

GOP SHORTCHANGES KEY PRIORITIES IN LABOR, HEALTH, AND EDUCATION FUNDING BILL Measure Underfunds Special Education and "No Child Left Behind" Act

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 10, 2003

GOP SHORTCHANGES KEY PRIORITIES IN LABOR, HEALTH, AND EDUCATION FUNDING BILL
Measure Underfunds Special Education and "No Child Left Behind" Act

WASHINGTON, D.C.- U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) voted against the Appropriations bill for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services and Education, H.R. 2660, which, among other cuts and shortfalls, breaks the promises of the GOP Majority to increase funding for education priorities including the "No Child Left Behind" Act and the Individuals with Disabilities in Education (IDEA) special education program. Overall, the GOP bill provides the smallest dollar increase for education in four years and the smallest percentage increase in education in eight years.

Larson voted in favor of an amendment offered by Congressmen Tom Allen and Dennis Moore that would have suspended mandatory requirements imposed on schools under the No Child Left Behind law unless adequate funding is provided by the federal government to cover the cost of implementing the new mandatory requirements.

Larson stated: "When the No Child Left Behind Act was signed into law, the President and the GOP Majority promised to provide adequate funding to match the new mandates on states and schools. This bill falls \$8 billion short of keeping that promise, again shortchanging our schools as they work to comply with the law.

"The bill also breaks the promises the Republican Majority made with respect to special education funding. During the recent debate surrounding IDEA, the GOP promised a \$2.2 billion increase to help local schools meet the immense costs of special education. Now that the bill has come to the floor, we find that they would provide less than half of the funding they promised, which is a \$1.2 billion shortfall.

"The federal government should be paying their full 40 percent share of IDEA and meeting the commitments set out in the No Child Left Behind Act to reduce the burden on states and municipalities. Instead the GOP Majority chooses to pass massive tax cuts that benefit some of the nation's wealthiest citizens, while at the same time breaking their own commitments and shortchanging education," said Larson.

Larson also voted in favor of an amendment offered by Congressmen David Obey and George Miller to block regulations proposed by the Labor Department that would make it easier for employers to classify employees as "white collar," making them ineligible for overtime compensation.

"This change in regulations could result in pay cuts for as many as eight million American workers, including half a million first responders such as firefighters, police officers and healthcare workers," said Larson. "These changes are especially galling because it comes at a time when so many American families are struggling to make ends meet."

The bill also:

- Cuts \$200 million from the President's \$2 billion request for Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).
- Freezes the maximum Pell Grant allowed for college education. This amount meets only 38 percent of college costs, compared to 84 percent when Pell grants were first established. Nearly 5 million students depend on Pell Grants, with a majority having incomes of \$30,000 or less. The bill also freezes all other forms of student financial assistance.
- Provides \$6 billion less than the level of funding authorized in the No Child Left Behind Act for Title I education funding for low-income children.
- Cuts the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) by \$150.8 million. Among other things, this cut will shut down

desperately needed emergency food distribution efforts for the homeless and low-income families.

- Contains \$7 million less than the President requested for nurse scholarship and student loan repayment programs designed to address the nursing shortage in America.
 - Underfunds bioterrorism preparedness by providing state and local health departments with \$94 million less than they received in 2003.
 - Despite bipartisan efforts to increase the budget at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) over the past five years to improve science and medical research, this bill does not provide a large enough increase - at 2.5% -- to stay ahead of inflation, which the NIH estimates to be 3.3%, bringing the process of doubling the NIH budget to a halt.
- ###