

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SJM 8029

As Reported By House Committee On:

Education

Brief Description: Regarding a petition to authorize federal block grant funds directly to school districts.

Sponsors: Senators McDonald and Oke.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/24/98, 2/26/98 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Johnson, Chairman; Hickel, Vice Chairman; Smith; Sterk; Sump and Talcott.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Cole, Ranking Minority Member; Keiser, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Quall and Veloria.

Staff: Jim Morishima (786-7191).

Background: In 1997, Senator Slade Gorton proposed an amendment in the United States Senate that would allow the Secretary of Education to award a block grant to local educational agencies "to enable the local educational agencies to support programs or activities for kindergarten through grade 12 students that the local educational agencies deem appropriate." The block grant would have come from funds originally intended for the Department of Education, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Health and Human Services to support programs or activities for kindergarten through grade 12 students. However, Senator Gorton's amendment was not included in the final legislation.

Summary of Bill: The memorial makes several findings. The 10th Amendment to the United States Constitution gives the states those rights not enumerated in the Constitution. Therefore, the education of children is the primary responsibility of the state. Since meeting the educational needs of students is a problem that differs among school districts, local school districts are better equipped to handle the problem than the federal government. The increasing amount of federal regulation in education has

inhibited the development of innovative programs and forced school districts to spend a large proportion of their budgets feeding the growing bureaucracy.

Senator Gorton's amendment would have consolidated the large number of government programs and block granted the funds to the local school districts who could best decide how to use them.

The memorial requests that the President of the United States and the United States Congress reconsider Senator Gorton's amendment.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: Senator Gorton's amendment would reduce the bureaucracy in public education. This memorial supports the idea of block granting federal funds directly to school districts.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator McDonald, prime sponsor.