

cape Council for American Private Education outlook

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GI Bill for Children Reignites Choice Debate

Despite earlier predictions from some education and political pundits, the President's "GI Bill for Children" seems to have renewed discussions on the issue of school choice and education reform.

When the \$500 million plan was first announced by the Bush Administration in its fiscal year 1993 budget, little notice was paid to the new initiative. However, with election year politics and the sluggish movement of education reform legislation in Congress, the plan has refined and expanded the debate on choice.

White House Kick-off

President Bush announced the bill he was sending to Congress to 1,300 guests gathered on the South Lawn of the White House. He observed, "For too long, we've shielded schools from competition -- allowed our schools a damaging monopoly power over our children. And this monopoly turns students into statistics and turns parents into pawns."

The bill would authorize a half billion dollars to the Department of Education for grants to states, schools districts or other units of government to provide \$1,000 scholarships to children of low- and middle-income families. The monies "could be spent at any lawfully operating school -- public, private, or religious."

The legislation would establish a 4-year competitive grant program to carry out the distribution of \$1,000 scholar-

ships. Selection of grantees would be based on a number of criteria: the number and variety of choices made available to families, the extent to which the applicant has provided educational choices to all children, the proportion of participating children who are from low-income families, and the applicant's financial support (including private support) for the project.

"Quality education is the civil rights issue for the '90's -- and educational choice is the front door to quality schools."

*Sr. Catherine McNamee,
CAPE board president*

The maximum family income for eligible children would be determined by the grantee, but it could not exceed the higher of the state or national median income, adjusted for family size. (The 1989 national medium family income for a family of four was roughly \$40,000.) Further, up to \$500 of each scholarship could be used for other academic programs for children before and after school, on weekends, and during school vacations.

A number of CAPE officials attended the June 25 announcement. Several choice advocates from Milwaukee and Pennsylvania came to Washington for the announcement and were applauded by the President for their leadership on local choice

programs and proposals. Bush gave recognition to the Milwaukee program, which he cited as "a bold experiment, to give low-income families more of the same choices of schools already available to wealthier families."

Support and Opposition

In a statement about the legislation, CAPE executive director Joyce G. McCray said that "CAPE supports the educational principles" in the bill "and its concept of providing more educational options to those families with the least choice today." McCray also outlined the principle reasons why the legislation "should have bi-partisan appeal".

In addition to providing appropriate federal leadership in reforming schools, McCray reminded skeptics that "public schools will benefit from this legislation" as well as private schools. Finally, she noted that the competitive grant system will reward only those states and communities which are truly committed to reform.

Others in the private school community commented on the measure as well. Sr. Catherine T. McNamee, president of the National Catholic Educational Association and CAPE board president said, "Quality education is the civil rights issue for the '90's -- and educational



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choice is the front door to quality schools." McNamee also said that passage of the bill would be a victory for children's rights and reflect the spirit of the U.S. Supreme Court's 1925 **Pierce** decision which states that the "child is not the mere creature of the state."

In a supportive statement, Agudath Israel of America, a broadly based Orthodox Jewish movement, noted that "use of G.I. benefits at religiously sponsored institutions on the college and university level has long been accepted as constitutional." Opponents of school choice have made arguments against such programs because of "church/state separation" concerns.

The plan drew several cries of opposition as well. A July 4 *New York Times* editorial claimed the legislation was flawed because it "offers nothing to the schools left behind... [and] would inevitably create new imbalances in the system." It went on to say that while the President's "instinct to shake up public schools is laudable... his mechanism for doing so is cynically inequitable."

Need for New Thinking

Despite the shortness of the remaining legislative schedule and the predictably partisan tenor on education reform efforts before the November elections, two highly respected Republicans from each house of Congress agreed to introduce the legislation for the President. Senator Jack Danforth (R-Missouri) and Representative Bill Gradison (R-Ohio) joined with Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander in a press conference four weeks after the White House announcement to discuss the choice measure.

Danforth said, "The concept of school choice is an exciting idea for reform and improvement in education, particularly for America's most disadvantaged young people... [and] will focus attention on the need for new thinking."

When asked why they bothered to introduce a bill that would go nowhere in the current political climate, Senator Danforth and Congressman Gradison agreed on their and the President's motivations. Not only would Bush be criticized for not presenting a clear and new idea for reform, but pressing the issue could add to a healthy, national debate during the campaign. Danforth said, "If he did nothing, he'd be criticized for doing nothing, and when he does something, he gets criticized for doing some-

thing."

