

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN LARSON ON H.R. 1, THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 13, 2001

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WASHINGTON, D.C.—U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) today issued the following statement on H.R. 1, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act conference report, which was passed by the House of Representatives today.

"The bill before the House today is the end result of a year-long process between leaders in both parties to achieve compromise on what is surely one of the most important issues on the national agenda: the education and development of our nation's future, our children. It is no secret that America has long recognized that its long-term strength and security, and its ability to recover and sustain high levels of economic growth, depends on maintaining its edge in the quality of its workforce, its scientific achievement and the technological innovation it produces. The only acceptable course of action for a country that wishes to maintain its edge in the global system is to have a long-term educational policy that responds to the challenges of a public school system with vigorous and renewed effort and commitment. That is why this bill before us today is truly historic.

"This bill strengthens education in this country by enhancing accountability in our public schools, increasing overall funding for education for disadvantaged students, for science and math education, and for technology programs. I am heartened that the bill would provide nearly \$1 billion for a new program aimed at having all children reading by the third grade. It also would give local school districts greater flexibility in spending federal money. The bill increases federal funding under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act by \$3.7 billion. Funding for Title I, the federal government's main education program for the disadvantaged, would increase by \$1.7 billion under the law and technology programs would be increased by about \$150 million.

"The bill is not perfect however. Currently, the federal government does not meet the financial obligations for special education it committed to in 1975 when the Individuals with Disabilities Act was first passed by Congress. This shortfall places an onerous financial burden on local communities who must find alternate resources, such as higher property taxes, to fund special education. The bill before us today does not address this injustice.

Efforts must continue to provide funding consistent with the legislation that I have proposed, H.R. 1829, that would fulfill our commitment to our children, to our communities, and to our public schools by fully supporting IDEA."

Despite this problem, I support the underlying bill. It is a very good piece of legislation and I support it for the opportunity and the hope that it represents for our commitment to the American education system.

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