

Contact Your U.S. Senators and U.S. Representatives and Ask Them to Support Rural Education

April 22, 2010

The Organizations Concerned about Rural Education, OCRE, is a coalition made up of the National Grange and many different types of organizations that include educational, farming, rural, technology, and utility organizations. We are united under the common concern for the economic and educational welfare of rural America. The group is concentrating on several issues, some of which include: revising the funding formula under Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary School Act (No Child Left Behind) to help eliminate the inequalities of the formula for small schools, rural school building infrastructure, and attracting and maintaining high quality teachers in rural schools.

Background

Under Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary School Act of 1965 (ESEA), rural schools are at a greater disadvantage compared to the urban schools. If rural schools are not treated equally, then they will continually be behind and may never catch up to urban schools. Rural school building infrastructure is another issue that rural schools shadow in comparison to urban schools. The distribution of funds for the construction and renovation of schools is not distributed equally.

Developing and maintaining high quality teachers is also a major problem for rural America. Many rural schools don't have the resources to keep high quality teachers, where as urban schools with a larger student base do. If quality teachers go to urban schools, it just widens the gap between rural and urban education barriers. OCRE members work to end these barriers and hope to make the system fair, not only to urban schools, but to rural schools as well. For more information, check out OCRE's website at www.ruralschools.org/coalition/.

The Obama Administration proposes to place its emphasis on school success rather than failure and sets a goal of ensuring that all students leave high school prepared for college or career, according to its blueprint for revising the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Passed in 2002, NCLB was the most recent rewriting of the ESEA of 1965.

The Administration's blueprint asks the states to adopt the academic standards proposed by the nation's governors and state education leaders, and to create accountability systems that recognize student growth and school progress and to ensure that students are prepared for college or to enter the workplace. The administration supports a rigorous and fair accountability system measuring student growth, rewarding schools that accelerate student achievement, and identifying and rewarding outstanding teachers and leaders.

The blueprint also says the accountability system will require states and districts to identify and take rigorous actions in the lowest-performing schools. The administration has proposed a significant investment to help states and districts recognize and reward high-poverty schools and districts that are showing improvement getting their students on this path, using measures of progress and growth.

Under the ESEA blueprint, states, and districts will continue to focus on the achievement gap by identifying and intervening in schools that are persistently failing to close those gaps. For other schools, states and districts would have flexibility to determine appropriate improvement and support options.

Grange Policy

1. The National Grange supports public education and supports the idea of strengthening and improving the system of public education. The National Grange urges Congress to amend the "No Child Left Behind" law so local tax dollars on education are spent more responsibly. Parents should have a choice of schools based on the schools' performance numbers provided that those parents furnish transportation for the children. We believe that every child should be able to receive a public education, and that the state is responsible for providing said education, which shall include the following: a broad curriculum with emphasis on basic language, physical education, math, and science skills; an opportunity for students to choose either vocational or "college preparatory" training; functional buildings; frequent public reports and accountability of funds; and basic training in agriculture, including the "Ag in the Classroom" program, covering both production and consumption.

4. The National Grange supports affordable telecommunications services for rural schools and libraries.

5. The National Grange supports strong educational standards, but does not believe that the establishment of National Education Standards Testing achieves this goal.

Action Needed

Please e-mail your U.S. Representative and U.S. Senators urging them to eliminate the inequalities of the formula for small schools, rural school building infrastructure, and attracting and maintaining high quality teachers in rural schools. Please feel free to cut and paste the following sample letter. If you do not know your Senator's e-mail addresses, please [click here](#) and for your Representative's e-mail address, please [click here](#).

Sample E-Mail

Dear Senator/Representative _____,

I am writing to urge you to eliminate the inequalities of the formula for small schools, rural school building infrastructure, and attracting and maintaining high quality teachers in rural schools.

Under Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary School Act of 1965 (ESEA), rural schools are at a greater disadvantage compared to the urban schools. If rural schools are not treated equally, then they will continually be behind and may never catch up to urban schools. Rural school building infrastructure is another issue that rural schools shadow in comparison to urban schools. The distribution of funds for the construction and renovation of schools is not distributed equally.

Developing and maintaining high quality teachers is also a major problem for rural America. Many rural schools don't have the resources to keep high quality teachers, where as the urban schools with a larger student base do. If quality teachers go to urban schools, it just widens the gap between rural and urban education barriers.

I believe emphasis should be placed on school success rather than failure and schools

should set a goal of ensuring that all students leave high school prepared for college or career. Accountability systems that recognize student growth and school progress should be measured by accelerated student achievement. Additionally, an accountability system should require states and districts to identify and take rigorous actions in the lowest-performing schools. There should be a reward system for high-poverty schools and districts that are showing improvement getting their students on this path, using measures of progress and growth.

By making these changes in our nation's education system, I believe we will strengthen public education across America, particularly in rural areas of the country. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Your name

Your Grange number

If you have any questions or comments regarding this Action Alert, please contact Legislative Program Assistant Molly Thompson by e-mail: mthompson@nationalgrange.org; or by phone 1-888-4GRANGE, ext. 107. Thank you for your grassroots participation in the National Grange Legislative Program.