



November 24, 2015

The Honorable Tom Emmer
United States House of Representatives
503 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Emmer,

This letter is to support the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Minnesota Rural Education Association (MREA) advocates for approximately 200,000 students within our 211 members who are Minnesota Independent School Districts.

While we have supported Minnesota's waiver from ESEA, it is time to stabilize the foundation of America's education with adoption of the conference report coming before Congress for reauthorization of ESEA. MREA asks you to support this legislation for the following reasons which are beneficial to Greater Minnesota students and the nation's students:

Stabilize the Foundation of America's Education

- Reauthorization is crucial to providing Minnesota's schools and the nation's schools with relief from current law, which is both broken and lacking the flexibility to support student learning and achievement needed by states and local school districts.
- This proposal is a strong step in the right direction because it restores a more proper balance between federal, state and local government roles in public education.
- While this is not a perfect bill, it gets far more right than it gets wrong, and our schools and students deserve a complete reauthorization to be free from the limited, conditional nature of ESEA waivers.

Federal Funding Important to Rural Schools

- The Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) which is important to students in our smallest school districts is reauthorized with language changes we support.
- Both Title VI (American Indian Aid) and Title VII (Impact Aid) are funded with small increases in authorization. These programs are important to many of our members educating significant numbers of students who are American Indian (AMI). Ninety-seven percent of Minnesota's AMI students attend public schools, and 67% of them attend rural Minnesota schools.



Voice For Greater Minnesota Education

Language Important for Rural Schools

- The conference report includes language important for rural schools directing the Secretary of Education to review the organization, structures, process, and procedures of the Department of Education for administering its programs and developing policy and regulations, and to assess the extent to which the Department of Education takes into account, considers input from, and addresses the unique needs and characteristics of rural schools and rural local educational agencies. The Secretary would have to determine how the Department can increase the consideration and participation of rural schools and rural local educational agencies in the development and execution of the processes, procedures, policies, and regulations of the Department. This report would have to be published within 60 days of enactment.
- Language is included that allows rural local educational agencies to submit consolidated program plans through their educational service agencies. We are confident Minnesota school districts and service cooperatives will consider this tool to provide better service to students and faculty.
- The conference report includes Rep. Thompson's (PA) Title I Study Amendment which would require the Institute of Education Sciences Director to complete a study within 18 months on the effectiveness of the formulas and weighting of formulas under Title I. The goal is to assess whether funds are going to the neediest students and to evaluate the efficacy and equity within number and concentration weighting. This is important to our rural schools with high percentages of students in poverty, many of which serve AMI students.

For these reasons we urge you to support this bi-partisan conference report to stabilize America's education foundation with this reauthorization rather than continue the current, conditional and limited waiver process under which Minnesota and other states are operating today.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Mills'.

Chris Mills
President
MREA Board of Directors

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fred Nolan'.

Fred Nolan, PhD
Executive Director
MREA