

1. Education Daily

September 10, 1997

CLINTON PUSHES CONGRESS TO SACRIFICE PROGRAMS FOR HIS PRIORITIES

The Clinton administration last week urged the Senate to cut \$1.5 billion in three dozen "lower priority [education] programs" next year to pay for his initiatives.

An Office of Management and Budget policy statement notes that the fiscal 1998 education funding bill under debate on the Senate floor is \$2 billion shy of President Clinton's priorities. A similar statement sent to the House notes that House lawmakers fall short of the president's requests by more than \$1 billion.

Moreover, the memos warn that several proposed amendments and parts of the bills — which encompass labor and health funding as well as education — would lead senior advisors to recommend a veto.

The veto triggers for education include proposals to refuse funding for national testing and both chambers' plans to fund a childhood literacy initiative in fiscal 1999, if it is authorized by April 1.

The memo urges lawmakers to make funds available for the president's America Reads program "under existing authorities" if Congress fails to authorize the program quickly.

The House bill would send the \$260 million reserved for the childhood literacy program to special education if Congress doesn't make the deadline (ED, July 23).

Different Priorities

The administration wants the Senate to add.

- * \$725 million for independent students to get Pell Grants, raising the total to \$7.635 billion, up from \$6.91 billion.
- * \$105 million for Goals 2000 education reform, to raise the total to \$605 million; and
- * \$64 million more under the Safe and Drug Free Schools Act, for a total of \$620 million.

The Senate statement also lists as priorities: Title I targeted grants, Eisenhower professional development grants, charter school funding, after-school programs, adult education grants, college Work-Study programs and educational research funding.

The memo does not list lower-priority programs. However, there are substantial differences in the administration's funding approach and the congressional plans.

The Senate bill is particularly generous to special education, proposing a \$894 million hike in grants to states in fiscal 1998, including an \$840 million raise to bring funding for school-aged children to \$3.94 billion (ED, July 30).

The president is proposing a \$162 million boost in special education grants to states, including \$139 million more for school-aged children (ED, Feb. 7).

Although the OMB statement doesn't mention special education at all, lobbyists fear a message to cut the Senate's proposed raise for programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is clear.

"We don't know how else to calculate this, [other than] to say that IDEA is a consideration," said Joe Ballard, the Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC) assistant executive director for public policy.

A Political Error?

Mike Resnick, lobbyist for the National School Boards Association, said that Republicans are poised to reap the political benefits of helping schools cope with special education expenses.

"After all the work is done, it's going to be the Republican Congress that stands for helping children with disabilities," Resnick said. "And I'm not sure the White House understands that that's the way it's going to be viewed politically around the country."

But Lawrence Haas, OMB's associate director for communications, insisted in an interview yesterday that Senate lawmakers scale back their proposed IDEA increase to provide added dollars for the administration's key education programs.

"We do believe it would be adequately funded at the president's requested level," Haas said.

"We ourselves are proposing an [IDEA] increase that is above and beyond the increase in the last four years," he explained. "We've got a series of priorities in education, and we're trying to look out for all of them. —William J. Cahill■"

1. Education Week

September 10, 1997

House, Senate Debates Postpone Votes on Appropriations

By Joetta L. Sack
Washington

As congressional debate bogged down over an array of spending and philosophical issues late last week, it appeared that the House and the Senate would not vote on their education spending bills until this week.

The Senate had expected to pass an education, labor, and health and human services spending bill with few changes to its \$32 billion in education provisions, but it was sidetracked by several health and labor amendments. Members were planning to continue debate this week.

The House bill containing \$29.1 billion in discretionary funding for education was also weighed down by debate, partly over the federal government's role in education. Conservative Republicans planned last Friday to offer 100 to 150 amendments—covering a wide variety of education and social programs—to the House bill. House Democrats vowed to respond with proposals of their own. Both chambers must agree on a single spending bill by Oct. 1, the start of the new fiscal year, or they must pass special legislation to keep the government running after Oct. 1 without a spending agreement.

One point of contention was a new program already in the House bill, HR 2264, that would allot \$150 million for a new "whole-school reform" effort to supply funds to needy schools seeking to adopt proven models of reform. The provision was sponsored by Rep. David Obey, D-Wis., the ranking minority member of the House Appropriations Committee. ("Proposal Would Link School Dollars, Proven Models," in This Week's News.)

Rep. David M. McIntosh, R-Ind., protested the provision, saying that he would prefer to see the money sent to states in block grants, without paperwork and regulations attached. Mr. McIntosh and other Republicans also said they were unhappy to see many federal programs receive large increases from a Republican-led, fiscally minded Congress.

But Rep. John Edward Porter, R-Ill., who chairs the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee, said that the increases were justified and that many were agreed to in the budget resolution adopted last spring.

"Like it or not, an agreement has to be substantially carried out, and this bill reflects many of the president's priorities," he said. Earlier, he had maintained that the funding was close to President Clinton's request, "but reflects Congress' priorities."

Proposed Spending

If the House and Senate approve their spending bills as proposed, neither the Goals 2000: Educate America Act nor the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities program would receive the funding increases that the White House had requested. The Goals 2000 allotment would decrease by \$17 million under the terms of the House bill, to \$460 million. Safe and Drug-Free Schools, a program that has been criticized as frequently ineffective by Congress and the Department of Education, would receive the same amount as last year, \$556 million, in both the House and Senate versions.

The House also passed a spending bill amendment last week that would add \$155 million to the measure's \$4.3 billion allotment for special education. The measure was sponsored by Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., the chairman of the Education and Workforce Committee. The addition of the new special education money was offset by reductions in educational research programs. In fiscal 1997, Congress appropriated \$4 billion for special education.

The Senate was expected to make few changes to its spending bill, S 1061, which would allot \$32 billion for education programs. Most education-related debate in the Senate was expected to center on a move to bar funding for President Clinton's national testing initiative. ("Clinton Team Pulls Out the Stops for Test Plan," in This Week's News.) Last week, the Senate also approved an amendment to the Agriculture appropriations bill that would give \$34 million to the Food and Drug Administration to help states enforce bans on cigarette sales to minors.

Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman, D-Conn., a proponent for school choice, withdrew an amendment which would have boosted federal funding for charter schools, after he was assured that the Senate would defer to House appropriators once the bill was passed and sent to a House-Senate conference committee to work out differences between the House and Senate spending plans. The Senate bill would "level fund" charters at \$51 million, the same as last year's allocation, but the House would increase funding to \$75 million—still \$25 million shy of Mr. Clinton's request for \$100 million.■

1. Education Daily

September 10, 1997

CONGRESS QUIET FOR A DAY ON UPCOMING TEST

A looming issue that could derail education funding in both chambers—the attempt to halt President Clinton's voluntary national testing plan—got only scant debate in the Senate by yesterday afternoon, and was not even mentioned on the House floor.

Votes on testing amendments in both chambers are expected by the end of today.

As compromise talks with the GOP continued, Democratic senators introduced an amendment that would codify the Clinton administration's recent decision to hand the test oversight from the Education Department to an independent board.

The tests for fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math, to begin in spring 1999, have run into opposition from both conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats.

Clinton has hinted broadly that he would veto any bill that would thwart his testing plan. — Laureen Lazarovici■

1. The New York Times

09/10/97; Edition: Washington Edition; Section: Section A; National Desk; Page 1

National Test Plan Runs Into Minefield

By PETER APPELBOME

Even if it is approved by Congress, President Clinton's proposed national testing program of student achievement is traversing so many political land mines in states, cities and school districts that many experts wonder whether it will ever be widely used.

Congress is expected to vote this week on spending bills that would bar the use of Federal money for developing the national tests in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math urged by Mr. Clinton. The President is proposing something that has never been done in the nation's schools: a national test of student achievement that would allow parents and schools in Ohio, New York or Alaska to compare how individual students and schools perform.

Though much of the Congressional debate has centered on the broad issue of whether the tests represent an unwarranted Federal intrusion into local schools, across the country, it is the details of the two tests that are drawing more heat: Should they be given in Spanish and other languages as well as English? Should students who fail be held back a grade? Should calculators be allowed? Does the fourth-grade reading test reflect a particular educational approach like phonics or whole language? Does the eighth-grade test focus on traditional calculation or an approach called "whole math," which gives new weight to the process of solving problems, not just the correct answer?

The tests, scheduled to be given for the first time in March 1999, are being criticized by minorities who think they will further stigmatize the poor; by conservatives who think they favor liberal pedagogy, and by ethnic groups who say they should be given in languages other than English.

The furor over the content and goals of the proposed tests is a reminder of how volatile educational issues have become. Mr. Clinton had picked tests of fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade mathematics partly because he saw them as the least politicized fields emerging from years of national discussion of standards in subjects like American history or English literature.

So far, 6 states and 15 major urban school districts, including New York City, have said they will use the tests, but knotty political issues have already arisen in some cities. The Los Angeles school system, with its heavily immigrant population, has backed off its original commitment to the reading test because of language issues.

"It may not be possible to do national testing in America under government sponsorship," said Chester Finn, a conservative education analyst who initially supported Mr. Clinton's proposed test and now opposes it. "There may just be too many fault lines in our politics and our educational systems."

The existing national tests given by the Federal Government, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, are given to representative samplings of students and rank only states, not individual students, schools or school districts. Most states use various standardized tests or their own tests, which are not tied to national standards and have limited or no comparability with those of other states.

Mr. Clinton's plan calls for 90-minute tests of fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade mathematics to be given on a voluntary basis beginning in March 1999. The reading test would be given only in English. The math test would be given in English and Spanish. It would cost \$27 million to develop the tests. Administering them would cost about \$10 to \$12 for each of the 8 million fourth and eighth graders who would take the tests. Under the Clinton proposal, the Federal Government would pay costs in the first year; state or local districts would pay for it after that.

But as details of the tests have become public, opposition has sprouted from both left and right, with conservative Republicans on the House of Representatives Committee on Education and the Workforce gleefully circulating faxes from civil rights groups also opposed to the tests.

One major issue is language. Civil rights groups like the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund are opposing the reading test because it will be given only in English. The Los Angeles Unified School District, the nation's second-largest district after New York City, said last week it would not give the reading test because it was being given only in English. About 60 percent of fourth graders in Los Angeles schools have limited proficiency in English.

"By setting different expectations for limited-English-proficient students, the current national test proposal creates a two-tier educational system — one for English-speaking children and one for L.E.P., disabled and minority children," Theresa Fay-Bustillos, vice president of legal programs for the Mexican-American defense fund, said in a statement.

But some conservatives are furious that the math test will be given in Spanish; others wonder why it is not being translated into other languages as well.

"It was a very peculiar compromise that made nobody happy," Mr. Finn said. "It was classic Clinton, cutting the baby in half."

At least as volatile is the issue of how test results will be used. The Congressional Black Caucus and major civil rights groups came out against the tests last week, saying they would be used to stigmatize poor children without adequate resources and would be abused for "high-stakes" purposes like tracking minority students into low-status classes.

Administration officials say there are numerous guidelines in place to guard against misuse, but even some supporters of the tests say that if they are widely used, they are almost certain to be used for far-reaching purposes like teacher evaluations or whether children should be promoted to the next grade.

"I think that people who are nervous about this test have a right to be concerned," said Anthony P. Carnevale, vice president for public leadership with the Educational Testing Service, "because the test will have consequences. The real question is, Are the consequences progressive? And I think they are."

Conservatives and some educators have become increasingly suspicious of the pedagogical assumptions in the tests. Conservatives say neither exam sufficiently tests the basics, but they are more concerned about the math test, which they say centers on problem solving, not computation. The newer approach is endorsed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, but a group of dissident math teachers and professors recently wrote President Clinton complaining that the test did not have enough basic computation at the low end or enough real algebra at the high end.

There are numerous other issues as well, many of them having to do with who controls the tests. Despite Mr. Clinton's proposal to turn the tests over to the independent, bi-partisan National Assessment Governing Board, conservatives say no Administration should have the power the Clinton Administration has already used to shape the test. They argue that the national assessment board needs both policy control and the authority to review and change the national test specifications.

Administration officials say that polls show that most people support a national test and that the political differences are manageable, and they deny that either test is biased toward a particular educational philosophy.

Just as the opposition to Mr. Clinton's plan crosses party and philosophical lines, so does support for some kind of testing, which could mean that a different sort of plan could emerge from Congress.

"I don't think the issue has to be the Clinton test or none at all," said William J. Bennett, the former Education Secretary, who opposes the Clinton plan. "We need a test, but we need a good test. Maybe we need to go outside government for a test, and if we fail, I'd be happy to do that, but I'd rather see if we can make this work first." Some of the proposed questions, like the one shown in the chart, reflect a new teaching approach that centers on the process of solving problems. The question shown is of medium difficulty. (Source: Council of Chief State School Officers)

06:12 EDT September 10, 1997■

1. Philadelphia Inquirer

September 9, 1997

Clinton again asks for education tests

A key House Republican called the plan a waste of money. Other school issues also loom.

By Terence Hunt

ASSOCIATED PRESS

GAMBRILLS, Md. — President Clinton opened his fall agenda yesterday with a schoolhouse pitch for national tests to measure education standards, a proposal that a key Republican House member called "a waste of taxpayers' money."

The President, on his first day back to work after a 21-day vacation, flew by helicopter to speak at Four Seasons Elementary School in this community 20 miles south of Baltimore. A roomful of shy third-, fourth- and fifth-grade students listened respectfully to his call for national, standardized reading tests for fourth graders and math exams for eighth graders.

"This should be something that has nothing to do with party politics," the President said. "I think every American — Republicans, Democrats, independents — should favor high standards." He said national testing "will tell us whether our children are learning what they need to do."

National testing is just one of the education issues over which Clinton and Congress disagree. Over administration objections, Republicans also are pushing a "school choice" proposal giving tax breaks to parents who send their children to private schools. The program was dropped from the recent budget agreement at Clinton's insistence, but Republicans vow to bring it up again. Clinton and Republicans both think education is the kind of family-friendly issue where they can boost their standing with voters. But their approaches are at odds. "As every American farmer knows, you can keep weighing a hog, but it won't get any fatter," said Rep. Bill Goodling (R., Pa.), chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee. "Let's help our children, not test them again."

Goodling is pushing an amendment that would bar the administration from spending money on new testing. He said the federal government already spends \$540 million on various education tests.

"I strongly support higher academic standards, but I strongly oppose new federal tests," Goodling said. The White House said it was seeking a compromise, but would not go along with Goodling's amendment.

Moving quickly to assert himself in policy debates, the President is scheduled to give a speech today outlining his priorities for the fall. Tomorrow, he will announce legislation empowering the White House to negotiate new trade agreements with foreign governments.

The President also faces a decision on how to proceed with the proposed tobacco deal between cigarette-makers and the states. An administration review of the settlement already is two months past its original due date. White House press secretary Michael McCurry said Clinton would not act on the matter this week, but probably would announce his stand early next week.

The spokesman also said that Clinton would step into the fight for the embattled nomination of former Massachusetts Gov. William F. Weld to be ambassador to Mexico. Sen. Jesse Helms (R., N.C.), the conservative chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has refused to hold hearings on the nomination. ■

1. Boston Globe

September 9, 1997

Clinton's school test bid called a 'waste'

By Associated Press

GAMBRILLS, Md. - President Clinton opened his fall agenda yesterday with a pitch for national tests to measure education standards. But a key Republican congressman called the president's proposal "a waste of taxpayers' money."

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National testing is just one of the education battles between Clinton and Congress. Over administration objections, Republicans are also pushing a "school choice" proposal giving tax breaks to parents who send their children to private schools. The program was dropped from the recent budget agreement at Clinton's insistence, but Republicans vow to bring it up again.

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"It's not going to become law one way or another," presidential spokesman Michael D. McCurry said. "But at the moment, we're working quietly to try to fashion something that the president can sign. But he won't sign the unsignable."

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1. New York Newsday

September 9, 1997

Students Put to the Test / Clinton proposes national education standards

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), the conservative chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has refused to hold hearings on the nomination, saying Weld, a Republican, has disqualified himself for the post by his past support for the medical use of marijuana and for needle-exchange programs as a means of preventing AIDS. ■

1. Education Daily

September 9, 1997

CIVIL RIGHTS GROUPS LINE UP AGAINST CLINTON'S TESTS

As Senate leaders continued working with the White House yesterday on an acceptable plan for national tests, President Clinton's initiative took a turn for the worse on another front.

A coalition of eight civil rights groups sent a letter to Clinton urging the administration to change its proposal for voluntary tests of fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math.

"We are convinced that in its present form, the national test proposal will not serve the children most in need of educational opportunity," said the letter from the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights.

The groups who comprise the conference want ED to more aggressively oversee the use and administration of the exams—such as preventing unfair exclusion of disabled and limited-English-proficient students and using the exams for high school graduation—opposing the very local control that the administration has been touting to entice states and localities to sign on for the first tests in spring 1999.

Enhanced federal control also wouldn't play well in the House and Senate, where amendments to halt or modify Clinton's testing plan are being considering in fiscal 1997 education appropriations bills this week.

Echoes Of 'Opportunity To Learn'

The civil rights groups also want test administrators to collect data on resources available to students taking the exams, including teacher certification and class size.

That type of sample data is collected for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which a sampling of students take and on which the new tests will be based.

But Democratic efforts to hold schools to "opportunity-to-learn standards" held up the Goals 2000 school reform legislation when Congress was crafting the program.

The testing letter was signed by representatives of the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, National Council of La Raza, the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights, National Women's Law Center, People For the American Way, the American Association of University Women, and the Center for Law and Education.

It was also signed by the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, which has blasted the administration for offering its fourth-grade test in English only, a move costing the support of Latino legislators and Los Angeles schools (ED, Sept. 8).

Compromise In The Works

Republican and Democratic senators yesterday were still working on a compromise testing amendment that would hand over authority to the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), along the lines of what Clinton proposed last month (ED, Aug. 28).

The deal could allow NAGB — which already handles NAEP — to alter the decisions that ED has already made regarding the tests, said White House education advisor Mike Cohen.

"There have been some productive discussions," said Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle at his daily briefing yesterday. "We may not have a showdown over testing."

