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William J. Bennett

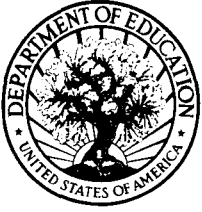
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

THE SECRETARY

APR 20 1988

Honorable Claiborne Pell
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Pell:

I am writing to express the views of the Department of Education on the respective House and Senate versions of H.J. Res. 90, a "Joint resolution to authorize and request the President to call and conduct a White House Conference on Library and Information Services to be held not earlier than September 1, 1989, and not later than September 30, 1991, and for other purposes." Both the House and Senate versions would authorize the White House conference; in addition, the Senate version of the joint resolution would: 1) expand the Constitutional Bicentennial Education Program authorized by the Arts, Humanities and Museums Amendments of 1985 (P.L. 99-194); 2) make several amendments to the Income Contingent Direct Loan Demonstration Project, among other amendments to the Higher Education Act of 1965; 3) authorize \$15.2 million in noncompetitive special projects; and 4) reauthorize and amend the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1986 (title IV-B of P.L. 99-570).

1. White House Conference

As the title of H.J. Res. 90 indicates, both the House and Senate versions of the joint resolution would authorize the President to call and conduct a White House Conference on Library and Information Services in fiscal years 1990 and 1991. Both versions would authorize Federal funding of the conference. A similar conference was held in 1979, and while the goals of such a conference are certainly laudable, and I support them, White House sponsorship of the conference is neither necessary nor desirable. It would be more appropriate for groups such as professional associations, corporate sponsors, civic groups, State and local governments, and other interested parties to organize and provide the resources for any such national conference. In fact, conferences with similar purposes, such as the annual conference sponsored by the American Library Association, occur with regularity.

2. Constitutional Bicentennial Education Program

Title II of the Senate version of H.J. Res. 90 would expand the Constitutional Bicentennial Education Program to authorize an additional \$3 million for training elementary and secondary school teachers in history, geography, and subjects relating to

the Constitution. The purposes of this expansion are clearly admirable; however, they could be accomplished under existing Federal programs. Nonetheless, because this program is the responsibility of the Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution, I defer to the Commission's recommendation regarding this title.

3. Higher Education Act Amendments

Title III of the Senate version of H.J. Res. 90 would make two significant changes to the Income Contingent Direct Loan Demonstration Project (ICL program), which is authorized by part D of title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA). I strongly support these changes to the ICL program because they would broaden access to this less-subsidized loan program and make it easier for student borrowers to manage their repayment burden. Title III of the Senate version of H.J. Res. 90 would also make two Guaranteed Student Loan (GSL) program amendments.

First, if annual appropriations for the ICL program exceed \$5 million, ten additional institutions of higher education would be permitted to participate, including consortia of institutions located within the same State. While I would prefer that there be no limitation on the number of institutions that may participate in the ICL program, this is a step in the right direction. By permitting more institutions to participate, the pilot project would better reflect how the ICL program would operate in the broader institutional community, where there are significant variations in geographic location, school size, type, and student body demographics, all of which could have an impact on the operation of the ICL program. Permitting participation by consortia would encourage the participation of institutions that might be reluctant to administer the new program on their own, but would be willing to participate if the financial and administrative resources of several institutions were pooled to reduce the burden on any single institution. I strongly support this expansion.

Second, graduate and professional students would become eligible to borrow up to \$10,000 annually and \$44,500 in the aggregate under the ICL program. These students would particularly benefit from ICL eligibility because of the higher costs of graduate school. I support this amendment.

In addition, title III of the Senate version of H.J. Res. 90 would also amend section 428(k)(1) of the HEA to require guaranty agencies to share information with institutions of higher education regarding former students who are in default on their GSLs. I strongly support any measure that will assist our efforts to remedy the current student loan default crisis. Finally, title III of the Senate version of the joint resolution

would clarify that students who have returned to school to obtain a State teacher certification are eligible for GSLs. I have no objection to this clarification.

4. Library and Education Resource Authorizations

Title IV of the Senate version of H.J. Res. 90 would authorize four special projects, as follows: \$7.5 million to construct and equip a facility for the Washington Library Consortium, \$4.5 million for the construction of a Health and Human Resources Center at Voorhees College, \$1 million to the Vermont Higher Education Council to develop a series of faculty development programs, and \$2.2 million to construct a law library at the University of Mississippi. I am strongly opposed to this title of the joint resolution. This Department has a deep and longstanding commitment to the selection of recipients of Federal assistance on a competitive basis. Selecting recipients on merit helps to ensure that the taxpayers' funds are spent only on projects that give the greatest promise of success in meeting the objectives of the award. Legislative provisions that accord special treatment to particular entities are even more objectionable in light of current budgetary constraints. I urge rejection of title IV of the Senate version.

5. Drug-Free Schools

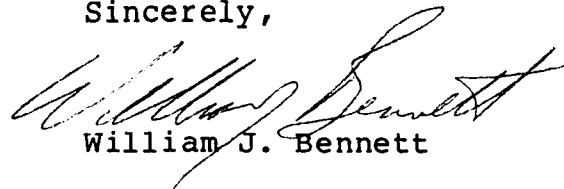
Title V of the Senate version of H.J. Res. 90 would reauthorize the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1986 through fiscal year 1993 and make a number of significant improvements, modeled closely on the Department's own legislative proposal submitted to Congress last March. Briefly summarized, title V would improve the operation and quality of State programs, and enhance State accountability for those programs, by requiring State educational agencies, after fiscal year 1987, to allocate funds among local applicants on the basis of school enrollment rather than school-age population; requiring an annual State report to the Secretary that assesses the impact of the State's program upon drug and alcohol use by students; strengthening local application requirements; and making continuation funding for local projects contingent upon reasonable progress in meeting the goals of the Act. In addition, title V would authorize the Secretary to conduct needed periodic evaluations of programs under the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1986 with funds available under that Act. Collectively, these amendments reflect this Administration's leadership in the fight to make our schools drug-free and would make an important contribution towards achieving that goal. Moreover, they are superior to the similar amendments to the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1986 contained in the House version of H.R. 5. I strongly recommend adoption of title V.

Conclusion

In summary, I oppose the provisions of H.J. Res. 90 that would authorize another White House Conference on Library and Information Services, and would fund projects outside of the normal competitive selection process. I defer to the Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution regarding the expansion of the Constitutional Bicentennial Education Program. I strongly support the amendments to the ICL program that would permit greater institutional participation and make graduate and professional students eligible for ICLs. I strongly support the GSL amendment in the Senate version of H.J. Res. 90 that will assist our efforts to remedy the current student loan default crisis, and strongly favor the amendments to the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1986.

The Office of Management and Budget advises that there is no objection to the submission of this report from the standpoint of the Administration's program.

Sincerely,



William J. Bennett