



EXHIBIT 19
DATE 2/21/07
HB 702

Montana Office of Public Instruction

Linda McCulloch
State Superintendent

House Bill 702
Reject No Child Left Behind
February 21, 2007
House Education Committee, Room 137
Supt. Linda McCulloch Testimony

- For the record, I'm Linda McCulloch, Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of Montana, representing 145,416 public school students
- It is with great irony that I rise in opposition to House Bill 702 to reject the No Child Left Behind law, President Bush's education act. I doubt there has been any more vocal critic in Montana and, perhaps, nationally of the No Child Left Behind Act.
- The No Child Left Behind law is the current reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known as ESEA. ESEA began in the mid-1960's to fight the "War on Poverty." Federal funds that directly constitute the No Child Left Behind law include Title I grants to schools. These funds go out to schools that qualify based on the census count in the schools, essentially based on low income students. Title I funds are targeted to low-income schools and low-achieving students to improve reading and math skills. Seventy-Nine percent (79%) of all Montana schools receive this funding to help with reading and math skills in their local schools.
- What was particularly encouraging were the scores of Montana students eligible for free or reduced cost lunches. Both Montana 4th and 8th grade students from lower income backgrounds scored at or above the national average for all students in science. This is huge and I'm not sure how many states can claim this success for their low income students.
- Other funds that directly fund NCLB include Reading First, Migrant Education, Impact Aid, Math and Science Partnership grants, Educational Technology State grants, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Rural and Low-Income Schools, Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities State grants, and more.
- These programs total up to just over \$121 million a year.
- In a small meeting a few years ago I asked then Secretary of Education, Rod Paige if a state decided to pull out of NCLB would they just lose those funds that directly constitutes the NCLB act. His reply was guarded, but essentially he stated that it may not be just NCLB funds. Subsequently, other conversations with USED officials have indicated the same. Other federal funds include Special Education, Vocational and Tech-Prep, Pell Grants, Byrd Honors Scholarships, Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Basic and Literacy, and more. These funds bring the total federal funds to almost \$400 million per year. So pulling out of NCLB could cost the schools in Montana \$121 million to \$400 million a year. Would you expect our Montana taxpayers to make up the loss of these funds?
- Needless to say, no state has pulled out of the No Child Left Behind Act.
• 1227 11th Avenue • P.O. Box 202501 • Helena, Montana 59620-2501.

tel: (406) 444-3095 • Fax: (406) 444-2893 • TDD (406) 444-0169 • www.opi.mt.gov



- To date, no state can afford to lose the funding associated with this program. In fact, Legislative Appropriations Committees have encouraged me to apply for federal grants that would help our Montana students. Reading First is an example of a competitive grant that we applied for that is putting more than \$20 million over a six year period into our schools to increase reading achievement in low performing schools.
- For well over a decade I have listened to complaints of "strings attached to federal monies" in education and in 1995 the 54th Legislature even turned back "federal monies" that would have helped our schools. Rarely, if ever, have I heard mention that we shouldn't accept "federal funds" for agriculture, forest fire fighting, highways, businesses, and more, even though there are "strings" attached there, too.
- Let's talk about this "federal funding" or "their money" as I have often heard referred to.
- Let's make one thing perfectly clear – this isn't "their" money. It is our money. It is our Montana taxpayers' money. It's your money and your constituents' money. It is money that should go to helping our students succeed in school. I sure do not want my share of these taxes to go to New Jersey or any other state to educate their children – I want to see it stay right here in Montana helping my 145,416 students to be successful in school.
- The federal No Child Left Behind Act is much like laws we pass here in Helena to address a specific problem in one or a few instances. Later we find that it negatively impacts areas that didn't have that problem to begin with and we need to do amendments in following sessions to make sure we address the needs of everyone. One size fits all legislation tends to not fit everyone at all. Laws that try to do everything, like NCLB, usually tend to not solve all the problems.
- This year is the scheduled reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (NCLB). It's anyone's guess whether it will be done this year or next year or after the Presidential Election. Information from the White House and the US Department of Education indicates that they would like more laws that again do not serve our students well in Montana, such as increased testing, more of NCLB into High Schools, redesign of high schools, continued sanctions to schools, districts and state, etc.
- I respectfully ask that you do not pass this bill, but instead join me in calling for major changes in the next ESEA law. Laws, whether they are national or state imposed, should allow all states or towns to benefit from them.
- Join me in working with our Congressional Delegation, the Senate and Congressional Education Committees, the US Department of Education and the White House to craft a law that will allow our money to work for our kids.