But similar compromise talks were not going on in the House, where Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the Education and the Workforce Committee, remains staunchly opposed to the program (ED, Aug. 28).

And African-American legislators appeared to be split on Clinton's testing proposal. Rep. Major Owens, D-New York, has joined Goodling in opposing the tests. In contrast, Rep. Bill Clay signed a letter with Reps. Matthew Martinez and George Miller supporting the program, arguing that it would give parents information they need to pressure schools to improve.

Appearing at an elementary school in Maryland yesterday, Clinton talked up his plan, but stopped short of explicitly threatening to veto the appropriations bill, which includes funding for labor and health programs, over the issue (ED, Sept. 4).

During an afternoon news conference, his spokesman was asked whether Clinton would veto the funding bill if it includes Goodling's amendment to bar any spending on tests not specifically authorized by Congress. "It's not going to become law one way or another," said Press Secretary Mike McCurry, adding that negotiations were under way. "He won't sign the unsignable."

The Senate could vote on a testing amendment and its version of the education appropriations bill, S. 1061, as soon as today. The House could vote on its version, H.R. 2264, by Thursday night. Both bills would provide about \$34 billion to ED in fiscal 1998, though the Senate bill is more generous to special education while the House bill favors Title I (ED, Sept. 4). —Laureen Lazarovici■

1. Hartford Courant

September 9, 1997

State officials cool to nationwide student test

By RICK GREEN

Connecticut is a leader when it comes to tough school testing, but education leaders say the state has little to gain by joining President Clinton's call for a voluntary national standardized test.

Public school children in the state already take - and perform well on - many tests that compare them with students across the country. For example, the Connecticut Mastery Test, a comprehensive standardized test for fourth-, sixth- and eighth-graders, is considered one of the most rigorous assessments in the nation.

Seven states and some major cities, including New York, Chicago and Atlanta, have agreed to participate in Clinton's proposed national test for fourth- and eighth-graders. But the plan faces stiff opposition in Congress, where legislators likely will vote this week on whether to prohibit federal spending on the testing.

In Connecticut, where testing is a much-discussed topic, reaction to Clinton's proposal has been skeptical.

"It would take valuable time away from instruction. We are tested-out at this point. I don't find any support from my colleagues," said Bridgeport Superintendent of Schools James A. Connelly. "Quite frankly, we have at least two full weeks involved in testing."

William Breck, superintendent of schools for Durham and Middlefield and chairman of the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, agreed. "We get the type of information that we need already

To add another layer at the federal level is not going to help. It may help the politicians."

Early this fall, students all over the state will begin taking the mastery tests. Soon after, high school students will take the PSAT. In the spring, more high school students will take the SAT, and all 10th-graders will take the state-mandated Connecticut Academic Performance Test. Meanwhile, districts independently also administer other standardized tests.

A sample of scores on the mastery tests are used to compare with scores nationally on the Metropolitan Achievement Test. Fourth-, sixth- and eighth-graders in Connecticut score among the top half of all students nationally in math, reading and writing, substantially above average. On the National Assessment of Educational Performance, a nationwide sample, Connecticut students also rank at or near the top.

"More hours of testing aren't necessarily better," said state Commissioner of Education Theodore S. Sergi, who like others said a final decision on the test had not been made. "I'm not sure there would be that much more to be gained."

State Board of Education Chairman Craig Toensing said the test might be a popular political move for Clinton, but thus far it offers little for Connecticut.

"I don't think we need to compare ourselves more nationally than we already do," he said.

Speaking to a U.S. Senate subcommittee last week, **Education Secretary Richard W. Riley** said the tests will "get the whole country buzzing" and "will tell parents, teachers, policy-makers and students about what it takes to reach national and international standards of achievement."

For Connecticut, it means a chance to "enhance its already excellent testing programs," said Gerald N. Tirozzi, assistant education secretary for elementary and secondary education in Washington and a former state education commissioner in Connecticut.

"You can get a look at how your fourth-graders are doing across the country," said Tirozzi, an architect of the Connecticut Mastery Test who is now lobbying for Clinton's plan.

Among the advantages that supporters tout is that students will be able to see their own scores on the test and how well they performed, compared with national and even world standards. This is not always the case with standardized tests.

Tirozzi and others further stress the importance of setting national standards for students that can be readily measured through the test. The test would last 90 minutes, hardly a lot of time, Tirozzi and others say. Under Clinton's proposal, fourth-graders would be tested in reading and eighth-graders tested in math.

The testing question is a sensitive issue among some members of the state's congressional delegation. Sen. Christopher J. Dodd, D-Conn., and Rep. Barbara B. Kennelly, D-1st District, both say they are clearly in favor of the voluntary

national tests. Others, including Rep. Sam Gejdenson, D-2nd District, and Rep. Nancy L. Johnson, R-6th District, declined to take a specific position on the proposed test, though like others, they say they support the idea of national standards.

Kennelly said she was delighted with Clinton's proposal, which faces a stiff challenge from opponents of federal intrusion in the schools and others who are critical of standardized testing.

"I've never been afraid to compete and I don't think our schools are afraid to compete," Kennelly said. "Kids love to compete." ■

1. Los Angeles Times

* 09/09/97; Edition: Home Edition; Section: Metro Desk; Page A-3

Deal on School Tests in Doubt; Some Funds Could Be Delayed: Legislators, governor differ on plan for statewide exams. Spanish version, source of material among points of contention

By DAN MORAIN
TIMES STAFF WRITER

SACRAMENTO — Senate President Pro Tem Bill Lockyer said Monday that he doubts legislators will reach agreement on Gov. Pete Wilson's plan to give a standardized test to public school students statewide, leaving more than \$200 million in school funding in question.

Lockyer, the most influential Democrat in the state Senate, described himself as "pessimistic" that an accord could be reached before legislators leave Sacramento for the year Friday.

"There are too many philosophical and practical difficulties with the school testing proposal, and it is just getting problematic about whether we'll come to an agreement in time," Lockyer said.

Although some legislators and others involved in the testing issue insist that a deal still can be struck this week, Lockyer's comments raised the possibility that the legislative session would end without an agreement, and that California would go another year without a systemwide way of determining how its students are faring.

Wilson made his desire for a statewide assessment for California's schoolchildren one of the top issues in this summer's negotiations over the state's \$68-billion budget, demanding that legislators provide \$30.4 million to test all students in grades 2 through 11.

When he failed to win a final agreement with Democrats on the proposal in budget negotiations, Wilson used his line-item veto authority to hold \$203 million for schools hostage until the Legislature approved bills providing for the tests.

The Wilson administration remains intent on getting a deal this week.

Sean Walsh, Wilson's press secretary, noted Monday that Lockyer and Assembly Speaker Cruz Bustamante (D-Fresno) had assured the governor during the budget talks last month that the testing issue would be resolved.

"We expect them to fulfill their commitments," Walsh said. "We expect to see a test on the governor's desk by the end of the week."

Lockyer said at the end of the budget negotiations that he "made a commitment to solve" the remaining issues in Wilson's testing plan. Bustamante also said last month that he expected to reach a deal on testing.

But on Monday, Lockyer said, "We have discontinued discussions" on testing. He did, however, leave room for talks to resume, saying: "That doesn't mean it can't reemerge."

Bustamante said Monday that the testing plan is "a proposal I can support." But he noted that Assembly Democrats are split on the issue, and he does not intend to impose his position on them.

Under California's school financing system, most of the \$203 million that Wilson vetoed ultimately will go to schools, but not until the end of the fiscal year next summer. And the money would be allocated based on attendance, rather than used for specific programs.

Much of the money was earmarked for urban districts represented by Democrats and for special programs, such as ones for students from poor areas, adult education and intellectually gifted students.

Those programs still will be funded, but won't receive cost-of-living increases of about \$123 million—unless a deal is struck in the closing days of the session.

One immediate impact, Democratic legislators acknowledge, is that the governor could carry out his plan to withhold funds for about \$30 million in various pet projects for the schools.

"I guess I do give up my little park," said Assemblywoman Martha M. Escutia (D-Bell).

Some Assembly Democrats want to ensure that if there is a statewide test, Spanish-speaking students would be tested in their native language until they become proficient in English.

Wilson does not want to require districts to give Spanish-language tests, but rather grant them the option to give tests in Spanish to new immigrants.

Other Democrats complain that Wilson wants to start the testing by buying one of a handful of standard tests administered to students in other parts of the country, even though this state's curriculum may not match questions on the tests.

Lockyer said Wilson also insisted on a provision to deny companies that produce and sell the tests the right to sue the state if they fail to win the lucrative contract.

Wilson, who wants the testing to begin this spring, contends that without the provision limiting the right to sue, a losing

company could delay the test for years by litigation.

The Republican governor had promised in his first election campaign to start a statewide assessment of students during his tenure. He also says he wants a test so he can show that his education initiatives—such as reduced class sizes in lower grades—have improved learning.

He has been stymied by legislators and some education lobbyists who say a statewide test might reflect badly on individual schools and teachers.

State Supt. of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin also opposes Wilson's test idea, arguing that the state ought to wait until January, when the State Board of Education is scheduled to adopt "standards" for what all children should know—and then use them as the basis for creating a state test.

The testing controversy in California is similar to one playing out in Washington. There, President Clinton, a Democrat, is pushing for national tests in reading and math starting in 1999, and Republicans are seeking to block them.

Clinton argues, much as does Wilson, that a national test would spur improvement in education by providing parents a way to pressure their school establishments to do better if the test showed their children lagging behind students elsewhere.

But many Republicans in Washington say that the federal government should stay out of education decisions and that tests alone will not produce the hoped-for results. They also worry about contents of the tests, fearing that they will not focus enough on essential skills.

Clinton's proposed tests would be voluntary, and only seven states and some urban school districts, including Los Angeles and Long Beach, have agreed to participate. Wilson has said California would not administer the national tests.

*

Times education writer Richard Lee Colvin contributed to this story.■

1. The New York Times

09/09/97; Edition: Late Edition - Final; Section: Section A; National Desk; Page Page 1, Column 4

CLINTON PROMOTES EDUCATION TESTING; GINGRICH OPPOSES

By ALISON MITCHELL

WASHINGTON, Sept. 8 — President Clinton and Speaker Newt Gingrich staked out opposing positions today on national educational testing as Congress planned for crucial votes perhaps as early as Tuesday on the program that Mr. Clinton has made a centerpiece of his second-term education agenda.

At an elementary school in Gambrills, Md., on his first day back from vacation, Mr. Clinton said support for his call to develop national tests for fourth-grade reading skills and eighth-grade math abilities should transcend partisanship.

"I think every American — Republicans, Democrats, independents — should favor high standards," he said. "I think people from all backgrounds should want all of our children to learn at a high level."

Children were clustered around him as he spoke at the school, about 25 miles northeast of Washington, under a banner proclaiming, "Educating Everyone Takes Everyone!"

But with conservative Republicans deeply suspicious of anything that could be seen as a Federal intrusion into local control of schools, Mr. Gingrich said today: "The President is focused on the wrong end. He's focused on Washington bureaucracy, Washington regulations, Washington red tape."

At a news conference in Detroit before a speech to the Economic Club of Detroit, Mr. Gingrich said, "We believe he ought to be focusing on local parents, local students and local teachers."

The battle over Mr. Clinton's plan for developing national tests to measure educational performance is one of many confrontations looming over education, as Republicans and Democrats alike plan to carry competing education agendas into the 1998 midterm Congressional elections to woo suburban swing voters.

Mr. Clinton proposed the national tests to allow parents and local school districts to assess student performance. While several such tests now exist, they are given to samplings of students and are not useful in determining how an individual student or school is performing.

To head off conservative opposition, Mr. Clinton repeated that use of the tests by states and school districts would be voluntary. "No school or school district will be forced to use them if they don't want to," he said. "But they will give us a sense of a national level of achievement in reading for fourth graders and math for eighth graders."

Recently, in an effort to further assuage the Republican Party, he also said the tests would be developed by the National Assessment Governing Board, a bipartisan, independent board created by Congress.

Democrats in the Senate said they thought that Mr. Clinton's pledge to use the independent board would win him support for the testing in the Senate, where a vote could come as early as Tuesday, as part of the spending bill that finances education.

Democratic negotiators said they were close to agreement with Republicans on a compromise under which the G.O.P. would withdraw an amendment to block the Education Department from spending money to develop the tests and would instead require the department to turn development of the tests over to the independent board.

But the situation was fluid. Senator Dan Coats, the Indiana Republican who co-sponsored the amendment, has not agreed to withdraw it, said his spokesman, Erik Hotmire. "Talks are continuing," he said. "There is not an agreement."

Even if the Senate approved the plan, opposition remains strong in the more conservative House, which could vote as early as Tuesday on its own amendment, by Representative William F. Goodling, to block the Education Department from spending money to develop the tests.

Mr. Goodling, the Pennsylvania Republican who leads the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, has argued that in the past decade 46 states have already set higher standards and created new tests. He says that another test will not help students who are performing poorly.

"What they don't need is one more standardized test to tell them and to tell their parents one more time that they are not doing well," Mr. Goodling said. "They know that." He said money should be put into classrooms instead. The Education Department is spending \$15 million to develop the tests this year and President Clinton has asked for another \$16 million in the next fiscal year.

Mr. Goodling has been drawing support from both ends of the political spectrum and said he thought his amendment would pass.

Conservatives like Gary Bauer, the head of the Family Research Council, have long warned against an expanded Federal role in schools. "It's an attempt by the Education Department to usurp more control from the states and local communities over the education of our children," Mr. Bauer said in a statement about the national testing plan.

Some liberal Democrats like Representative Major R. Owens of Brooklyn have also come out against Mr. Clinton's plan because, they say, not enough Federal money is being spent on schools to make sure that the poorest urban students do well.

A split vote by the Senate and House would mean that the issue would be decided in a conference committee, where Republicans would have to consider a possible veto fight with Mr. Clinton on an education issue.

The President made no veto threat today, with aides saying he did not want to disrupt Senate negotiations. But his spokesman, Michael D. McCurry, said a testing ban "is not going to become law, one way or another."

Mr. Clinton did give a clear display of how he planned to stump for the issue as he asked the children who surrounded him how many books they had read over the summer.

"I want to make sure we give a reading test to every fourth grader in America," he said, "so we'll know if the children need help measuring up to national standards, we'll know if a class needs help, we'll know if a school needs help."

04:18 EDT September 9, 1997■

1. Associated Press

09-09 11:51a Precede DETROIT

Gingrich: Clinton has wrong approach to education

By ROBERT GREENE

AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - House Speaker Newt Gingrich drew a sharp line between the GOP's plan for education and President Clinton's, pushing several bills today that would have taxpayers support private school choice for needy children.

Appearing before a House Education subcommittee, Gingrich complained that opponents of vouchers and tax-free educational savings accounts to nonpublic schools were condemning the urban poor to substandard schools.

"Public schools should be a magnet, not a trap," Gingrich told a hearing of the early childhood, youth and families subcommittee. Opponents of those private school subsidies should "take on the moral burden of sending their children to the worst school in their state."

But critics said that such a plan could only help a few children with the most motivated parents.

"The majority of those children are still going to be trapped," said Rep. Matthew Martinez, D-Calif., who sent his five children to Catholic schools for grades one through six.

Today's hearing was part of a House Republican effort to pit their educational agenda against that of President Clinton, who is pushing voluntary national tests in reading and math. That plan faces a challenge in the House as early as today, and possibly in the Senate too.

House Majority Leader Dick Armey told the subcommittee that public schools have become "bureaucracy-centered rather than child-centered. ... Parents must be able to vote with their feet, or the school bureaucracy will never listen."

On Monday, Gingrich told The Economic Club of Detroit that the president was focusing "on the wrong end" of education.

"He's focusing on Washington bureaucracy, Washington regulations and Washington red tape," Gingrich said of Clinton. "We believe he ought to focus on local parents, local students and local teachers."

Not every Republican was comfortable with the federal government pushing so-called school choice.

Rep. Michael N. Castle, R-Del., said he was concerned that private schools would skim students, leaving public schools to deal with the learning disabled and those children whose parents aren't involved in their education. He also questioned the wisdom of a party typically hostile to Washington having such an active federal role in a local or state issue.

In his Detroit speech, Gingrich said Republicans in Congress have failed to win the credit they deserve for welfare reform, tax cuts and balancing the budget.

Gingrich, citing waste in the earned income tax credit program, Medicare and mishandled tax returns, said the federal government should be streamlined in the same way that the auto industry is making cars with fewer parts.

"We've got to apply to the federal government the same standards of efficiency and the same standards of accuracy that apply to the private sector," he said.

Gingrich also said he expects Attorney General Janet Reno to seek appointment of an independent counsel to review Vice President Al Gore's calls to Democratic donors from the White House.

"I don't see how she can possibly avoid doing that," he said. ■

1. The Washington Post

09/09/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A08

Clinton Resumes Push for Testing; President Tells Arundel Children That Grading Schools Is a Must

By Amy Argetsinger
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Clinton visited an Anne Arundel County elementary school yesterday to promote his plan for national reading and math tests, a strategy he said would let schools be "held accountable" for their students' progress.

"Every single child in America needs to read well, and needs to read independently, by third grade," he said at Four Seasons Elementary School in Gambrills.

"If you set high expectations for students, they'll always give it to you."

Clinton's proposal to test all fourth-graders in reading and all eighth-graders in math — with standardized tests similar to those already used in Maryland — has drawn strong opposition from some Republican legislators who say the \$22 million tests would be an unnecessary and costly burden on local school systems. Congress may vote soon on a measure to block the Education Department from administering the tests.

But the president got a warm welcome in Gambrills, a quiet suburb between Washington and Baltimore. At a presentation attended by Gov. Parris N. Glendening (D) and other state and local officials, children clamored to shake Clinton's hand, and parents lined the sidewalk outside straining for a glimpse.

Fifth-grader Jonathan Knobel, selected to show off his reading skills to the president, read a paragraph from "Eben Tyne, Powdermonkey," the story of a young boy who loaded gunpowder for battleships in the Civil War. Then he presented the book to the chief executive.