Gradison claimed that the newly refined emphasis on choice legislation could have a "dramatic and positive effect" on the school system nationwide. "Much political and bureaucratic control over schools will be eliminated and will be replaced with the competition fostered by parental choice."

No hearings have been scheduled on either the House or Senate bills.

Senators Vote for "Huck" and "Tom"

In a survey of favorite childhood books of the 100 U.S. Senators, *Huckleberry Finn* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* were titles most often selected. The poll was conducted to help celebrate National Young Reader's Day, November 11, 1992.

The survey was administered by the Pizza Hut BOOK IT! National Reading Incentive Program, which co-sponsors National Young Reader's Day with the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress.

The most popular books after *Huckleberry Finn* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* were *Treasure Island*, *The Bible*, and (in a tie for fifth place) *The Hardy Boys Series* and *Black Stallion*. Also notable is the wide variety of books named -- 49 different titles among the 100 Members of the Senate -- from classics like *Peter Pan* to other titles like *Thidwick and the Big Hearted Moose*.

The Senator's favorites will make up a recommended book list to be distributed to the 10,000 students attending a "reading pep rally" on the fourth annual reader's day in Oklahoma City, OK. The rally will unite the children to enjoy celebrity readers, storytellers, musical entertainers, and even a gymnastic interpretation of the alphabet in an event to be broadcast to 300,000 students statewide by the Oklahoma Educational Television Authority and nationwide via satellite.

Across the nation, National Young Reader's Day is celebrated in a variety of ways: libraries hold open houses, school children dress up as their favorite book characters for parades, colleges hold reading seminars, and volunteers become special reading guests in classrooms.

CAPE serves on the advisory commit-

tee of BOOK IT!, which is a reading incentive program for children in grades K through 6, and is sponsored by Pizza Hut, Inc. For more information, write BOOK IT! at P. O. Box 2999, Wichita, KS 67201 or call (800) 4-BOOK IT.

Legislative Update:

Education Programs Funded

In late July, the House of Representatives passed the Labor/HHS/Education appropriations bill, **H.R. 5677**, by a vote of 345 to 54.

While the total House spending for Department of Education programs was over \$300 million short of the President Bush's original budget request, the \$28.9 billion funding level was 6% above the 1992 appropriation. A billion dollar increase was assigned to the Chapter 1 program for elementary and secondary compensatory education, a program utilized for thousands of private school students. The House measure would provide \$7.075 billion for that popular program.

The Senate appropriations subcommittee is expected to markup the legislation later this month.

House Passes Education Bill

The House voted 279 to 124 along party lines for a Democrat-sponsored education bill to authorize \$800 million for grants to states to implement reform activities. **H.R. 4323** contains no reference to school choice for public and private schools, as did a bipartisan Committee-approved compromise measure last year.

An amendment to restore the bill to that previous version was offered by the ranking Republican on the House Education and Labor Committee, William Goodling (R-Pennsylvania). It was defeated by a 267 to 140 vote. Another amendment offered by Rep. Richard Arney (R-Texas) would have required that \$175 million of the funds authorized be used to support choice programs which include private schools. It was defeated by a 328 to 80 margin.

However, in an August 11 briefing with private schools leaders, Department



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of Education officials emphatically assured the group that the President would veto any education legislation that resembled the "business as usual" approach to education reform such as H.R. 4323.

Joyce G. McCray, CAPE executive director, expressed support for the Administration's pledge. "This bill does nothing to revitalize American education. It ignores the power of school choice as a factor to affect change." Committee chairman, Rep. William Ford (D-Michigan), admitted the legislative effort had become more a partisan issue than a reform program when he said that H.R. 4323 was "not going to revolutionize anything."

The bill must now go to a House-Senate conference committee and be reconciled with S. 2, the Senate bill passed in January.

House Committee Approves Lead Bill

The House Energy and Commerce Committee approved a bill to authorize grants to inspect and help reduce lead hazards in day-care centers and schools. **H.R. 5730** was approved by the committee on August 5 by a vote of 39 to 4.

CAPE wrote committee members to express its support for "efforts to protect the environmental safety of children in all our nation's schools" provided that federal support accompany any such mandates. In the

CAPE letter, McCray wrote that the bill must "provide a delivery system of federal funds that allows private schools to fully participate in grant and loan programs to perform" the tasks of testing and remediation. The committee-approved bill improved upon an earlier version that did not provide adequate guarantees to such a system of federal assistance.

