperative Education Exchange Program, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, National History Day, National Writing Project, New Leaders for New Schools, Project GRAD, Reach Out and Read, Reading is Fundamental, Teach For America, and VSA – The International Organization on Arts and Disability. These programs are proven by scientifically-based independent research to work. Their results are public and they have stringent accountability systems.

Our programs are quite different from other congressionally directed spending that may only benefit a specific state, district or region and change year-to-year. In contrast, our programs are primarily authorized nationally-structured programs with many years of bipartisan support and that benefit millions of students and families in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In short, we are not what are envisioned as typical congressionally directed spending items that have invoked the public's demand for earmark reform.

Elimination of this funding would have a severe national impact on students, educators and families:

- Civic Education: Each year this funding helps educate more than 2.5 million elementary and secondary students in the We the People programs, which includes a nationwide academic course of study on the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights and provides free textbooks and professional development assistance to schools in every state and congressional district in the United States.
- Close Up Foundation: This funding provides tuition assistance for 2,000 economically disadvantaged high school and middle school students and their teachers from nearly every state, D.C. and Puerto Rico to participate in week-long Close Up Washington civic education programs.
- Communities In Schools: This funding will support 1.3 million of the nation's most at-risk youth by providing vital resources needed to help these young people stay in school and achieve in life.
- Council for Economic Education: Supports an international exchange programs with eligible countries around the globe and US teachers and students in 38 states to learn about market economies that has helped transform education in these countries and support emerging democratic nations.
- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards: This funding helps over 20,000 teachers in all 50 states seek to improve their teaching practice and skills each year through National Board Certification, and over 91,000 National Board Certified Teachers to participate in school reform efforts.

- National History Day: As the only program that has a mission to work with both students and teachers to improve the teaching and learning of history, funding supports a network of sites in all 50 states that impacts over 1.5 million people – students, teachers and parents.
- National Writing Project: Supports a network of over 200 sites in all 50 states that have engaged over 100,000 teachers in all disciplines in annual summer institutes and sustains ongoing professional development to over 1.2 million teachers.
- New Leaders for New Schools: New Leaders for New Schools promotes effective school leadership in 23 states and the District of Columbia impacting nearly a quarter million children and young people.
- Project GRAD: Project GRAD has demonstrated its effective turnaround strategies in a K-16 model which have resulted in dramatic improvements to the lowest-performing public schools in some of the nation’s most economically disadvantaged communities ensuring that 134,000 students and their families are prepared to enter and be successful in college.
- Reach Out and Read: Reach Out and Read, the pediatric school readiness program, works with more than 3.95 million low-income children and their families at more than 4,500 hospitals and health centers in all fifty states. These children are at the highest risk for school failure and Reach Out and Read's evidence based program has been proven to significantly increase their preparedness for school and to change parental behavior.
- Reading is Fundamental: Over the last year, federally funded RIF book distribution programs were held in all 50 states, the territories and the District of Columbia serving more than 4 million children with the distribution of more than 14 million books at over 15,000 sites utilizing 430,000 volunteers.
- Teach For America: This funding will enable more than 9,000 outstanding teachers to serve nearly 600,000 underserved students in low income communities next year and will leverage more than \$120 million in non-federal funding.
- VSA: Supports a fifty state network of non-profit organizations that assure the participation of K-12 students with disabilities in arts education activities and individuals of all ages with disabilities in arts programming in their communities, serving over 5 million annually.

Given this background, we thank you for your past support and consideration, and ask that you **VOTE NO** on the Coburn amendment.

Sincerely,

s/Charles N. Quigley, Executive Director, Center for Civic Education
s/Timothy Davis, CEO, Close Up Foundation
s/Daniel Cardinali, President, Communities In Schools
s/ Nan J. Morrison, President & CEO, Council for Economic Education
s/Joe Aguerrebere, President & CEO, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
s/Cathy Gorn, Executive Director, National History Day
s/Sharon Washington, Executive Director, National Writing Project
s/LaVerne Srinivasan, President, New Leaders For New Schools
s/Robert Rivera, CEO, Project GRAD
s/Earl Martin Phalen, CEO, Reach Out and Read
s/Carol Rasco, President & CEO, Reading Is Fundamental
s/Wendy Kopp, CEO and Founder, Teach For America
s/Soula Antoniou, President, VSA – The International Organization on Arts and Disability