"If you'd like to finish the book, you can do it yourself," the 10-year-old from Crofton said politely. "It's due back at the Crofton library the 27th of September."

Clinton said that by 1999, he wants every fourth-grader to take a reading test "so we'll know if a school needs help, if a class needs help." The tests, which would be created by an independent panel, would be voluntary — any state or school system could opt not to participate.

The president lauded Maryland for being one of the first states to establish statewide education standards in 1989, and noted that Four Seasons has shown improvement since testing began.

Clinton spent several minutes shaking hands and chatting with the hundreds of schoolchildren who mobbed him after his speech.

Afterward, fifth-grader Jessica Fulton, 10, confided to friends, "I shook his hand twice." ■

1. Baltimore Sun

September 9, 1997

Clinton pitches new test to class

President takes case for reading exam to Maryland school

By Carl M. Cannon

SUN NATIONAL STAFF

President Clinton celebrated International Literacy Day with a visit to an Anne Arundel County elementary school yesterday, where he saluted children in an advanced reading program, borrowed a book from a student and pitched his own plans for nationwide standardized testing directly to the children who would be tested.

Toning down his rhetoric on what is becoming a partisan issue, the president touted his national testing plan in soft tones — and manageable words — for his audience of third-, fourth- and fifth-graders at Four Seasons Elementary School in Gambrills.

"Do you believe all children can learn to read?" Clinton asked the children. "Would you like us to find out, so that if somebody is not reading well we can teach them to read well? It would be unfair to leave somebody behind, wouldn't it?"

The students happily answered "yes" to each of the president's questions, but on Capitol Hill the issue is trickier than yesterday's session might suggest.

The chief opposition comes from Republicans who have denounced the program as expensive, redundant and illustrative of one-size-fits-all Washington thinking.

"The president's plan is a waste of taxpayer's money," said Rep. Bill Goodling, the Republican chairman of the House education committee as well as a former teacher, coach and school board member in Pennsylvania.

"I strongly support higher academic standards, but I strongly oppose new federal tests," Goodling said. "House Republicans would rather send dollars to the classroom, bolster basic academics and increase parental involvement." The tests — proposed for fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math — are projected to cost about \$100 million per year.

The president has told the states that their participation would be voluntary and the federal government would pick up the tab.

The plan has been embraced by six states, including Maryland, and 15 of the nation's largest school districts. But some liberal lawmakers and teachers groups fear that test results might stigmatize immigrant and minority students, and diminish respect for the public schools.

Clinton's response is that the tests will help educators, lawmakers and parents determine which schools, school districts and even states need attention.

"Even though English and reading is the same in Maryland as it is in Montana, and mathematics is the same in California as it is in Maine, there is still no national standard to say whether every child has learned to read well enough," he said here. "So that's what we're trying to do."

The president is expending political capital to try and make it happen.

National standards in education was the subject of his address to the Maryland General Assembly in Annapolis in February — and of a subsequent speech in North Carolina.

Last week, Clinton took time out of his vacation on Martha's Vineyard to visit an elementary school on that Massachusetts island to express his displeasure at Republican attempts to kill his testing program.

Mike McCurry, the White House press secretary, yesterday reiterated the administration position that removing \$13 million in seed money to develop the tests — as Goodling is attempting to do this week — would make veto-bait of the huge spending bill for the Department of Education working its way through Congress.

Clinton's audience yesterday seemed oblivious to the machinations of Washington politics, but thrilled to see the president in the flesh.

The students also connected better with Clinton's remarks about his plans to bolster early childhood reading than with his comments about national testing.

"I love reading," third-grader Nicholas Pietrowski volunteered while awaiting the president's appearance.

Eight-year-old Kari Mencik, a pupil in a third-grade class, fidgeted nervously as she awaited the president. Asked if she was excited, she smiled and replied: "Big time!"

About 20 well-scrubbed kids who participated in a voluntary summer reading program were assembled on a makeshift stage sporting T-shirts with the slogan, "Educating Everyone Takes Everyone."

When it was time for the program to begin, several top Maryland Democrats, including Gov. Parris N. Glendening, Sen. Paul S. Sarbanes and Rep. Steny H. Hoyer walked in, each holding the hand of a child in identical T-shirts.

"Life-long memories are being made for all of us today," school Principal Lorna Leoni told the children and faculty. "It's a great day for Four Seasons."

When it was his turn to speak, Clinton delighted the students by asking all those who had read a book this summer to raise their hands. Every hand shot up.

"One of the most important things we are doing is to support a program called America Reads," Clinton explained.

"We're trying to get up to 1 million people all around the country to help parents and teachers make sure every single third-grader in America can read independently by the end of that third grade. And I think that's a very good thing to do. It's obvious that all of you are doing that now."

Clinton was introduced by a Four Seasons student, fifth-grader Jonathan Knobel, who wore a blue suit and black shoes. Jonathan was invited to read a passage to the president from a book he'd been reading, a fictionalized account of the Civil War battle between two iron warships, the Monitor and the Merrimack. The book is called "Eben Tyne, Powdermonkey" by Patricia Beatty and Phillip Robbins.

After presenting the book to the president, Jonathan got a big laugh from the audience — and the president — when he quietly added that Clinton has about 10 days to read it. It's due back at the county library Sept. 18.■

1. The Wall Street Journal

09/08/97 Section: Politics & Policy;

Opponents Sharpen Pencils Over National Testing Plan

By June Kronholz

Staff Reporter of The Wall Street Journal

WASHINGTON — It seemed a simple enough idea when President Clinton proposed it seven months ago: Find out if schoolchildren could read and do math by giving them two brief tests. Who could possibly object?

Plenty of people, it turns out.

National testing suddenly is in trouble, and in no small part because an overeager president sidestepped a prerogative-conscious Congress. In Cape Cod, Mass., last week, Mr. Clinton told teachers that critics of the tests are "people who are afraid our children can't measure up, or who have a misguided notion that somehow the federal government is trying to take over the direction of education."

But with some lawmakers determined to strip the tests of funding this week, and opposition growing on both the left and right, it appears to be more than that. "The people who are against it are against it for different reasons," says Chester Finn, an Education Department official in the Reagan administration. "Now there's a convergence of factions."

The irony is that Mr. Clinton has taken care to protect national tests from ideological sniper fire since he proposed them in his State of the Union Address last January. He has made the tests voluntary, charged the states with giving and grading them, and limited them to fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math, instead of potentially sensitive subjects like history.

Mr. Clinton began campaigning for the tests within a week of announcing them, enlisting support from Republican and Democratic governors, cajoling teachers' and principals' groups and, in his greatest coup, winning an endorsement in July from 15 big-city school districts, including New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. Business groups quickly signed on, and 67% of the American public told a recent Gallup poll that they favor national tests.

"The public is very clear that it wants these tests," says Anthony Carnevale, a vice president of Educational Testing Service, which is helping develop the tests. "The decision-making structure is just as clear that it doesn't."

For all Mr. Clinton's consensus building, many political leaders and educators have opposed the idea from the start. Conservative Republicans see it as federal intrusion and a threat to local control of the schools. Liberal Democrats fear innercity, immigrant and minority children will compare badly with youngsters from richer suburban schools. Many teachers fear being blamed for poor student results — and perhaps having salaries linked to scores. And local politicians, from school-board members to governors, worry about voter wrath if the results are disappointing.

"It's a little scary, in the sense that the public is not in a forgiving mood," adds Mr. Carnevale.

For all that, the Education Department set a fast-track schedule for national testing: appointing an oversight panel, holding national hearings and in August awarding a \$13 million contract to draft the outline of the tests. The department maintained from the start that the tests didn't need congressional approval because they are voluntary and because the money will come from the existing education budget. The Bush administration used money from the same fund, also without Congress's approval, when it launched an effort to write national curriculum standards six years ago.

But Mr. Clinton's decision not to ask Congress has angered the chairman of the House Education Committee, GOP Rep. William Goodling of Pennsylvania. He calls it "politically stupid," and last month announced he would try to kill the tests when Congress considers the Education Department's budget.

Mr. Goodling, who was a teacher, coach, principal, superintendent and school-board member in Pennsylvania before coming to Congress, says he's opposed to testing because it will confirm what everyone knows about student performance, without doing anything to improve it. "What is one more standardized test going to do for the 50% of kids who aren't doing well?" he asks.

Not all test opponents agree with Mr. Goodling's reasoning, but his opposition has given them a platform for their own complaints. An argument over who should decide what sort of questions will be asked became so heated in recent weeks that Mr. Clinton was forced to assign the job to the directors of the National Assessment of Educational Progress or NAEP. This is a test authorized by Congress in 1969 and given to a sampling of the country's 52 million schoolchildren every other year.

With that argument defused, opponents have only turned to others: that the national tests will undermine new state tests and that there's enough testing already. "You're adding test after test after test," says Sue Galletti of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, which hasn't endorsed the Clinton exams.

Despite the endorsement of the tests by some inner-city school districts, standardized testing has split the Congressional Black Caucus — some seeing humiliation in it, others a chance for greater funding for city schools if they perform markedly below the suburbs. Meantime, Hispanic opposition is growing: The Education Department will offer the math test in Spanish but is firm that fourth graders take the reading test in English.

Mr. Clinton recently insisted that he is "working to make sure this doesn't become a partisan issue." Test supporters note that the idea of a national test was also first proposed by President Bush and widely endorsed by congressional Republicans in 1991. Education has largely been a bipartisan issue for the past two years, with Democrats riding a surge of popular support for education reform and Republicans hurrying to catch up.

But Congress's pique over testing could at least dim that glow. "We like to do education on a bipartisan basis," says Mr. Goodling, implying that the president broke that agreement when he bypassed Congress. Republicans now are working on an alternative to Mr. Clinton's America Reads program, which would put a million volunteer reading teachers in the public schools, and plan to reintroduce a school-voucher plan for Washington, D.C. Democratic opposition killed a similar bill last year.

But the controversy hasn't dimmed Mr. Clinton's enthusiasm for national testing, in part because he foresees it as part of his legacy. NAEP, the only standardized national test in use now, is given to only a few students, and each of them takes only a slice of one test. Problem readers can't be traced back to a school, district or even a state. So when 70% of the fourth graders scored badly on the latest NAEP test, the results lead to little more than national chest beating.

By giving all children the same test, then publishing the results on a school, district and state level, Mr. Clinton hopes his tests will create public demand for better schools — and secure his reputation as the education president into the bargain. Thus Mr. Clinton wants to see the first test scores before he leaves office in 2000; unless Mr. Goodling intervenes, the first tests now are scheduled for spring 1999.

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1. Education Daily

September 8, 1997

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The House and Senate began debate last week on fiscal 1998 education funding bills, including attempts to halt President Clinton's voluntary national testing program.

Recent or Upcoming Action ...

Fiscal 1998 Appropriations H.R. 2264: Would boost the Education Department's budget from nearly \$29.47 billion this year to \$34.27 billion in fiscal 1998, including mandatory spending on programs such as student loans. It would increase spending on Title I and special education slightly, set aside \$205 million for whole school reforms, level-fund Safe and Drug-Free Schools grants, and cut Goals 2000 funding from \$491 million to \$475 million. S. 1061: Would increase ED's budget to nearly \$33.99 billion with level funding for Title I and Safe and Drug-Free Schools, but state special education grants for school-age children would rise 27 percent and school technology funding would more than double. Goals 2000 would rise to \$530 million, and \$40 million would be set aside for school construction grants. Both bills would set aside \$260 million for a childhood literacy program in fiscal 1999, raise the maximum Pell Grant to \$3,000, and eliminate State Student Incentive Grants (ED, July 16).

Last action: The Senate began debate on S. 1061 last Tuesday. The Senate Appropriations Committee chairman pledged to seek \$75 million for charter schools during House-Senate compromise meetings, up from \$51 million in the pending Senate proposal (ED, Sept. 5). The House began debate Thursday, moving \$25 million to special education and \$12.8 million out of Goals 2000. The House District of Columbia Appropriations Subcommittee held a hearing on D.C.

public schools Thursday, where members contemplated reviving plans for a voucher program.

Next action: The House and Senate are expected to vote as early as today on amendments to halt the development of voluntary national tests (ED, Sept. 5).

Omnibus Education S. 1: The GOP bill would allow states to use existing Title VI block grant funds for public and private school choice, would raise special education funding starting with a \$1 billion hike next year, and would authorize a school choice demonstration program for low-income families (ED, Jan. 23).

S. 12: The Democrats' bill would require the federal government to pay up to half of the interest on school construction bonds and authorize \$1.75 billion for reading programs and \$1.8 billion for school technology.

Last action: The House Education and the Workforce Committee discussed ways to boost literacy through teacher training last Wednesday (ED, Sept. 4).

Next action: The House Early Childhood, Youth and Families Subcommittee plans a hearing on school choice Tuesday. The House Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee will hold a hearing Friday in Cleveland to discuss ways to improve K-12 education.

Vocational Education H.R. 1853: The House GOP plan to reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act would allot school districts at least 90 percent of the basic state voc ed grant, up from 75 percent. It also would lower the minimum school district grant from \$15,000 to \$10,000. States would have their administrative set-asides shaved from 5 percent to 2 percent, and their leadership funds from 8.5 percent to 8 percent of their Perkins grant.

Increases in voc ed funds would be allocated under a census and poverty formula for the next three years. By 2002, the formula would be weighed 40 percent on the same population and 60 percent on its poverty rate (ED, July 24).

Last action: The House passed its bill, 414-12, on July 23.

Next action: The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee has indefinitely postponed a vote, originally set for Wednesday, on a combined voc ed and job training bill that would keep the programs' funding authority separate (ED, Aug. 28).

HEA Reauthorization H.R. 6: The bill would reauthorize funds for all existing Higher Education Act (HEA) programs, which expire Sept. 30.

After the House writes new legislation for student aid and other programs under HEA, it will be substituted into H.R. 6.

Last action: The Education Department's inspector general pressed the House postsecondary education subcommittee in July to create a post for a nonpolitical student aid manager (ED, July 30).

Next action: The House and Senate education committees plan to write their HEA bills this fall.

Private School Tax Breaks H.R. 2373, S. 1133: Would allow parents tax-free withdrawals from an education savings account to be used for expenses including private K-12 tuition, transportation, tutoring and computers (ED, Aug. 4.) Last action: H.R. 2373 was introduced Aug. 1 by House Speaker Newt Gingrich; referred to the House Ways and Means Committee. S. 1133 was introduced July 31 by Sen. Paul Coverdell, R-Ga.; referred to the Senate Finance Committee.

Next action: The House Ways and Means Committee is expected to work on H.R. 2373 this month. No action is scheduled in the Senate.

Affirmative Action S. 590, H.R. 1909: Would end use of race and gender preferences by the federal government in employment, contracting and other programs, which could affect any Education Department race-based scholarship programs.

Last action: At a House Constitution Subcommittee hearing June 26, GOP members of Congress criticized affirmative action.

Next action: The Senate Judiciary Committee plans hearings on S. 590 in the fall. House Speaker Newt Gingrich is pushing H.R. 1909 as a companion to H.R. 1031, which would offer tax breaks and incentives to low-income areas, and has not been scheduled for action yet.

Student Loans H.R. 2391: Would make uniform the student loan repayment options for the Family Education Loan (FEL) and Direct Student Loan programs, such as offering an income-sensitive payment plan of up to 25 years for FEL debt.

Last action: Introduced Sept. 3 by Rep. William Pascrell, D-N.J.; referred to the Education and the Workforce Committee.

Next action: None is scheduled.—Laureen Lazarovici.■

1. Education Daily

September 8, 1997

LOS ANGELES WON'T GIVE ENGLISH-ONLY READING TEST

The nation's second-largest school district last week dropped out of voluntary national reading tests after the **Education Department** announced it would not offer a Spanish- language exam.

The Los Angeles Unified School District said it will still give the eighth-grade math test, which will be offered in languages other than English.

"We can't participate in a test if all of our kids can't take it," said Ron Prescott, lobbyist for L.A. schools, where 46 percent of the students are limited-English- proficient (LEP).

Last week, ED turned down requests from advocates for LEP students to offer a fourth-grade reading test in Spanish—a move that cost it the support of Hispanic members of Congress on the eve of House and Senate consideration of legislation to block the testing program (ED, Sept. 5).

An ED spokeswoman said Los Angeles officials had not notified the department about its partial withdrawal but said, "It is unfortunate that L.A.'s students, parents and teachers won't get the information that the tests would have given them."

Worm In The Big Apple? In a statement unrelated to the issue of Spanish-language tests, a spokesman for New York City said the school district chancellor has not decided whether to participate in the testing program.

"No hard and fast decision has been made," said district spokesman J.D. LaRock, despite the presence of New York City officials at President Clinton's July announcement and its name on White House lists of cities participating.

When Clinton announced that urban districts would participate in the program, he was unequivocal: "Fifteen of our largest school districts ... have committed to meet these standards and to participate in the tests to measure the progress of their students against them." —Laureen Lazarovici■

1. Education Daily

September 8, 1997

HOUSE MOVES MONEY AROUND IN EDUCATION FUNDING BILL

The House began action on its fiscal 1998 education funding bill Thursday by adding to special education and subtracting from Goals 2000 school reform.

By voice vote, the House passed an amendment by Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., to move \$25 million to special education, mostly from Labor Department job training programs, but with \$1 million from the Education Department's inspector general.

Meanwhile, two Democrats—Reps. David Obey of Wisconsin and Peter DeFazio of Oregon—successfully pushed to transfer \$12.8 million from Goals 2000 school reform into a child abuse prevention fund.

The House's pending Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bill, H.R. 2264, already would cut Goals 2000 from \$491 million to \$475 million.

GOP Attacks Whole School Reform During debate, conservative Republicans lashed into a \$205 million fund in the bill for whole school reforms (ED, July 17).

"We will be creating a brand new spending program," said Rep. David McIntosh, R-Ind., arguing instead for block grants to states. "Whole school reform has strings attached."

"This is much more sweeping than Goals 2000," complained Rep. Mark Souder, R-Ind.

While the reform program was Obey's idea, Rep. John Porter, R-Ill., chairman of the House education funding panel, enthusiastically defended it from the slings and arrows of his GOP colleagues, saying the money otherwise would go to Title I.

