

SENATE BILL REPORT

SJM 8029

As Passed Senate, February 17, 1998

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

Sponsors: Senators McDonald and Oke.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 2/6/98, 2/10/98 [DP].

Passed Senate, 2/17/98, 26-23.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators West, Chair; Deccio, Vice Chair; Strannigan, Vice Chair; Hochstatter, Long, McDonald, Rossi, Schow, Swecker, Winsley and Zarelli.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Bauer, Brown, Fraser, Kohl, Loveland, B. Sheldon, Snyder, Spanel and Thibaudeau.

Staff: William Freund (786-7441)

Background: Last September, Senator Slade Gorton proposed an amendment to the federal appropriations act. The amendment put most of the K-12 federal education program funds into a block grant and sent the block grant funds directly to the local school districts. The amendment passed the Senate by a vote of 59-41. Subsequently, a conference committee was requested for the appropriations act, and the amendatory language previously offered by Senator Gorton was not included in the conference committee report.

Summary of Bill: A memorial is sent to the President of the United States and members of the United States Congress. The memorial encourages Congress to reconsider the amendment by Senator Slade Gorton that would consolidate a number of federal education programs and block grant the funds for the programs directly to school districts.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: Compliance with the myriad of federal requirements that accompany each federal program consumes many dollars that could otherwise be spent in the classroom. Decisions on how to expend education dollars should be made at the district level, not at the federal level.

Testimony Against: Federal funding for bilingual and immigrant programs would be included in the block grant. Not all districts have these populations. Block granting these funds would dilute the money among all the school districts leaving districts with these populations with less resources. Washington State would lose funds due to the proposed distribution formula.

Testified: Jennifer Priddy, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (con).