

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HJM 4031

As Reported By House Committee On:
Education

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

Sponsors: Representatives Hickel, Talcott, Robertson, Hankins, Dyer, Sherstad, Huff, Honeyford, Bush, Delvin, D. Sommers, D. Schmidt, Benson, Buck, McCune, Crouse, Sterk, Cooke, Alexander, Johnson, Mulliken, Sump, Mielke, Radcliff, Pennington, Schoesler, Sheahan, McDonald, Mastin, Skinner, Lambert, Wensman, Thompson, Mitchell, Boldt, Dunn and Backlund.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/5/98, 2/6/98 [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 5 members: Representatives Cole, Ranking Minority Member; Keiser, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Linville; 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 Tenth 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 they would be used.

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.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Local school districts are better able to address certain problems than the federal government. The block granting of funds would reduce the amount of bureaucracy currently present in the school system.

Testimony Against: Sometimes federal regulation is the only way to ensure that students receive the education they are entitled to. The block granting of funds could cut funds to districts who are more in need of aid. Finally, the block granting of funds could lead to states losing federal funds in years to come.

Testified: Representative Hickle, prime sponsor; Carrie Masten, Parent Coalition of Snohomish County (con); Jennifer Priddy, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (con); Dwayne Slate, Washington State School Directors' Association (support); and Barbara Mertens, Washington Association of School Administrators (support).