"From this Republican's perspective, this is exactly what we need," Porter said. "This money is money that would otherwise go to a program that doesn't work well—Title I—that just throws money at inner city schools with no guidance."

But the House this week could take up an amendment by Rep.

Frank Riggs, R-Calif., chairman of the K-12 education subcommittee, to shift the whole school reform funds to Title I basic grants.

On Friday, continuing what promises to be a protracted debate, House conservatives tried to move money out of social programs they oppose—using non-controversial education programs as their repository.

For instance, the House rejected an attempt to move \$4.3 million to special education—an increase of 0.1 percent for that account—from a worker-protection enforcement fund, a favorite of Democrats, by a 167-260 vote.

House members also debated an amendment to move \$11.2 million out of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and into vocational and adult education. A vote on that measure is expected today.

According to an updated list of possible amendments, House conservatives may try to move more Goals 2000 funds to a range of other education programs, including special education, charter schools and technology.

There also might be a bipartisan effort to eliminate the Pell Grant eligibility of postsecondary institutions that are ineligible to participate in federal student loan programs because of high default rates.

Currently, institutions with a 25 percent default rate for three consecutive years aren't allowed to participate in federal student loan programs, but those that reach 40 percent in one year are cut off from all student aid.

An amendment to boost construction funding for impact aid schools from \$7 million to \$18 million might also come up.

The Senate did not debate its version of the education funding bill, S. 1061, on Friday.

Amendments to halt development of voluntary national tests in reading and math could be voted on as early as today in both chambers.

Goodling gained a high-profile ally last week when House Speaker Newt Gingrich spoke out for the first time against the national tests.

"There are lots of instruments created in the private sector and lots of instruments created at the state and local levels," Gingrich said at a meeting with columnists Thursday, according to press accounts.

"The idea of a Washington bureaucrat suddenly doing better at this than they've done everywhere else strikes me as implausible," Gingrich said. —Laureen Lazarovici■

1. The Detroit News

09/08/97:

Education fight awaits Clinton

By Sandra Sobieraj

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — After three nearly uninterrupted weeks at play on Martha's Vineyard, President Clinton returned Sunday to the White House with a long to-do list. At the top: Salvage his centerpiece plan for education standards and testing.

Clinton has "really had a chance to relax and spend some time thinking and recharging his batteries, so I think he's looking forward to getting back to work," spokesman Joe Lockhart said before the president and his family left their Massachusetts island haven Sunday.

"We expect progress on a number of issues."

Still, looming over the work ahead was the expectation among many White House officials that Clinton would be distracted by the departure of daughter Chelsea for Stanford University later this month.

One administration official cited a fall planning memo sent in August from the White House to the heads of all federal agencies, encouraging them to watch for official opportunities for the president to travel to northern California, near Stanford.

Clinton is under pressure to act quickly on the big issues of tobacco, free trade and global warming, but the stakes are highest on education.

He was wasting little time in trying to beat back congressional opponents who hoped for a vote this week on gutting his program for voluntary grade-school testing in math and reading. He was scheduled to speak at a Maryland elementary school today.

Aides gave the speech advance billing as his most forceful yet, and they suggested he would threaten to veto the massive spending bill for the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education departments if Republicans succeed on an amendment blocking funds for the testing.

Education Secretary Richard Riley and senior White House advisers have been waving the veto threat for weeks.

In a similar school appearance last week on Martha's Vineyard, one of the few official pauses in his vacation, Clinton admitted to being "a little bit peeved" that his push to set high national education standards and test learning has not caught fire.

Just six states and 15 school districts have embraced the plan and committed to the testing that would begin in 1999.

Caption: President Clinton greets a baby, Tristan Nyman, before boarding Air Force One on Sunday to return to Washington after a three-week vacation. J. Scott Applewhite / Associated Press■

1. Chicago Tribune

09/08/97; Edition: NORTH SPORTS FINAL; N; Section: NEWS; Page 5

CLINTON PUSHES NATIONAL TESTS GOP MAY CUT OFF FUNDS FOR EXAMS IN READING, MATH

By Noah Isackson
Washington Bureau.

President Clinton plans to visit a Maryland elementary school Monday to pitch his plan for new national reading and math tests, even as congressional Republicans seek to scrap it.

In a dispute over how to fix the nation's public schools, the House and Senate could vote as early as Monday on Republican amendments to block funding for the administration's proposed National Standards and Testing Initiative.

An educational priority for the administration, the tests would measure 4th graders on how well they can read, and 8th graders on their math skills, including some algebra and geometry. Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and 12 other cities have signed up for the voluntary program, tentatively scheduled to begin in 1999.

Opinion polls suggest broad public backing. Supporters say such national tests will help parents rate and make decisions about their schools, encourage scholastic achievement and help school systems identify their strengths and weaknesses.

"In essence, what we're proposing is that parents be given a report card on schools . . . (and) thereby make some assessment as to whether or not their children are being educated to their expectations," said Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.)

Critics suspect the initiative would undermine local control of education, a sensitive issue for conservatives, and perhaps push school boards to alter their curricula to satisfy Washington's educational views. They also charge that the tests might put some minority pupils at a disadvantage.

"The president's plan is a waste of taxpayers' money and won't do anything except increase federal involvement in our schools," said House Education Committee Chairman William Goodling (R-Pa.), who is seeking to cut funding for the program.

Arguing that America's education problems should be fixed at home and not by the federal government, Republicans in the House and Senate want to block the \$16 million allotted to the Department of Education to develop the tests. Administering the tests is projected to cost \$90 million to \$100 million a year, beginning in the spring of 1999.

Rep. John Porter (R-Ill.) is pressing a compromise that would allow use of federal funds to develop national tests but not implement them.

Republicans want legislation that gives parents alternatives to the public schools through the use of school vouchers and tax-free education savings accounts.

"We could find you 500 schools that, without testing, we could all agree are really bad," said House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.). "The president then says we'll keep the kids trapped there."

Critics argue that the new tests have not been properly researched and would give the public an false sense of how American pupils are learning.

"The tests will encourage rote and lower-level thinking like memorization," said Monty Neill, associate director of the National Center for Fair and Open Testing in Cambridge, Mass. "There is only research to show that teachers teach to pass a test and kids work to pass a test. That doesn't lead any student to a better understanding of subject matter. The motivation is to score higher on a test, not to learn more."

Critics fear the tests would have questions that will not provide teachers and parents with accurate information about education.

"Clinton has taken the subject of accountability and politicized it," said Paul Anir, a political analyst for Empower America, a Washington-based conservative advocacy group. "The test is filled with left-wing educational fads like 'fuzzy math,' a concept that values how you approach a math problem rather than whether or not it was answered correctly. Concepts like these do not help in offering a barometer of American students' academic achievement."

Responding to such concerns, Clinton proposed late last month that the tests be developed by an independent and bipartisan panel, the National Assessment Governing Board, rather than the Education Department. White House officials are threatening a veto if legislation denies funding for the tests.

A recent Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll found that two out of three Americans said national tests would improve pupil achievement "a great deal or quite a lot," and the American Federation of Teachers reported that 20 states and the District of Columbia are interested in using the proposed national tests.

Clinton plans one more appeal for support when he visits the Four Seasons Elementary School in Gambrills, Md. Maryland has endorsed the testing program, along with Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Carolina and West Virginia.

"We are tired of being told we can't overcome our obstacles," Clinton told schoolteachers in Oak Bluffs, Mass. last week, taking a break in his vacation to push his plan. "We expect to be held accountable. . . . We don't want to make any excuses anymore."

Civil rights groups such as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund have refused to endorse the program.

"The tests will result in the gross over representation of poor and minority children in low-end classes and low curriculum tracks, which ultimately limit opportunity and deny the lifelong benefits of a quality education," said Janell Byrd, assistant counsel for NAACP Legal Defense Fund.

That assertion drew heated denials from the Chicago Public Schools administration. "We do not intend to track students based on the exam. We're making sure that students get the standards across the system," said Cozette Buckney, chief education officer of the Chicago Public Schools. "We intend to use all quantifiable data to better help our students. It's unfair to students in poorer communities to assume that they cannot learn or cannot pass tests."

Some critics suggest that the debate has less to do with the pupils and more to do with politicians. "There's only one governor that wins with a national test, and that's the governor in the state where students score the highest," said Anthony Carnevale, vice president for public leadership at the Education Testing Service in Princeton, N.J. "That makes people nervous. Governors, school administrators, county executives, mayors all have a stake in this." ■

1. New York Daily News

September 8, 1997

After Bill Vacation, Back to School Plan

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON -- After three weeks at play on Martha's Vineyard, President Clinton returned to the White House yesterday with a long to-do list. At the very top: Salvage his plan for education standards and testing.

The President also hoped, through an ambitious fall game plan, to control the political agenda on the big issues of tobacco, free trade and global warming.

But the stakes are highest for Clinton on education. "The President has made it clear that education is at the top of his list," White House spokesman Joe Lockhart said.

Clinton was wasting little time in trying to beat back congressional opponents who hoped for a vote this week on gutting his program for voluntary grade-school testing in math and reading. He was scheduled to speak at a Maryland elementary school first thing today.

Aides suggested he would threaten to veto the huge spending bill for the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education departments if Republicans succeed on an amendment blocking funds for the testing. ■

1. The Washington Post

09/08/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A04

Presidency's Next Plot Twist Is a Late-Season Cliffhanger; Clinton Tests Themes for His Endgame Goals

By John F. Harris

Washington Post Staff Writer

President Clinton loves to read mysteries while on vacation, and on the last week of his 21-day respite to Martha's Vineyard a new one arrived, courtesy of his staff back in Washington.

The book is actually a three-ring binder, and Clinton himself is the main character. The mystery: What does Clinton want to do with the rest of his presidency?

The document, compiled under orders of White House Chief of Staff Erskine B. Bowles, lists "14 pillars" of the administration, including sections on education, race relations, "renewing cities," "entitlement reform," and "crime, drugs, and prisons." Each listing has different initiatives Clinton might pursue, as well as the political benefits and risks of each course.

The idea, aides said, is that Clinton would read the document on vacation, then when he returns to Washington this week, meet with aides to set priorities, deciding which of the so-called pillars he wants to move to the forefront.

Clinton, who arrived at the White House yesterday after the longest vacation of his presidency, is returning at an odd time. For nearly three years, the administration has defined itself principally through the politics of the budget. During 1995 and 1996, Clinton's message was negative: Trust me to keep extremist Republicans from cutting popular programs. For this year, the message was positive: Trust me to build consensus and finally get a bipartisan budget passed. Now that an accord has been passed into law, according to some Democratic officials and outside observers, there is a void in the Clinton presidency.

"It's a little bit themeless right now," said University of Wisconsin political scientist Charles O. Jones. "That's got to be a frustration for an activist president."

The frustration isn't because there is a lack of things to do. This fall, Clinton faces a battle to win congressional approval giving him authority to negotiate free-trade agreements on a "fast-track" basis. He must also announce the administration's position on a proposed settlement between states and the tobacco industry. Then he and Congress must reach agreement on the 13 appropriations bills needed to keep the federal government running. Next month, he will travel to South America, returning just in time for a critical Washington summit with Chinese leader Jiang Zemin. And by December he must approve the U.S. position on a global treaty limiting "greenhouse gases."

The problem, in the view of some administration officials and Democrats on Capitol Hill, is that, despite the flurry of activity, it amounts to a somewhat shapeless agenda. Clinton has yet to publicly identify the unifying programs and rhetorical themes that will make it clear to the public what he wants to accomplish in the post-budget phase of his tenure.

White House aides promise a partial answer this week. Today, Clinton will go to a Maryland elementary school to talk about his plan for raising educational standards by a program of voluntary national tests of fourth- and eighth-graders. On Tuesday, he will give what aides are calling a "back-to-work" speech at American University, outlining his hopes for the fall, including a pledge that, after years of delay, he will push for reform of campaign finance laws. On Wednesday, he will launch his campaign for the "fast-track" free trade authority.

But the schedule highlights the potential tension between Clinton's short-term "to do" list and his long-term hopes for his presidency.

Several White House aides say Clinton has high hopes for reasserting himself publicly as the leader of the Democratic Party. Yet the most prominent items on his fall agenda may divide the party as much as they unite it. Congressional and White House aides say it is unlikely the "fast-track" trade bill will win majority support among Democrats, and if it passes, it will be on the strength of Republican votes.

Even the proposal for education tests, which has proved popular in polls, has revealed fissures in the Democratic coalition. Some black and Hispanic lawmakers have warned that new tests will simply stigmatize the weakest students unless they are accompanied by new funds to help the poorest school districts.

But various White House advisers say Clinton believes he has the best chance he has ever had to remake the Democratic Party around his brand of political centrism. White House senior adviser Rahm Emanuel said the majority support Democrats gave the recent tax and spending bills proves the point.

"Clintonism applies to more than just Clinton," Emanuel said.

What Emanuel calls "Clintonism" applies also to the president's attempt to exert influence on issues that fall outside the traditional domain of Washington but are of more interest to ordinary voters. These include his educational standards proposal, as well as such events as a White House symposium on child care that Clinton will host next month.

Clinton embraced this brand of issue advocacy under the urging of political consultant Dick Morris during last year's election. But White House aides said Clinton is eager to show that pursuing these issues can be an authentic style of governing, not merely a set of poll-tested campaign gambits.

Among congressional Democrats, there appears to be less interest in this new brand of politics than in more traditional

ways the party has defined itself — by taking on Republicans attacking popular government programs. On Friday, Bowles, deputy chief of staff John Podesta and White House congressional liaison John Hilley traveled to Capitol Hill to plot strategy with House Minority Leader Richard A. Gephardt (D-Mo.) and Senate Minority Leader Thomas A. Daschle (D-S.D.). At the meeting, according to Democratic sources, the White House and congressional leaders agreed to look for at least a few high-profile fights with Republicans over the appropriations bills.

In both Congress and the White House, however, the sense of lull is unmistakable. "What we have to do is not much," said a senior congressional aide. "The question is, what do we want to do. . . . If you're looking for 'message' and big political stuff, there's not a lot there."■

1. The Dallas Morning News

09/05/97; Section: NEWS

(This story also appeared in the The New Orleans Times-Picayune and the San Antonio Express-News)

National test plan under fire; Officials try to save program critics say won't help schools

Associated Press

WASHINGTON - President Clinton's deputies fought Thursday to save his proposed national tests in reading and math from congressional critics, who said the plan would feed bureaucrats but shortchange struggling schools.

"These tests will help mobilize the American people in a great national effort to raise reading and math achievement," **Education Secretary Richard W. Riley** told a Senate Appropriations subcommittee. "Because this is so important for our country, I see it as a great patriotic cause."

Both the House and Senate were planning votes as early as Thursday on efforts to block the Education Department from going forward with the voluntary tests, scheduled to begin in 1999.

The tests, a top item on Mr. Clinton's education agenda, would measure fourth-graders on reading and eighth-graders on math.

Republicans said the administration was using gimmicks to fight the problem of poor-performing, crime-ridden schools. Instead, said House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., parents should be given more choice on where to send their children.

Republicans want an expansion of vouchers and tax-free savings accounts to help parents find alternatives to public schools.

"We could find you 500 schools that without testing we could all agree are really bad," Mr. Gingrich told reporters. "The president then says we'll keep the kids trapped there."

Despite the partisan rhetoric, the lines aren't clearly drawn on the issue. Many Republicans support the tests, an idea hatched in the Bush administration.

"I don't see a problem right now with where the department is going," said Sen. James Jeffords, R-Vt., chairman of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, which oversees education, said at the Appropriations subcommittee hearing.

He said tests would give local governments and states a way to see how their students are doing and if state-created standards are working.

The Senate minority leader, Tom Daschle, D-S.D., said the test results would help parents rate and make decisions about their schools.

"In essence, what we're proposing is that parents be given a report card on schools, a report card to determine the degree to which the schools are performing and thereby make some assessment as to whether or not their children are being educated to their expectations," he told reporters.

Business leaders have supported the tests, arguing that they will help assure that students can compete with those elsewhere in the world and are intellectually prepared for jobs.

The proposal calls for converting existing federal tests to measure educational trends into tests for individual students.

Some liberals oppose the tests, saying they would be used to compare rich and poor schools without giving poor schools the money and teachers to improve. Rep. Major R. Owens, D-N.Y., has joined House Republicans in urging that the tests be blocked.

Mr. Owens and Rep. William Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House Education and Workforce Committee, circulated a letter this week noting that the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund raised concerns about the tests. ■

1. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

09/05/97; Section: NATIONAL

SCHOOL TESTING BATTLE ESCALATES: EDUCATION SECRETARY SAYS CLINTON MAY USE VETO IF NATIONAL EDUCATION TESTING IS BARRED

By JEFFREY L. KATZ and
CHUCK MCCUTCHEON
CONGRESSIONAL QUARTERLY

The increasingly partisan battle over national education testing escalated sharply yesterday when **Education Secretary Richard Riley** warned that President Clinton may veto the fiscal 1998 appropriations bill for his department if Congress amends it to bar development of such tests.

"Our proposal for voluntary national tests is not revolutionary," Riley said at a Senate Appropriations subcommittee hearing on the issue. "Voluntary national tests, linked to high standards, will give parents and teachers a much clearer, more realistic picture of how their children are actually doing."

As for a Clinton veto, Riley later told House Democrats in a closed-door meeting that "my judgment is that it would be that important to him." Other advisers have been urging Clinton to issue an explicit veto threat on the matter.

Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, insisted the administration was misguided in developing the tests without explicit congressional approval. "Let's slow it down so that they don't make the mistake," he said. "Get us involved."

Clinton's proposed tests, to be administered for the first time in 1999, would be voluntary, with each state deciding whether to use them. Fourth graders would be tested for reading skills, while eighth graders would take math tests.

Sens. Judd Gregg, R-N.H., and Daniel Coats, R-Ind., are expected to offer a Senate floor amendment to the pending Labor-Health and Human Services, and Education funding bill barring use of funds to develop those tests. Goodling plans to offer a similar amendment to the House version of the bill.