The bill may next be considered by the House Education and Labor Committee before the full House would debate the measure. No comparable measure has been discussed in the Senate.

Senate Tax Bill Looks Promising

The Senate considered a \$31 billion tax bill prior to its four-week recess which includes a provision to permanently allow for the deduction of charitable gifts of appreciated property. Senators plan to complete work on the measure upon their return in mid-September.

H.R. 11, already approved by the House, would also extend several expiring provisions of the tax code and provide \$2.5 billion for enterprise zones, part of an urban aid plan discussed since the Los Angeles riots this Spring.

CAPE continues to work with the coalitions of Independent Sector and the "Appreciated Property Working Group" to press

for the permanent extension of deductibility of charitable gifts of appreciated property.

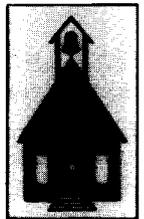
Education Officials Gain Senate Consent

The nominations of three Department of Education officials, previously stalled in the Senate, finally received consideration and approval prior to Congress' recess for the Republican Convention and traditional August break.

The Senate gave its advice and consent on August 11 for Bruno Manno to be Assistant Secretary of Education for Policy and Planning, William Hansen to be chief financial officer, and Emerson Elliot to be Commissioner of Education Statistics. Manno previously worked for the National Catholic Educational Association.

Capenotes:

► **Private Schools of the United States**, the 1992 edition, has just been published by Market Data Retrieval in association with CAPE. The directory lists all CAPE-affiliated private elementary and secondary schools in the US. The book listings by state provide the school name, address, phone, principal, grades, type, tu-



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ition, staffing, programs and facilities, founding and CAPE affiliations. Copies of an individual state's listings are available for \$5 each.

To order a copy of the 1,239-page volume, send a check for \$37 (\$29.95 plus \$7.05 postage and handling) to CAPE, and your copy will be sent UPS.

► **The National Endowment for the Humanities** is accepting applications for the 1993 High School Younger Scholars Awards. The awards support full-time work on projects in literature, history and other fields of the humanities. Awards winners work under the supervision of a teacher who advises them on their research paper. Awards are \$2,000 and include \$400 for the project advisor. Any high school student may apply.

To receive guidelines and application forms, write: Younger Scholars Guidelines, Room 316, Division of Fellowships and Seminars, National Endowment for the Humanities, 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20506, or call (202) 786-0463. The deadline for applications is November 2.

► **The National Diffusion Network** is assisted by the National Dissemination Asso-

ciation, a private organization which supports the dissemination of exemplary school improvement practices. Last fall, in the face of pressures for education funding and reform of Education Department programs, the NDA board set out to draft a new strategic plan.

The plan notes four points of focus for the NDA in the future. They are to represent "the interests of the professional educational dissemination community to Congress, federal administrations, and other education policy makers and decision makers" and to market and promote educational dissemination.

Further, they will work at "coordinating networking among dissemination professional and organizations, and providing professional development in the field of education dissemination."

CAPE, through its Private School Facilitator Project, assists private schools in the dissemination of NDN programs. For more information on CAPE/NDN, contact Dr. Charles Nunley at the CAPE office or by calling (202) 659-0177.

► **SAVE THE DATE REMINDER:** The **1993 CAPE Legislative Conference** will be March 16-17, 1993. For more information, please contact the CAPE office.

► **Theodore R. Sizer**, Chairman of the Coalition of Essential Schools said: "Today's schools are poorly designed and go by rules that defy both serious research findings and common sense. Sometimes they function more for the convenience of the adults they employ than for the children they claim to serve." (Taken from a July 28 opinion piece in *The Washington Post*.)

► A book entitled *Scholarships for Children*, discussing the pros and cons of school choice, has just been published. The book acknowledges that change is on the horizon with new choice legislation pending in 29 states, the Bush Administration placing choice as a cornerstone of education reform, and the private efforts like the Edison Project planning to build a chain of for-profit schools. The study attempts to show how such programs could be implemented.

The book is published by the Institute of Governmental Studies at the University of California, Berkeley and written by John E. Coons and Stephen D. Sugarman. The 85-page paperback is available from IGS Press, 102 Moses Hall, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA 94720 at a price of \$7.95 plus \$1.59 shipping (and applicable sales tax for California residents). To order by phone, call (510) 642-6723.

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