Gregg did not sound quite as opposed to the concept of national tests as Goodling; he merely said he wanted to ensure that the tests deal strictly with basic reading and math skills and would not lead to "the slippery slope of moving down the road of a national curriculum."

At his daily press briefing, Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle of South Dakota said national educational testing is "entirely necessary" and that Democrats would fight to kill the Gregg-Coats amendment.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., also got into the argument yesterday, insisting that the federal government should stay out of the business of developing tests for schoolchildren.

"I believe in testing; I was a teacher," Gingrich told a group of reporters and columnists. "I also know that there are lots of instruments created in the private sector and lots of instruments created at the state and local levels. The idea of a Washington bureaucrat suddenly doing better at this than they've done everywhere else strikes me as implausible."

Gingrich also made a renewed pitch for a Republican proposal to allow parents to set up tax-sheltered savings account to pay for elementary and secondary education expenses, including private or parochial school tuition. And he predicted that the proposal eventually would surmount intense White House opposition.

Introduced in the House and Senate last month by a group led by Sen. Paul Coverdell, R-Ga., the proposal would allow parents to set aside up to \$2,000 per year in after-tax dollars in an education account similar to an individual retirement account (IRA). The account could be used for public, private, parochial or home-schooling education expenses in kindergarten through 12th grade. ■

1. Baltimore Sun

September 5, 1997 Category: Local

Gore visits Anne Arundel school

Vice president advocates national education tests

By Tom Stuckey

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Vice President Al Gore went to Shady Side yesterday to challenge Congress to support President Clinton's proposed national education tests.

Gore told a group of Shady Side Elementary School fifth-graders that he suspected they worked harder when they knew they were going to be tested, because "that's just human nature."

That's why the president wants to begin in 1999 to test fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math, Gore said during a one-hour visit. "If you don't have standards, we'll never inspire [students] to the highest levels of achievement," he said.

Gore's visit was part of a Clinton administration plan to build support for national standards in such basic subjects as reading, math and science and for the voluntary testing the administration says is needed to gauge the results.

The House was considering a proposal to forbid the Department of Education to spend money on the national tests.

Gore praised Maryland for being the first state to adopt Clinton's proposal and for being a leader in developing state tests to measure how well schools are educating children.

But, he said, "statewide standards are not enough."

"The competition isn't between Baltimore and Shady Side. It isn't between Maryland and Michigan," Gore said. In the new world economy, U.S. workers must compete with those from all over the world, he said.

Gore also visited a second-grade class where, seated in a wooden rocking chair, he read a book about three frogs and a baby alligator to 23 children seated beside him or on the floor at his feet.

The vice president's visit came as a House committee heard testimony yesterday about a fund-raiser at a Buddhist temple attended by Gore. A day earlier, Attorney General Janet Reno announced she was reviewing whether to open a preliminary investigation that could lead to appointment of an independent prosecutor to investigate Gore's fund-raising activities.

Reporters were kept away from Gore during his Maryland visit. He did not acknowledge a question shouted at him about his fund-raising.

Gov. Parris N. Glendening and top state and county education officials met Gore when he arrived by helicopter from Washington.■

1. Education Daily

September 5, 1997 Category: Trade

SENATE SEEKS COMPROMISE ON TESTING CONTROVERSY

A key senator remained mum yesterday about whether he supports President Clinton's voluntary national testing plan, as the exams' fate remained mired in education funding bills awaiting House and Senate votes.

Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., expressed ambivalence about the tests at a zero-hour hearing of the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee, which he chairs.

"There is a lot of concern about the issue of a federal role in education, of it being intrusive," Specter observed.

"Maybe it ought to go through the legislative process; I'm just not sure." He added, "Testing is necessary. The question is how the test is administered."

Jeffords On Board

In contrast, Sen. James Jeffords, R-Vt., chairman of the education policy committee, broke ranks with his fellow GOP panel members and said he supported the testing initiative, which Clinton wants to begin in spring 1999.

"It's important for localities and states to have options in testing," said Jeffords, often a moderate force on education issues. "I don't see problems with what the department is doing."

On Tuesday, Sen. Dan Coats, R-Ind., introduced an amendment to a Senate fiscal 1998 appropriations bill that would bar the Education Department from spending money to develop or administer the tests unless Congress specifically authorizes them (ED, Sept. 4).

Coats' effort follows a similar four-month crusade in the House by Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the Education and the Workforce Committee, who testified at the Senate hearing.

The hearing was designed to clear the way for the Senate to vote on the testing plan. But proceedings bogged down, and by late afternoon the Senate had taken up neither the Coats amendment nor the spending bill, S. 1061, which also includes funding for labor and health programs.

With Clinton hinting at a veto if the spending bill would kill his initiative, a Capitol Hill source said senators were trying to come up with a compromise plan, perhaps codifying the administration's recent announcement that it would allow an independent, bipartisan board to oversee the program, which is already well into development (ED, Aug. 28).

Heart Of Education Control Debate

At the hearing, conservatives lashed into Clinton's proposal.

Sen. Lauch Faircloth, R-N.C., said it would drive curriculum. And Sen. Judd Gregg, R-N.H., said "I don't support the Education Department doing the test because there are many forces influencing the department that want to usurp local control."

Responding to the local control argument, Sen. Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts, the top Democrat on the education policy committee, asked, "Are we going to deny states and districts the opportunity" to offer the tests? Pointing to controversies over the teaching of even basic skills, Gregg asked Education Secretary Richard Riley whether ED would be amenable to legislation barring it from developing tests in yet more contentious areas, such as history and science.

Riley countered, "It would be a real mistake for Congress to start saying what could and couldn't be done." Previous GOP administrations wanted a more extensive testing program in more topics and grade levels. Riley reminded the subcommittee.

However, Clinton also has publicly stated that he envisions more tests--a fact Riley didn't mention (ED, May 28).

Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, the ranking Democrat on the education funding panel, said school superintendents want to know how students are doing so they can ask governors and other political bodies for more help. — Laureen Lazarovici■

1. Education Daily

September 5, 1997 Category: Trade

ENGLISH ONLY: ED REFUSES ALTERNATE READING TESTS

The Education Department has formally decided against offering a voluntary fourth-grade reading test in languages other than English, much to the dismay of advocates for students with limited English skills.

While ED's director of the voluntary testing program said as early as a month ago that there would be no version of the test in Spanish or another language, Acting Deputy Secretary Mike Smith said shortly afterward that the issue was still under discussion (ED, Aug. 11).

A letter Wednesday from Education Secretary Richard Riley to the chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus leaves no doubt.

"The purpose of the fourth-grade test is to test student proficiency in reading in English, not general reading comprehension," Riley wrote to Rep. Xavier Becerra, D-Calif.

"Therefore, the voluntary national test itself will not be developed in other languages."

Advocates for limited-English-proficient (LEP) students, including Latino members of Congress, have argued that reading skills are transferable from one language to another.

17 House Votes Lost

Yesterday, Becerra said that he was "extremely dismayed" by the decision, and the 17 members of his caucus will not support the tests President Clinton wants when this issue comes up in a crucial House vote this week as part of debate over H.R. 2264, the fiscal 1998 education funding bill, which would provide \$34.4 billion for ED.

The Council of the Great City Schools—which only five weeks ago was applauding the 15 urban districts that signed up for the exams—said it was "distressed and troubled" by ED's decision and urged the administration to reconsider.

"The Council is concerned that the goal of the tests—to spur high standards for all children—has now been compromised," said a statement by the group.

"It's very disappointing," said Jose Hernandez, assistant superintendent for multilingual programs in Houston, which agreed in July to participate in the tests scheduled to begin in spring 1999.

"Our kids are on the sidelines, and it leaves us out of the accountability loop," he added.

Nonetheless, Hernandez said Houston would still participate in the national voluntary testing program, which also includes a math test for eighth-graders.

That exam will be given in languages other than English.

No City Defectors

Indeed, although the Clinton administration has been touting the voluntary nature of the exams, none of the three cities contacted yesterday said it would opt out of the reading exam if it is only in English.

Chicago and El Paso officials also said they would stick with their plans to participate.

Argelia Carreon, director for bilingual education in El Paso, said her district would likely separate out data on how students who had participated in English-as-a-second-language and bilingual programs do on the test.

"That will give us some information" about how well the district serves students with limited English skills, "but not a full picture," she said.

The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund is urging Congress to oppose the tests but has not taken a position on specific proposals on the House and Senate floors this week to halt the program. —Laureen Lazarovici■

1. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

September 5, 1997

Clinton will bend on school accounts, Gingrich says

By Jeanne Cummings,

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Washington — House Speaker Newt Gingrich on Thursday predicted that President Clinton ultimately will support a proposal to allow parents to use tax-exempt money to pay for elementary and high school education costs, including private school tuition.

The measure is being sponsored by Sen. Paul Coverdell (R-Ga.), who has been promised a meeting with President Clinton to discuss the bill.

Gingrich made his remarks during a meeting with Coverdell and a small group of reporters that was designed to draw attention to the proposal.

According to Coverdell, the bill would allow creation of special savings accounts that would be exempt from taxes on the accrued interest.

Once such an account is established, anyone could donate to it. For example, friends or relatives or corporations could contribute to the accounts of specific children, Coverdell said.

The bill does not provide for formal monitoring of the accounts. Among the approved uses for the money would be tutoring, transportation, uniforms, home computers and tuition at private schools.

Coverdell's proposal was inserted by Gingrich and Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) into the recently passed budget package, but the White House insisted it be removed.

Gingrich and Lott vowed to push the proposal through Congress independently and return it to Clinton's desk this fall.

Opponents of the proposal argue that it is the first step toward a private school voucher system that would siphon millions of dollars from the public school system and purge the smartest children from those classrooms.

But Coverdell called that argument "ludicrous" and said that "not one dime" of federal money would be diverted from public education to support the savings accounts.

"It is a broad-based concept that allows a family to draw out of the account for special teaching needs," Coverdell said.

Gingrich said that once the proposal gets more attention, Clinton and his aides "will finally realize they are on the wrong side of this issue." ■

1. The Washington Post

09/05/97: Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A07

Congress Struggles With Contentious Issues in Push to Clear Spending Bills

By Helen Dewar and John E. Yang
Washington Post Staff Writers

Lawmakers labored yesterday to clear legislation to fund the government for the spending year that begins in four weeks, wrestling with politically contentious matters that could threaten GOP leaders' hopes for a trouble-free close of business.

The House approved a \$12.3 billion foreign aid measure after agreeing to ban U.S. funding for private groups that use their own money to perform or promote abortions overseas, except in cases of rape, incest or to protect the life of the woman. The 234 to 191 vote on the antiabortion provision, sponsored by Rep. Christopher H. Smith (R-N.J.), continues a policy battle with President Clinton dating to 1993 and, if it survives House-Senate negotiations, would likely trigger a veto.

Conservative House Republicans, upset over parts of the budget agreement that they say abandon the party's efforts to limit the size and scope of the federal government, signaled last night their intention to use the bill **funding the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education departments** to highlight their concerns.

"We want to have a debate on whether we have backed up from what we said we stood for," said Rep. Mark Edward Souder (R-Ind.), one of the leaders of the effort. "This isn't reverse. This is turning the car around and speeding in the wrong direction."

About 20 lawmakers have prepared about 120 amendments intended to both highlight and try to correct what they view as problems in the bill. The lawmakers stress that their intent is not to torpedo the bill, the largest of the 13 annual spending measures. "The goal is to put the debate before the American people," said Rep. Sue Myrick (R-N.C.).

The resulting debate could reflect the disagreement between GOP congressional leaders and conservative party activists over the direction of the Republican Party. Such party leaders as former vice president Dan Quayle and magazine publisher Malcolm S. "Steve" Forbes have heaped scorn on the budget agreement, saying it gave President Clinton too much new spending and too many government programs.

Meanwhile, senators of both parties neared agreement last night on an administration-proposed plan to defuse the controversy over national testing of schoolchildren's reading and math skills by turning the design of tests over to an independent testing agency, according to several senators.

The agreement, along lines suggested by Clinton last weekend, would clear the way for the national testing that Clinton wants while responding to the objections of many Republicans to government development of the tests.

A Senate vote on the plan is likely next week. Senators said they did not expect their solution to prevail in the House, where sentiment against the testing plan is stronger, meaning that the issue will probably have to be resolved in a House-Senate conference.

The House vote on the foreign aid bill came as it narrowly rejected, 218 to 210, an attempt by House International Relations Committee Chairman Benjamin A. Gilman (R-N.Y.) and Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) to modify Smith's language by limiting the ban to groups that perform or promote abortions as a form of family planning.

Lawmakers approved the overall spending bill, 375 to 49.

House Appropriations Committee Chairman Bob Livingston (R-La.) has been urging his GOP colleagues to avoid contentious issues such as abortion as lawmakers push to finish work on spending bills before the Oct. 1 beginning of the new fiscal year. Livingston wants to avoid a repeat of the bitter budget battle in 1995 that led to two partial government shutdowns and soured public opinion of the GOP Congress.

But conservative House Republicans want the spending bills to reflect their priorities, saying talk of compromise should wait until after Clinton rejects a measure.

Smith's amendment would restore what had been the policy of the Reagan and Bush administrations. Clinton reversed it upon taking office in 1993. Each year since then, the House has voted to reinstate the antiabortion language.

While current law bars the use of U.S. funds to pay for abortions, antiabortion forces argue that foreign aid to groups that perform the procedures free up funds for that use. "Who we give to does matter," Smith said. "Many groups use family planning as a Trojan horse to conceal their real agenda — abortion on demand."

The Senate and the administration have opposed the stance, known as the "Mexico City policy" because it was first advanced at a 1984 United Nations population conference there. Supporters of abortion rights and family planning services argue that cutting off funds for family planning groups that perform abortions would have the effect of increasing the number of abortions by limiting birth control counseling, resulting in more unwanted and high-risk pregnancies.

"Family planning is the best way to reduce the number of abortions," Pelosi said.

The Senate, slogging slowly through the huge bill funding the Labor and Health and Human Services departments, approved a new federal research program for Parkinson's disease but rejected a proposal that would have banned the program from conducting research using fetal tissue taken during induced abortions.

The research project, proposed by Sen. Paul D. Wellstone (D-Minn.), was approved Wednesday by a vote of 95 to 3. The fetal tissue ban, proposed by Sen. Dan Coats (R-Ind.), was rejected yesterday, 38 to 60.

A broader ban on fetal tissue research was lifted four years ago by joint action of Congress and the Clinton administration.

Meanwhile, a bipartisan group of lawmakers served notice it will try to overturn a provision in the recent tax bill that would give tobacco companies a \$50 billion credit against what they have to pay as part of a national settlement of anti-smoking lawsuits.

Sens. Richard J. Durbin (D-Ill.) and Susan Collins (R-Maine) said the provision should be overturned because it amounts to an unwarranted subsidy for tobacco companies that was inserted in the tax bill at the behest of the companies without knowledge of most lawmakers — a "stereotypical example of back-room politics at its worst," according to Collins.

Durbin and Collins plan to offer their proposal as an amendment to the pending labor, health and human resources spending bill in the Senate. Rep. Nita M. Lowey (D-N.Y.) said she plans to offer an identical amendment in the House.

The effort to overturn the tobacco provision is a direct challenge to House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) and Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.), who were instrumental in getting it passed. But the outcome is uncertain, largely because of a major grass-roots effort against it by anti-tobacco forces during Congress's recent recess. Public anger over the maneuver was cited as a factor in the Senate's vote Wednesday to reverse itself and approve the full \$34 million Clinton administration request for a program to discourage sales of cigarettes to teenagers.■

1. Associated Press

09-05 11:16a

Democrats, Republicans claim high ground on education

By ROBERT GREENE

AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - Republican and Democratic leaders argued they were giving the people more voice in their children's future as Congress neared a vote on President Clinton's plan for national reading and math tests.

Democratic allies said Thursday the tests would give parents vital information about how well their children and schools are doing and push them to reach higher standards.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., said parents already know where schools and students are failing and instead need vouchers or tax breaks to put their children in private or parochial schools.

President Clinton gave the voluntary national tests of fourth-graders for reading and eighth-graders for math top billing on the education agenda for his second term.

But Republicans, with some liberal Democratic allies, were seeking to derail the plan with amendments to the 1998 spending bills for the Education Department. The bills are before the House and Senate and votes could come as early as today.

Using existing money, the administration has already spent \$13 million to develop the tests, to be offered first in 1999. Republican lawmakers are angry the department didn't seek congressional approval.

But the politics took the front seat in hearings and briefings Thursday.

"What we're proposing is that parents be given a report card on schools, a report card to determine the degree to which the schools are performing and thereby make some assessment as to whether or not their children are being educated to their expectations," Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D., told reporters.

Describing tests as a "great patriotic cause," **Education Secretary Richard W. Riley** said the tests "will help mobilize the American people in a great national effort to raise reading and math achievement."

Gingrich said taxpayers need school choice.

"We could find you 500 schools that without testing we could all agree are really bad," Gingrich told reporters. "The president then says we'll keep the kids trapped there."

And Gov. Terry Branstad of Iowa, chairman of the Republican Governor's Association, told reporters this morning, "The last thing we need is the bureaucracy in Washington, D.C., devising some politically correct test."

The administration chose math and reading for national tests because the subjects lend themselves to fewer arguments over what should be taught and tested. But even mathematics has become controversial, with many people worried that recent changes in teaching method ignore basic skills.

Despite the partisan rhetoric, the lines aren't clearly drawn on the issue. Many Republicans support the tests, an idea hatched in the Bush administration. Michigan, with a Republican governor, has endorsed them.

"I don't see a problem right now with where the department is going," Sen. James Jeffords, R-Vt., chairman of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, said at the Appropriations subcommittee hearing. The committee oversees education.

He said tests would give local governments and states a way to see how their students are doing and if state-created standards are working.

The tests would measure fourth-graders on how well they can read and eighth-graders on math, including some algebra and geometry. The results could be compared internationally.

A number of liberals oppose the tests, saying they would be used to compare rich and poor schools without giving poor schools the money and teachers to improve teaching. Rep. Major R. Owens, D-N.Y., has joined House Republicans in urging that the tests be blocked.

"Testing grabs headlines, but it doesn't do anything positive," said Owens in an interview. "What they'll be doing is testing the status quo."

He and other urban liberals are angry that the administration didn't push hard enough for the failed proposal to use \$5 billion in federal money to repair crumbling schools.

Rep. William Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House Education and Workforce Committee, told Senators the money would be better spent on schools and training teachers to better teach students on the subjects that will be tested. ■

1. Boston Globe

September 5, 1997

Clinton aides try to rescue his national testing plan

By Associated Press

WASHINGTON - President Clinton's deputies fought yesterday to save his proposed national tests in reading and math from congressional critics, who said the plan would feed bureaucrats but shortchange struggling schools.

"These tests will help mobilize the American people in a great national effort to raise reading and math achievement," Education Secretary Richard W. Riley told a Senate Appropriations subcommittee. "Because this is so important for our country, I see it as a great patriotic cause."

Both the House and Senate scheduled votes for later in the day on efforts to block the Education Department from going forward with the voluntary tests, scheduled to begin in 1999.

The tests, a top item on Clinton's education agenda, would measure fourth-graders on how well they can read and eighth-graders on math, including some algebra and geometry.

In the rapidly escalating fight over who knows what's best for education, Republicans said the administration was using gimmicks to fight the problem of poor-performing, crime-ridden schools. Instead, said House Speaker Newt Gingrich, a Georgia Republican, parents should be given more choice where to send their children.

Republicans want an expansion of vouchers and tax-free savings accounts to help parents find alternatives to public schools.

"We could find you 500 schools that without testing we could all agree are really bad," Gingrich told reporters. "The president then says we'll keep the kids trapped there."

Despite the partisan rhetoric, many Republicans support the tests, an idea hatched in the Bush administration.

"I don't see a problem right now with where the department is going," said Senator James Jeffords, a Republican of Vermont, chairman of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, which oversees education, said at the Appropriations subcommittee hearing. ■

1. The Washington Post

09/04/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A04

Clinton Defends National Testing Plan; As Face-Off Looms, Opposition Grows on Both Ends of Political Spectrum

By John F. Harris

Washington Post Staff Writer

Facing a showdown with Republicans, President Clinton briefly halted his three-week vacation today to defend his plan for national education testing.

The proposal for national tests, to be promoted and paid for by the Education Department, is under assault from Republicans, who say the tests would do little to improve education and would be an unwarranted federal intrusion on what is historically a local responsibility. Legislation drafted by Rep. William F. Goodling (R-Pa.), chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, which could come to a vote in the House as early as Thursday, would bar the Education Department from spending any money on the tests.

"There are certain basic things that all our children should know," Clinton told about 80 teachers at Oak Bluffs Elementary School. "I think it would be a terrible mistake for people who are afraid our children can't measure up or who have a misguided notion that somehow the federal government is trying to take over the direction of education in America to persuade members of Congress not to fund the tests. . . . That's basically the issue that we're going to be fighting out over the next few weeks." The tests Clinton envisions would be voluntary, with each state deciding whether its students would participate. The administration's proposal would have a national test in reading for fourth-graders and in math for eighth-graders. The tests, to be administered for the first time in 1999, would be prepared by a bipartisan board appointed by Congress, but the \$22 million annual expense would be paid by the Education Department.

Goodling has said his concerns are mostly practical: He believes U.S. students already take lots of tests and that improving instruction is more important than another tool for monitoring performance. But Clinton said today the medley of tests offered at the state level do not guarantee that each student is meeting "national standards," and while many students may fall short at first, "setting a goal means you're more likely to meet it than if you don't set it."

Opposition to the tests is gathering at both ends of the political spectrum. Social conservatives have long warned against an expanded federal role in schools. But some Democrats said they oppose Clinton's plan for an opposite reason — that not enough federal money is being spent to make sure the poorest students, particularly in inner cities, do well. "We know who's going to fail and who's going to pass," said Rep. Major R. Owens (D-N.Y.). "We're not addressing the opportunities to learn, but we're going to have more tests, and we know what the outcome is going to be."

Clinton's advisers have urged that he veto the annual education appropriations bill if Goodling's amendment passes. "If they want to ruin the bipartisanship and take on a fight over education, we've been down that road," White House senior adviser Rahm Emanuel said of the GOP. ■

1. USA Today

09/04/97; Section: NEWS

Clinton presses for national student testing

By Tamara Henry

WASHINGTON — Vowing to fight, President Clinton warned Congress on Wednesday not to block his proposal for voluntary national tests of school children. But today his administration will offer an olive branch to key Republican opponents.

"It would be a terrible mistake for people . . . to persuade members of Congress not to fund the tests," Clinton said Wednesday, referring to GOP threats to bar the use of any federal funds in developing the standardized national tests.

"That's basically an issue that we're going to be fighting out over the next few weeks," Clinton told a group of about 80 teachers who were attending an orientation session on the Massachusetts resort of Martha's Vineyard, where he has been vacationing.

Clinton, in his State of the Union address, called for testing all fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math by March 1999. The tests would be paid for by the federal government and implemented voluntarily on a state-by-state basis. To date, seven states and 15 big city school districts have agreed to adopt the tests. The administration believes national standards would allow parents and educators to better judge performances of students and schools.

Clinton's plan "is a waste of taxpayers' money and won't do anything except increase the federal government's involvement in our schools," Rep. William Goodling, R-Pa., said Wednesday in response. "House Republicans and many Democrats would rather send federal dollars to the classroom."

Meanwhile, **Education Secretary Richard Riley** will discuss new legislation from the administration today that would put the tests under the purview of a bipartisan education panel, the National Assessment Government Board (NAGB) created by Congress in 1989.

That's seen as a compromise because one of the main complaints about the original proposal was that Congress had no role in the test.

The administration has awarded a \$13 million contract for development of the tests, using money from the discretionary Fund for Improvement of Education. Goodling is to push his amendment today to ban future funding for tests as the House begins debate on 1998 budgets for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services and Education.

Clinton did not specifically threaten to veto any such legislation during his speech to the teachers. But White House aides say senior White House advisers and Education Department officials have advised the president to veto the massive spending bill if money to develop the tests is taken out.

Contributing: Mimi Hall in Edgartown, Mass. PHOTO,b/w,AP; PHOTO,b/w■

1. Los Angeles Times

09/04/97; Section: National Desk

UPDATE: Clinton Promises to Fight for National Academic Tests

By ELIZABETH SHOGREN
TIMES STAFF WRITER

EDGARTOWN, Mass. — President Clinton vowed Wednesday to fight for voluntary national academic testing as White House officials warned that an effort in the House to block the initiative may provoke a presidential veto of a broad spending bill.

Rep. William F. Goodling plans to introduce as early as Friday legislation that would prohibit the Education Department from spending any money to develop national tests.

The president has been pushing all states to start testing fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math. The department has a contract with test publishers to develop the tests.

Taking a break from his vacation to meet with teachers at a school on Martha's Vineyard, Clinton declared that "educational excellence at world-class standards is now more important than ever before."

Clinton told the teachers he has been "a little bit peeved" that some members of Congress have resisted the establishment of national academic standards and a system to measure student achievement.

"There are some people in Congress and in the country who don't want this to happen," Clinton said at Oak Bluffs School. "They either say we've got enough tests already or the federal government's making a power grab or they're afraid that the tests won't be fair to people who don't do well on it."

Clinton said he expects "to be fighting [the issue] out over the next few weeks" with Congress.

A statement of administration policy sent to Congress Tuesday says that if Goodling's amendment is adopted, "the president's senior advisors would be forced to recommend that the president veto the bill." Goodling's amendment would be part of the sweeping House appropriations bill for the departments of Labor, Education, Health and Human Services and related agencies.

Education Secretary Richard W. Riley also has urged Clinton to veto the measure if it includes Goodling's amendment.

"In effect, defunding would basically bring this effort to a halt, and we find that to be unacceptable," White House spokesman Joe Lockhart said, adding that the president is "considering" the veto advice but hopes the Goodling amendment will be voted down.

Goodling, chairman of the House Education and Work Force Committee, opposes the national testing initiative because he believes there are already enough standardized tests being given to students to help educators understand what is lacking in America's schools.

"President Clinton's plan for two new federal education tests won't boost the academic performance of a single American child," Goodling said. "Americans should not be misled that better tests will lead to better students. That's akin to claiming that better speedometers make for faster cars."

The president, by contrast, argues that there is no test now given to every American student that would enable students and parents to judge whether children are learning what they should.

Goodling, a former teacher and school administrator, believes states should develop their own standards and assessments, as many have with the president's Goals 2000 education reform initiative.

"The president's [testing] plan is a waste of taxpayers' money and won't do anything except increase federal government's involvement in schools," he said. The development of the tests is expected to cost \$16 million this year, and administration costs are estimated at \$100 million a year.

Goodling's staff said his amendment is supported by many Republicans and a few Democrats.

"We know what the tests are going to show: low grades for the students in the inner cities and the rural areas," said testing opponent Rep. Major R. Owens (D-N.Y.).

Just six states—Massachusetts, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, North Carolina and West Virginia—have indicated their intention to use the tests. School districts of six of the nation's largest cities—including Los Angeles—have expressed support for Clinton's testing initiative and said they want to participate even if their states do not.

Clinton had tried to avert a clash with Congress on the issue by announcing in his radio address Saturday that a bipartisan panel would draft the test instead of the Education Department. ■

MEAP scores up in Detroit City's improvements outpace the state's

September 4, 1997

BY PEGGY WALSH-SARNECKI, TRACY VAN MOORLEHEM AND JENNIFER JUAREZ ROBLES

Free Press Education Writers

The Detroit Public Schools chalked up impressive gains in the latest round of statewide assessment tests, improving more than the average gain for all Michigan districts on fifth- and eighth-grade writing and science exams.

Superintendent David Snead, who announced the test scores Wednesday, said it was "a day to be recognized" in Michigan's much-maligned, largest school system.

In Lansing, meanwhile, an aide to Gov. John Engler said the state may reconsider participating in a new, national assessment testing program next year for fourth- and eighth-graders.

Snead said the improvement was due to expanded teacher training and "the realigning of our curriculum" to meet state objectives.

Detroit posted an increase of more than 28 percentage points in the number of fifth-graders with test scores showing they are proficient in writing.

And, contrary to a statewide decline, Detroit students saw a 2.7-percentage point increase in eighth-grade science scores. Detroit fifth-graders also beat the statewide increase in science, climbing to 31 percent proficient, up from 18.3 percent in 1996.

However, the picture was not entirely rosy. Detroit's gains were not enough to pull the 175,000-student district from among the state's 10 lowest in terms of the percent of eighth-graders with proficient scores.

The scores released Wednesday in Detroit and elsewhere completed the latest round of results in the MEAP tests — Michigan Education Assessment Program.

Across the state, students did well on the writing tests, but struggled with the science tests.

Given the wide disparity in science and writing scores, educators said parents would get the best reading on results by comparing their district scores to the state average.

"The first thing I would do is look at how these kids did in math and reading last year, because most of them did pretty well," said Ernie Bauer, MEAP coordinator for the Oakland Intermediate School District. "Don't just look at the science."

This was the second year for the MEAP science test. Several districts complained that their students answered more questions correctly on the 1997 science test, but the percentage of students deemed proficient actually fell.

The test varies slightly each year. State officials say they increased the number of correct answers required for a proficient score because the 1997 test was easier.

But educators weren't convinced.

"It clearly wasn't" easier "if everyone did worse," Bauer said. "If it was easier, kids would have done better."

Students will take the MEAP tests again next spring and are expected to begin taking new, national assessment tests in spring 1999.

Michigan is among seven states that have volunteered for the national fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math tests.

President Bill Clinton has championed such testing, and told a teachers' meeting near his Massachusetts vacation site Wednesday that the Republican-controlled Congress would make "a terrible mistake" if it scuttled the testing program. A House vote to block money for the tests is expected soon.

But in Lansing, Tim Kelly, Engler's aide for education policy, said the governor wants to include questions from the national tests in MEAP tests, rather than administer a separate test.

Mike Smith, acting U.S. deputy secretary of education, said Engler's idea wouldn't work.

"It won't be able to be done that way," Smith said.

Test design is almost a science. It is impossible to simply lift a few questions from one test and insert them in another, he said.

Hazel Park schools tested an early version of the national test. Loren Bloetscher, director of curriculum, said it was similar to the MEAP exams, but different enough to cause a problem.

"It's like a shifting target," Bloetscher said. "I don't mind the state having expectations, but it takes me two or three years to get things lined up to meet those expectations," he said. "And every two or three years the test keeps changing, so it's like a never-ending process." ■

1. Houston Chronicle

September 4, 1997

Clinton defends plan for nationwide testing

House poised to halt math, reading exams

By NANCY MATHIS

EDGARTOWN, Mass. — President Clinton defended his national student performance testing plan Wednesday, charging Congress would make a "terrible mistake" to scrap it.

The president interrupted his vacation to visit a school in nearby Oak Bluffs, where he urged teachers to "send a clear message that you believe that excellence and accountability and high aspirations are for all of our children."

Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House Education Committee, will offer an amendment this week to stop the Education Department from financing the development of national tests to assess the performance of fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math. A House vote is expected today or Friday.

"There are some people in Congress and in the country who don't want this to happen. They either say we've got enough tests already or the federal government's making a power grab or they're afraid that the tests won't be fair . . ." Clinton said.

"I would just like to re-emphasize, Number 1, these tests are voluntary; Number 2, the results are not to be misused but it's helpful to know whether the children, individually or in a class, or in a school or in a school district, do or do not perform at acceptable levels in reading and mathematics at the very least," Clinton said.

Goodling's amendment, along with other controversial items being proposed for the massive spending bill for the departments of labor, education and health and human services, could provoke a veto.

"I think it would be a terrible mistake for people who are afraid our children can't measure up or who have a misguided notion that somehow the federal government is trying to take over the direction of education in America to persuade members of Congress not to fund the tests," Clinton said.

Six states and 15 school districts, including Houston's, have signed up for the voluntary testing program that is expected to begin in 1999.

Clinton maintained his national testing program was a concept similar to rigorous evaluations for airline pilots or the military. "Why would you stop setting high standards in measuring to see if we meet them? That's all that I am trying to do," Clinton said.

The White House in recent days has moved to publicly highlight the president's proposal for stronger education standards and the crafting of new national performance tests to judge those standards.

The president on Saturday used his weekly radio address to defend the program and offer a compromise to allow an independent board to craft the tests. The radio address coincided with the release of new sampling test results that showed American students' reading performance remained stagnant while there were some increases in math and science.

Goodling maintains there are enough tests, and people already know what the problems are with public schools. Conservatives view the tests as a first step toward a national curriculum. Some liberals who have signed onto Goodling's amendment fear national tests could place urban school districts at a disadvantage.

The fight between the White House and Congress on education comes as 52 million students, a record number surpassing even the Baby Boom generation, have entered public school.

The administration already has lodged a veto threat against the appropriations bill that include education funding. Other potential amendments to the measure opposed by Clinton include proposals that would bar minimum wage for welfare recipients, provide no funding for the president's reading program and allow states to privatize the administration of welfare programs. ■

1. Education Daily

September 4, 1997

SENATE SHOWDOWN TODAY ON CLINTON'S NATIONAL TESTS

Against the backdrop of a veiled veto threat, the Senate is to vote today on whether to bar any funding for President Clinton's voluntary national testing plan.

The Senate education appropriations subcommittee hastily called a hearing for this morning, after Republicans drafted an amendment to the fiscal 1998 funding bill now under debate to block further development of the exams.

During debate yesterday on the education appropriations, Chairman Arlen Specter, R-Pa., announced that after speaking to Education Secretary Richard Riley by telephone Tuesday evening about the testing plan, he decided to hold a hearing of his Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee.

Riley is scheduled to speak at the hearing.

Afterward, the Senate is to vote on the amendment by Sen.

Dan Coats, R-Ind., that would tie ED's hands and preclude development of the voluntary exams, which Clinton wants to field test in the spring.

Specter said he didn't know enough about the testing proposal to take a position.

Sen. Judd Gregg, R-N.H., offered a related amendment that would codify the administration's recent capitulation to allow the National Assessment Governing Board, rather than ED, to oversee the test (ED, Aug. 28).

The Senate was trying last night to clear all other amendments on S. 1061, which encompasses funding for all three departments under Specter's panel, so it can pass the bill after the vote on the testing amendment.

The House also could vote as early as today on an amendment to its education appropriations bill, H.R. 2264, that would halt the new tests of fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math (ED, Aug. 29).

Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., the chairman of the House education committee, has waged a high-profile battle against the tests and is scheduled to testify at today's Senate hearing.

White House: Unacceptable

While visiting a school during his vacation in Martha's Vineyard, Mass., Clinton said yesterday, "It would be a terrible mistake for people who are afraid our children can't measure up—or who have a misguided notion that somehow the federal government is trying to take over the direction of education in America—to persuade members of Congress not to fund the test."

A White House spokesman said it would be "unacceptable" for Congress to halt the tests — ED has already granted a \$13 million, five-year contract to develop the exams — but stopped short of an explicit veto threat.

While the House expects to vote on its education funding bill by week's end, the two chambers still have to write a compromise plan. The House and Senate proposals would fund ED at similar levels—\$34.3 billion and \$34 billion respectively—but stress different priorities. The House proposal has \$397 million more for Title I than the Senate's, while the Senate's would give \$596 million more to special education state grants (ED, Aug. 29).

The chairman of the House Appropriations Committee predicted yesterday that Congress will pass all 13 appropriations measures by mid-October. But with the new fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, Congress may need to pass a stopgap spending bill to keep government programs running. — William J. Cahir, Lauren Lazarovici■

1. Education Daily

September 4, 1997

GOODLING: IMPROVE READING THROUGH TEACHER TRAINING

The head of the House education committee wants to build a national literacy initiative around improved teacher training. While the Clinton administration wants to fund voluntary tutors to help boost child literacy, Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, said improving the teaching of reading is the way to go.

Combating illiteracy means teachers should "receive the best possible training regarding how to teach children to read+both before they become teachers and while they are teaching," Goodling said at a hearing yesterday on the shape of the literacy initiative, which may get \$260 million in fiscal 1999 if Congress authorizes it by next April.

The hearing was the committee's third on literacy programs.

At two earlier hearings, Goodling and other panel Republicans assailed Clinton's plan to spend the money to train an army of a million volunteers (ED, Aug. 1).

But Goodling also used the hearing to further denounce Clinton's plans for voluntary national tests for fourth- grade reading and eighth-grade math. He said the \$90 million that Clinton wants to spend for a pair of national tests should instead be spent on teacher training and family literacy.

Split On Tests

But try as they might, Republican committee members couldn't get the panel of reading researchers and teachers to side one way or the other on the national reading test.

One panelist, however, told the committee the nation's schools need some way of measuring reading mastery before moving a child from grade to grade.

"We do need a national assessment, but it needs to be developed objectively, independently and bipartisan-ly," said Laura Frederick, an educational psychology and special education assistant professor at Georgia State University in Atlanta. "Unless you get that kind of assessment, you continue a battle that will get us no where."

All panelists agreed that teachers must have the skills and knowledge to effectively teach reading, but that most lack it.

"The time to learn how to teach reading is when you are in training, not when you are facing your first classroom of students," said Debra Wakefield, who teaches first grade in the Del Norte, Calif., Unified School District.

And the speakers said most college and university faculty have the expertise to teach upcoming teachers, while professional development often offers a method or program but not the science and pedagogy needed.

"When teachers are wedded to philosophies, programs, or methodologies ... they tend to be less open to findings of objective studies that could improve their practice," said Louisa Moats, director of teacher training in the Greenwood, Vt., school district.

The committee plans more hearings on literacy this fall. — Regina Lightfoot-Clark■

1. Indianapolis Star-News

September 4, 1997

ISTEP-Plus rates low among states' tests

FairTest's findings about statewide exams

By Barb Albert and Leonard N. Fleming

The Indianapolis Star/News

Indiana's ISTEP-Plus program fared poorly in a highly critical state-by-state analysis of standardized student testing by a national research and advocacy organization.

Just three weeks before Indiana sophomores are to take the state's first high school graduation exam, the National Center for Fair & Open Testing (FairTest) said it should be scrapped.

High-stakes decisions shouldn't be based on one test, the group says.

The state's entire testing system needs major improvements and perhaps a complete overhaul, said the report released Tuesday. Many other states received equally scathing marks.

One-third of the state public school testing systems need to be overhauled and another third need major improvements, if they are to provide support for high quality teaching and learning, FairTest's study showed.

Only one state — Vermont — received a top FairTest rating.

Indiana's test, like many other states' systems, relies too heavily on multiple-choice questions, rather than short answer or open-ended questions, contends FairTest, which pushes for valid and reliable testing systems.

The nonprofit group based in Cambridge, Mass., and funded by the Joyce and Ford foundations, also said Indiana's ISTEP-Plus doesn't fully match its standards.

The harsh criticism, say Indiana Department of Education officials, is unjustified and off the mark. Some school district educators and testing experts don't think ISTEP-Plus is perfect, but that it has improved over the years.

"More than anything, what this report says is that they don't know what they're talking about," said Steve Grimes, assistant superintendent of the state's Department of Education.

Many of FairTest's gripes about Indiana would have been eliminated if the legislature had passed a controversial test program in 1995. It focused primarily on open-ended and essay questions and eliminated the part of the test allowing comparisons with students nationwide.

"That was rejected, as I recall, in Indiana," said State Superintendent of Public Instruction Suellen K. Reed.

State and local educators lobbied hard for those provisions, but the legislature ended up passing less drastic and less expensive changes to the ISTEP — the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress.

"A number of people, including legislators, felt Indiana was not ready for that drastic a move," said Sheila Ewing, curriculum director for Washington Township Schools. "But the current test is a move in the right direction."

Stan Jones, who as an aide to then-Gov. Evan Bayh helped lobby for the testing changes, said he agrees with many of FairTest's points, such as increasing the open-ended or essay questions. But Jones, now state commissioner of higher education, believes Indiana meets FairTest's standards better than the organization gave the state credit for.

The revised ISTEP-Plus, to be given to students in grades 3, 6, 8 and 10 beginning Sept. 22, contains two-thirds multiple-choice and one-third open-ended and essay questions. Legislators and business representatives insisted on a "norm-referenced" portion of the test that permits Indiana's scores to be compared with national scores.

FairTest said Indiana should switch to a "criterion-referenced" test that is fully based on the state's learning standards. But Grimes said a significant portion of ISTEP-Plus is closely aligned to state standards and that part is used to make the graduation and pass/fail decisions.

Derek Redelman, director of education policy for the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, who disagrees with FairTest's main criticisms, said the state needs to know "where our students are performing compared to students in other states and other countries."

State and local educators, as well as business representatives, think the state's mix of questions on the test is good now, and the graduation exam is necessary to be accountable to the public.

Reed agrees with FairTest that it's not good to rely solely on one test. But she said Indiana's system allows students to qualify for waivers, to take the test five times, or to pass the Core 40 curriculum, based on college and technical school requirements, to graduate.

Indianapolis Public Schools Superintendent Esperanza Zendejas strongly backs the state's graduation exam. Although it's no testing panacea, it at least gauges what students should know, she said.

"Until something better comes along, I would recommend that we stick to what we have," she said.

Jennifer McCreadie, IPS testing director, says that FairTest is a reputable group but has a strong bias against multiple-choice questions and comparisons to national testing norms.

"They may be pushing a totally performance-based system, and I would say what we need is a balanced system," McCreadie said.



The FairTest call for criterion-referenced tests suits Ewing, at Washington Township Schools, which is developing a uniform, districtwide curriculum and local testing program.

"The advantage of criterion-referenced tests," Ewing said, "is that you can link what you are testing for with what you consider important in the curriculum."■

1. San Diego Union-Tribune

September 4, 1997

Clinton's school testing plan flunks with House GOP

By Stephen Green

COPLEY NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON — President Clinton's proposal for national school testing exploded into a major political issue yesterday on Capitol Hill as House Republicans vowed to block its implementation.

"We simply don't need any more tests," declared Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., the chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee who plans to offer an amendment to stop the administration from spending any more money on the tests.

"It's a waste of the taxpayers' money and won't do anything except increase federal involvement in our schools," said Goodling, whose amendment would be attached to an appropriations bill funding the departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services.

From his vacation on Martha's Vineyard, Clinton appealed to Congress to reject Goodling's amendment. Clinton's plan would give states the option of taking part in national testing of reading and math skills.

"It would be a terrible mistake for people who are afraid our children can't measure up — or who have a misguided notion that somehow the federal government is trying to take over the direction of education in America — to persuade members of Congress not to fund the test," Clinton said.

Addressing teachers and staff at a public school, Clinton added, "If there's one place politics ought to stop in America, it's at the schoolhouse door."

In the Senate late yesterday, Republican Dan Coats of Indiana introduced an amendment similar to Goodling's to stop the funding of the tests. His measure is likely to be voted on this week.

Although education traditionally has been the province of state and local governments, Clinton has stressed the issue in the wake of polls showing it has soared to the top of public concerns.

"We believe very strongly about the issue and it will be a fun fight," Senate Minority Leader Thomas A. Daschle, D-S.D., told reporters. The Associated Press quoted anonymous White House officials as threatening a presidential veto if Goodling's amendment survives.

Critics of the plan view it as an unnecessary federal intrusion and say the money used to develop the tests could be better spent in the classrooms.

Home schooling advocates circulated an appeal on the Internet, soliciting support for Goodling. Rep. Robert W. Schaffer, R-Colo., described the proposal as "the first step toward a top-down national curriculum."

Also, opponents of the plan may have significant Democratic support. Rep. Major R. Owens, D-N.Y., a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, has co-sponsored Goodling's amendment.

The NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund opposes the Clinton proposal on the grounds the test results would be used to place "poor and minority children in low-end classes . . . which ultimately limit opportunity and deny the lifelong benefits of a quality education."

In an effort to defuse criticism of the plan to test fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math beginning in 1999, Education Secretary William F. Riley has agreed that the National Assessment Governing Board should develop the examinations. The independent, nonpartisan agency already samples student skills in various subjects state by state.

But a consulting firm hired by the Education Department has begun to develop the tests. Diane S. Ravitch, an assistant secretary of education in the Bush administration and a supporter of national testing, said the key decisions in developing the examinations already have been made.

Goodling, in a letter to House members, said the government spends more than \$500 million a year to help states develop their own achievement tests and the Clinton plan would cost another \$22 million. The California Legislature and Gov. Pete Wilson currently are negotiating over a statewide test.

Supporters of the administration proposal say the national tests would provide a standard by which all schools could be judged, and that students would know where they stand against a national performance average.

Acting Deputy Education Secretary Marshall S. Smith described national testing as a matter of "urgency. We've been sitting back on this issue too long, tolerating curricula that do not adequately prepare many of our students."

Clinton is not the first president to push for national testing.

Former President George Bush called for national testing in 1991 but it never got anywhere in Congress. Clinton hasn't sought congressional approval. Instead, the administration has used discretionary funds appropriated for the Education Department to develop the tests.

Only six states — Massachusetts, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, North Carolina and West Virginia — have endorsed Clinton's plan.

In California, Delaine Eastin, the Democratic state superintendent of public instruction, has come out in support of

Clinton's proposal. But Gov. Pete Wilson and others have emphasized that is not the official state position.■

1. Xinhua English Newswire

09/03/97

Clinton Protects Students Test Plan

U.S. President Bill Clinton said today it would be a terrible mistake for the Republican Congress to reject national testing to measure student performance, an Associated Press report said.

"If there's one place politics ought to stop in America, it's at the schoolhouse door," Clinton told a group of teachers as his aides raised the prospect of a veto should Congress vote to scuttle the tests.

Clinton, who was on his summer vacation, drove to a teacher orientation meeting at Oak Bluffs Elementary School in Massachusetts to address the importance of national standards in such basic subjects as reading, math and science and of the voluntary testing to achieve the goals.

When the president was speaking on the subject, a vote was near in the House on a bid by William Goodling, chairman of the House education committee, to forbid the Department of Education to spend any money to test fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math.

Goodling said recently, "The president's plan is a waste of taxpayers' money and won't do anything except increase federal involvement in our schools."

Education Secretary Richard Riley is pushing Clinton to promise a veto of the bill, should Goodling prevail.

"The tests should not be misused but neither should we pretend it's not needed," said the president. ■

1. Agence France-Presse

09/03/97

Clinton, Congress, square off over national reading and math ...

MARTHA'S VINEYARD, Massachusetts, Sept 3 (AFP) - Democratic President Bill Clinton called on the Republican-led Congress Wednesday not to block funding for the creation of national reading and math tests.

Clinton called in January for measures to set nationally standardized reading and math tests — that US schoolchildren would take at eight and 12 years of age respectively — in a bid to raise US education standards.

Recent studies show only about 40 percent of US children read at age eight and 20 percent can do algebra at 12.

"There are some people in Congress and in the country who don't want this to happen," Clinton said Wednesday in a school in the tiny town of Oak Bluffs on this island in the Atlantic where the president is on vacation until Sunday.

He was referring to a Republican-sponsored amendment to the Department of Education budget that would forbid financing such tests.

Education Secretary Richard Riley has recommended Clinton use his line-item veto to cut out that amendment, which was expected to face a vote in the House of Representatives as early as Thursday, White House spokesman Joe Lockhart said.

Republicans have charged Clinton's real goal is to expand the federal government's power in a policy arena that is traditionally the domain of state and local governments.

"All we want the department of education to do is to have the funds to pay for it," the president told a crowd of teachers gathered in an elementary school library here Wednesday.

Clinton on Saturday offered to compromise with the Republicans, saying that the tests would be devised by an independent and bipartisan group, not by the department of education.

But that move had yet to soften opposition to the initiative. ■

1. Associated Press

09-03 9:25p

Clinton: Mistake to block test standards

By LAWRENCE L. KNUTSON Associated Press Writer

OAK BLUFFS, Mass. (AP) - President Clinton greeted the new school year Wednesday by telling teachers it would be a terrible mistake for the Republican Congress to reject national testing to measure student performance.

"If there's one place politics ought to stop in America, it's at the schoolhouse door," Clinton said as his aides raised the prospect of a veto should Congress vote to scuttle the tests.

Taking an hour off from his summer vacation, Clinton drove to a teacher orientation meeting at Oak Bluffs Elementary School to renew his pitch for national standards in such basic subjects as reading, math and science and for the voluntary testing he said is needed to gauge the results.

He called on the teachers seated in rows before him and on their counterparts across the country to send a clear message to the House and Senate "that you believe in standards and accountability for all of our children."

He spoke as a vote neared in the House on a bid by Rep. William Goodling, R-Pa., chairman of the House education committee, to forbid the Department of Education to spend any money to test fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math. Goodling hopes to add the amendment to a spending bill for the Education and Health and Human Services departments. A vote could come as early as Thursday afternoon.

"I agree with President Clinton that politics should stop at the schoolhouse door," Goodling said. He said the administration was trying to set national standards by hastily developing the new tests in Washington. "That is a huge folly that threatens to further politicize education."

"The president's plan is a waste of taxpayers' money and won't do anything except increase the federal government's involvement in our schools," he asserted.

Education Secretary Richard Riley is pushing Clinton to promise a veto of the bill, should Goodling prevail.

Arguing that national testing is a bureaucratic waste is part of a GOP strategy to divide Democrats on education issues. Republicans also want to give federal subsidies to help parents pay private school tuition. They argue that Clinton sent his daughter, Chelsea, to a private school but won't support legislation allowing inner-city pupils the same opportunity.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich and Sen. Paul Coverdale planned a Thursday news conference to promote Coverdale's proposal to create tax-free education savings accounts for private school tuition.

Riley sent proposed legislation to the House and Senate that would have an independent, bipartisan board rather than the Education Department oversee the tests. The move is intended to ease worries that the federal bureaucracy is getting too closely involved in standards and tests.

The National Assessment Government Board already sets guidelines for national tests that measure progress in math, reading and other subjects but don't give individual results.

"The tests should not be misused but neither should we pretend it's not needed," the president told more than 80 Martha's Vineyard teachers gathered in the school's computer-equipped library.

"It would be a terrible mistake for people who are afraid our children can't measure up or who have a misguided notion that somehow the federal government is trying to take over the direction of education in America to persuade their members of Congress not to fund the tests," he said.

"And that's basically the issue we are going to be fighting out over the next few weeks."

Education Department officials want to use \$16 million already appropriated to write the test this year. Starting in 1999, with the first wave of testing, they expect the program to cost \$100 million a year. ■

1. The Christian Science Monitor

September 3, 1997

Put Schools to the Test

American children won't notice, but the public schools they return to this fall lack something important: a reliable, uniform means of assessing how well they're doing their job.

Erasing that lack is what President Clinton has in mind when he calls for national tests, at the fourth and eighth grades, to assess students' performance in reading and math. **The Department of Education** has hastened the response to that call, letting a \$13 million contract for development of such tests.

Administration planners hope the tests will be ready by 1999. Though use of the exams will be voluntary, it's assumed most school districts will participate. Opting out might be tacit admission that the local schools don't measure up.

But the administration's time frame could run into problems. The move to institute voluntary national tests faces opposition from a number of directions. Some Republicans in Congress hope to block any funding for test development. They are concerned about federal intervention in local school decisionmaking, and worry that a national test, even if voluntary, is a step toward a federally set curriculum. They are distrustful of anything conceived by the federal education bureaucracy.

On the other side of the political spectrum are liberal critics who see standardized tests as inherently unfair to ethnic and cultural minorities. There are already efforts, for instance, to have the math, and even the reading, tests administered in Spanish as well as English.

Countering these arguments is the need to bring a degree of consistency and accountability to American education. The slowly progressing move toward national standards, and the related effort to develop uniform testing, address this need. Such steps have strong backing from business leaders, who rely on public schools to produce workers who, at the least, have a solid grasp of reading and math. Many big-city educational leaders are squarely behind national standards and tests, too, seeing them as a way of raising community involvement and student performance in their often-blighted school systems.

There are, of course, various ways of taking these steps. Some education analysts say the approach being taken by the administration, having the Education Department guide the development of the tests through its contract with an alliance of publishers and education groups, will heighten the chances of political and bureaucratic manipulation.

Why not simply expand the already existing - and highly respected - National Assessment of Educational Progress testing program? Currently, that program is restricted by law to sample testing that can be used to compare educational performance among the states. The Department of Education has announced that its tests will, in fact, be based on the NAEP model.

No matter how carefully conceived, and no matter how focused on the fundamentals of reading and math, the tests are likely to generate controversy. Both fields have deep philosophical divides, between new math and old math, whole language and phonics. The debate should, however, be much less heated than the eruption over proposed national history standards a few years ago.

For the sake of America's students, the political and philosophical hurdles have to be cleared. Reliable national tests won't in themselves rebuild public education, but they're an important foundation stone. Secretary of Education Richard Riley has it right: "Raising expectations and standards in education motivates students to learn more and work harder. For the first time, the tests will inform parents, teachers, and students themselves about what it takes to reach national and even international standards of achievement in this great country - something no other test currently does."■

1. Christian Science Monitor

September 3, 1997

Brouhaha on National School Testing

Gail Russell Chaddock, Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

WASHINGTON — Educators call it the "Lake Wobegon syndrome," a reference to Garrison Keillor's imagined homeland, where "all of the children are above average."

Most American parents are being told by local schools that their children rank "above average" in both reading and math. Yet according to a national education survey released this weekend, 62 percent of fourth-graders have trouble reading and only 20 percent of eighth-graders have ever faced an algebraic equation.

This dichotomy is at the heart of what's shaping up as a high-stakes battle over who sets the standard for achievement in American education.

The White House says that national tests are needed to give parents a clear idea of how their children and local schools stack up against national and international competition.

"In many countries, such as Japan, 100 percent of eighth-graders take algebra. We've got to close the 'algebra gap' or our international competitors will move ahead of us," Secretary of Education Richard Riley said last month. His department has begun developing voluntary tests for fourth-graders in reading and eighth-graders in math, which would be introduced in 1999.

Critics say such national tests will undermine local control of education and force school boards to adjust their curriculum to the demands of the test. They also charge the tests may put minority students at a disadvantage.

When the House reconvenes Sept. 3, Republicans say that they will try to scuttle the plan. New federal tests are "a waste of the taxpayers money," says Rep. William Goodling (R) of Pennsylvania, who chairs the House Education Committee. He proposes blocking further spending on national tests until there has been congressional debate and authorization.

Yet six states and 15 major school districts have signed on to the federal test initiative, which is expected to cost \$90 million to \$100 million a year. Education officials say there will be no loss of federal funding to states or districts that decline to participate. The initiative also has the backing of numerous business groups as well as the American Federation of Teachers, who argue that the nation cannot remain competitive without higher, more uniform expectations of students.

Good news, bad news Since the landmark 1983 "Nation at Risk" study that set off a nationwide reform effort, American math and science scores have improved slightly, reading is about the same, and writing is in a small but consistent pattern of decline. That's the message from the most recent round of national tests, released on Aug. 30.

Many parents are not hearing the bad news. Only a sample of the nation's students actually take these national tests, called the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and individual student or school rankings in this survey are kept confidential.

Most parents hear that their children are meeting state standards of proficiency in reading and math. What they don't realize is that those standards are often well below national or international norms.

"States and school districts have their own testing programs in reading and math, and there is a fair amount of agreement over what children should know. But there are big differences in what constitutes good enough," says Mike Cohen, the president's special adviser on education.

"For example, there are some half-dozen states where less than a third of students sampled [on the NAEP assessment] meet the minimal level of proficiency for eighth-grade math. But the states' own tests say that at least 80 percent of students are meeting state standards," he adds.

"All 50 states and 89 percent of school districts rate their students as above average. We need a system of testing that provides parents and teachers with good information about how their children are doing in a consistent way," adds Gary Phillips, executive director of the Department of Education and head of the voluntary test effort.

Administration officials expect that student scores on a high-standards national test will alarm many parents. In fact, they're counting on parents' outrage over how poorly their children perform to spur calls for more demanding courses in local schools. Only 20 percent of American eighth-graders take algebra, compared with 100 percent in other industrialized nations. "We need to take a very hard look at the quality of our curriculum nationwide. Students can't learn algebra if they're not given the opportunity to learn it," said Acting Deputy Secretary of Education Marshall Smith on Aug. 29.

'We need a system of testing that provides parents and teachers with good information about how their children are doing in a consistent way.' -Gary Phillips, Dept. of Education

"It's going to perhaps embarrass some kids in the beginning. We hope to set it up so that they aren't embarrassed ... that in effect who's embarrassed is the school board, the superintendent, and the teachers in situations where algebra could have been offered and wasn't," Mr. Smith said during the first public meeting in February on the department's strategy for developing new national tests (for the full text of the meeting see www.ed.gov/nationaltests).

The public supports the idea of national standards and tests. Two out of 3 surveyed said that national tests would improve student achievement "a great deal or quite a lot," while 59 percent said they backed the president's proposal, according to a Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll released Aug. 26.

But if too many students fail new national tests, that support could quickly sour, analysts say. "The reason we don't yet

have a national test is that we are a diverse democracy and it's not clear we can live politically with the results of a high-standards test," says Anthony Carnevale, a vice president at the Educational Testing Service, the nation's largest testing group, in Princeton, N.J.

"Tests create a powerful accountability. The only governor who wins is the one whose state comes in first. Tests also put pressure on politicians and community leaders to deliver. Our current system of testing gives false comfort to parents that their children are competing well when they are not," he says.

What about minorities? Civil rights groups such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) already oppose new national tests, arguing that standardized tests could hurt poor and minority children, who could be held back or segregated in lower-achieving classes because of poor *individual* scores.

"It is both discriminatory and unwise to treat large segments of the population as nonpersons by failing to recognize reading proficiency of young children in languages other than English," said the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund, which recently launched a case in North Carolina challenging the use of standardized tests to keep children back in class.

Conservatives, including former Bush administration officials who once supported national tests, also oppose the Clinton plan, arguing that the administration is stacking the panel that is writing new tests to favor controversial methods of teaching, such as "whole language" reading or "fuzzy math."

"Local control of education is already a sensitive issue for conservatives, who are wary of federal intrusion in this area. But when you get into too many controversial areas, such as fuzzy math, which values how you approach the problem rather than whether you got the right answer, you lose respect," says Paul Anir of the Washington-based lobby group Empower America.

"You cannot have a national test without a national consensus on education, and such a high- stakes test deserves a full national debate," he adds.

On Aug. 30, in bid to defuse such criticism, President Clinton proposed that the tests be developed by an independent and bipartisan board - the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) - not the Education Department. "I intend to do whatever is necessary to move forward," he said.■

1. The Washington Post

09/03/97; Edition: FINAL; Section: A Section; Page A17

THE FEDERAL PAGE; IN THE LOOP

This Fall's Pledges

By Al Kamen

Washington Post Staff Writer

...Riley, Ireland. Can Clinton Forge a Link?

Meanwhile, most all the ambassadorial plums have been plucked for the second Clinton administration. One exception would be Mexico, where there's the still-dangling nomination of former Massachusetts governor William F. Weld (R). The Clintonites may be content to let the Republicans fight this one out a while longer.

Another opening expected next year would be Ireland. Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith won an extension of her tour of duty through the winter, but a successor, probably someone close to Clinton, would then have to fill that difficult post.

A name that's been making the rounds of late is **Education Secretary Richard W. Riley**, who is Irish, though a Protestant, with roots in Cavan County. Riley was in the homeland for eight days in early summer, giving a couple of speeches and vacationing. Turns out the Irish government changed in the summer so Riley was the first Clinton Cabinet member to visit the new Irish Taoiseach (prime minister).

Riley, asked about the possibility after he finished a news conference on educational testing yesterday in Philadelphia, said he has "never talked to the president about it. I have never in any way planned to leave the Department of Education and I do not now. My sole attention has been on education, including national standards of excellence and voluntary national tests in reading and math."

Some Riley aides say he wouldn't take the job even if it were offered. But Clinton loves the guy and even trusts him. ■

PRESS BRIEFING BY JOE LOCKHART

Edgartown Elementary School Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts

10:25 A.M. EDT

MR. LOCKHART: Good morning, everybody. I'm out here a little bit early today. I just wanted to let you know the President, at I think about 11:15 a.m., will leave — he's going to do a drop-by at the local Oak Bluffs School. It's K through 8.

The school system here, the students come tomorrow, and they've been doing a two-day orientation, sort of, I think, district-wide with all of the teachers. And the head of this particular school wrote a letter to the President inviting him to come by and talk to the teachers. He's going to do that this morning. The pool will cover it.

He'll talk a little bit, I think, about how great it's been in Martha's Vineyard, and then talk for a few minutes about the need for national standards in education. I think some of the stuff will be similar to what you've heard in the radio address, but he'll just be talking about how important it is to demand high standards and testing, challenging students to achieve has worked; probably cite an event that **Secretary of Education Riley** did yesterday in Philadelphia where they're at the end of a three-year program where they've increased the academic achievement through testing and standards; and talk a little bit about how this should not be a partisan issue and there are some efforts underway to offer an amendment to block the **Department of Education** spending on developing a test which would certainly set back any effort to move towards national standards in testing.

Anyway, he'll do that and then go back, and I don't really yet have a sense of what the rest of the day looks like.

Q Will we hear those remarks in here live?

MR. LOCKHART: Let me see if we can work that out. I, frankly, didn't think of it until about two minutes ago when somebody else asked me that. If not, we'll obviously get a transcript back as soon as we can, but we'll try to do that.

Q Are we likely to see some movement on that next week when the President gets back?

MR. LOCKHART: I think it's likely that there will be some movement in the House this week. The particular appropriations bill that Congressman Goodling has been talking about attaching an amendment to I believe may come up as early as tomorrow.

Q Joe, would the President veto that bill if the Goodling amendment survived in it?

MR. LOCKHART: I don't think we've moved to that point yet. As you know, the Secretary of Education has suggested — has recommended a veto on this particular issue. We have sent up a SAP, I believe it was late last night or early this morning, which I'll try to get a copy as soon as I have it where within that SAP is a senior advisors' recommendation to veto. But I think we're still hoping that we can make the case that standards is one of the most important challenges facing our nation and our educational system, and not have to invoke a presidential veto.

Q Is he going to, at all, touch on the issue the Education Department has had to quit accepting applications for student loans? Goodling has also criticized —

MR. LOCKHART: Yes — I don't expect that to come up today, no.

Q What's the latest for the administration to say about that issue?

MR. LOCKHART: I don't really have much to add beyond what I've seen the spokesman at the **Department of Education** on the backlog. I don't have any more current information.

Q Joe, Goodling's argument is that there are already enough tests and that we already know what's wrong with the education system and that passing this is like using a speedometer to make a faster car, or whatever. But how does the administration respond to that argument?

MR. LOCKHART: We respectfully disagree with Congressman Goodling. And I think if you look at the pilot program that the Philadelphia School Board used, which they announced yesterday, they showed an increase of five percentage points in the proportion of students at a basic level or higher in nearly all grades and subjects, a reading increase of more than five percentage points in proportion of students achieving at the basic, proficient and advanced level, and in science an increase of nearly nine points among 4th graders. And I think those sorts of programs make the case for demanding high standards among students all across the country.

Q How much money is involved in this, Joe?

MR. LOCKHART: As far as what the **Department of Education** — I don't have a figure. I'll track down a figure. And I don't think it's a huge appropriation, but I think what the attempt by some who disagree with us on this are hoping to shut the whole program down by forbidding spending any money at all on testing.

Q It's a rolling appropriation; it starts at a relatively small amount, and then —

MR. LOCKHART: I think one of the things that we have talked about is sending up legislation to have the NAGB Board — the National Assessment Governing Board — actually administer work towards developing and administering these tests to make sure that everyone understands this is nonpartisan. But that's legislation that hasn't been introduced or passed, and in effect, what — defunding or barring funding at the **Department of Education** would basically bring this effort to a halt. And we just find that to be unacceptable.

Q One of the things Goodling has said is that it's not a partisan issue, but he says the opposition is powerful because conservatives are opposed to anything that has national in it, and liberals are opposing to anything that has testing in it; so he says he has a lot of support, not just partisan support.

MR. LOCKHART: Well, that's his political assessment. He's well within his rights to make that political assessment. We believe that there's a national consensus for higher standards and achieving higher educational standards through this effort and through this program, and we think this is the way it should go.

Q Joe, if there's a consensus, it would appear a number of the people you have invited in to talk about racial issues are not part of that consensus. They told us when they came a few weeks ago that they felt that these tests were arguably racially discriminatory. Is the administration doing anything to address their concerns?

MR. LOCKHART: I don't have any specific information on any specific actions we've taken. We certainly have been listening and consulting widely on this, but I think when I talk about a consensus I think if you look at some of the surveys that have been done by independent organizations, people think this will work. And we believe that it's really the important — if not the most important challenge, one of the most important challenges we face as we move toward the 21st century and developing a world-class education system.

Q How do you come to the conclusion that there is a national consensus when, in the seven months since the President unveiled this program, only six states have embraced it?

MR. LOCKHART: This is an ongoing process, and we have six states, we have many large school districts. You're looking at more than 20 percent of — covering more than 20 percent of the students, and we're continuing to work on this effort. But I think the point we're making here now is that this is not the point where we should take a step back and shut down this program, which is, I think, what the amendment that has been discussed, being offered, would do, by defunding it at the **Department of Education**.

Q Are you counting on success in Congress this week?

MR. LOCKHART: Well, I think Congress has just come back from a long recess, so we're still assessing where we are.

Q So this is their issue; do you think that you will prevail?

MR. LOCKHART: I think we'll be in a better position to know in the coming days, and it is an important issue and it's one of the reasons we think we're going to take another opportunity today to talk about it.

Q Is Massachusetts one of the six states?

MR. LOCKHART: Yes, Massachusetts was one of the first states.

Q So it's like preaching to the choir.

MR. LOCKHART: It's one of the states, and as you know, as the President often does, he highlights the best practices around the country. And he's happy to be here in Massachusetts, which is one of the first states to sign on. ■

1. Morning Edition (NPR)

September 2, 1997

National tests

BOB EDWARDS A record 53 million children are beginning the school year, and while the news about their academic performance and the quality of American schools is upbeat, a huge political battle over school reform is underway in Washington. At issue is whether the federal government should be involved in developing national academic standards and tests. It's a bitter partisan debate that is creating some serious misgivings about the direction school reform is taking. NPR's Claudio Sanchez reports.

CLAUDIO SANCHEZ To hear the President of the United States tell it, American schoolchildren have made a remarkable comeback in recent years and the federal government has had a hand in it. In his weekend radio address, Bill Clinton cited U.S. Education Department data showing that students' performance, especially in math and science, is improving at every age level.

PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON, from his radio address Most exciting: More high schoolers are taking challenging courses and college-level courses. Still, we all know, we have more to do to improve our schools and to raise learning levels for all our students.

SANCHEZ The only way that's going to happen, the president said, is if every state adopts national standards that define what every child should learn, and if every state agrees to test students in reading and math. This push for standards and tests grew out of Goals 2000, a plan devised by both the Bush and Clinton administrations, enacted into law with bi-partisan support in 1994. But now, there's a rift between Republican leaders in Congress and the White House over one big concern -- whether the federal government's role in setting standards and developing tests will usurp local authority. It is something that's sure to worry everybody, says Steven Arends, a professor of legal studies at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst.

STEVEN ARENDS, University of Massachusetts Political bodies -- not just the federal government, but the state governments as well -- are determining what the content of curriculum, and therefore what every child is going to be held to know. And these standardized curriculum standards are affecting not only what kids have to learn, but also the way in which teachers are trained and certified; the content of text; the content of tests; graduation and even the standards by which federal and state aid are to be administered to schools.

SANCHEZ In a book he titled "*A Short Route to Chaos*," Arends argues that the most sought-after schools are small and self-governing, yet government-led reforms in the last two years, says Arends, have meant fewer choices, less autonomy, less academic freedom and too much uniformity.

ARENDS In fact, the powership that I see, worked by Goals 2000, is so basic that I've come to call it a 'reconstitution' of American schooling.

MARSHALL MIKESMITH, U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education I can't believe that he says that Goals 2000 is having this much impact when, in fact, the flexibility in Goals 2000 is really quite extraordinary.

SANCHEZ Marshall Mikesmith is U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education.

MIKESMITH In places where they have moved up the standards, they have moved in challenging standards, they have trained the teachers to be able to teach those standards, not inhibited the teachers, let them teach in whatever way they can, but said, "Okay, every child has to have the opportunity to learn some algebra by the end of eighth grade. Every child has to be able to read adeptly by the end of third or fourth grade." I mean, if everybody in the United States is to have the same kinds of general opportunities, we need to have students challenged by the same kinds of standards.

SANCHEZ Recent polls show that two out of every three Americans think that national standards and tests would help improve the performance of students in schools. But many do worry about the process becoming politicized. To keep the development of national tests free of politics, President Clinton has promised that the U.S. Department of Education will not be involved. Instead, an independent bi-partisan board created by Congress would oversee the process. It's hard to say, though, whether this will sway the 43 states that have refused to sign onto the President's proposal, or if it will appease Congressional Republicans who have vowed to oppose federal funding for it. Professor Arends predicts that a fight over standards and tests in Washington will further divide Americans and keep the nation from debating more important issues this year.

ARENDS One is a guarantee for educational freedom that runs parallel to the guarantees of religious freedom and freedom of expression that we find in the U.S. Constitution. And the second is the basic commitment to equitable funding for all persons, so that these freedoms are not dependent upon the accents of one's wealth or place of birth.

SANCHEZ It is true that when Congress and the White House fight over education policy, other important issues take a back seat -- the integration of schoolchildren by race, ethnicity, language, and income, for example, has slowed to a standstill across the country. Yet, there is little or no discussion over what that may mean. It's also unclear whether national standards will help the 16 million children in poverty, who are more likely to attend bad schools and do poorly. The fact is, no one on either side of the debate has a specific plan to help needy students now. Claudio Sanchez, NPR News, Washington. ■

1. Education Daily

September 2, 1997

ED POINTING TO NAEP TRENDS IN CALL FOR NEW TESTS

Education Department officials are using the latest long-term data on student achievement to bolster the president's call for voluntary national tests pinpointing individual performance.

Sluggish reading performance and a decline in writing ability for some grade levels in particular show the need to test fourth-graders in reading, Education Secretary Richard Riley said Friday in previewing trend data covering the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) since 1969.

Discrepancy By Age

Using charts of public school student's gains since 1982, Mike Smith, ED acting deputy secretary, showed that in math, 13-year-olds made the least progress—a six point gain on the 500 point scale—compared to 13 points for nine-year-olds and nine points for 17-year-olds.

Even so, the 1996 achievement for 13-year-olds is higher than the 1973 average.

President Clinton's plan also would test eighth-graders in math, and his Saturday radio address was expected to discuss the trends, which show stagnation in three of the four subject areas since 1992.

The voluntary national tests will pinpoint individual student performance for parents and provide a nationwide comparable measure, while NAEP provides a representative sample.

Beyond The Numbers

The report—which compares 30,000 students' performance in 1996 with those of previous assessments dating back to 1969—gauges the achievement of nine-, 13- and 17-year olds in mathematics, science and reading as well as fourth-, eighth- and 11th-graders in writing.

In mathematics, the trend shows overall improvement in 17-year-olds' average scores, then declines between 1973 and 1982. The 1996 score is no different from the 1973 level.

Yet, nine- and 13-year-olds had higher average scores in 1996 than their peers in 1973.

More of those young students can add, subtract, multiply and divide using whole numbers and solve one-step problems, and the number of 17-year-olds who can compute with decimals, fractions and percents, solve simple equations and use moderately complex reasoning has increased since 1978.

In reading, the gains achieved by 17-year-olds from 1971 to 1988 have not held in the '90s.

While the number of nine-year-olds who can comprehend specific material increased over the time, the percentage who can do more challenging tasks such as searching for specific information, interrelate ideas and make generalizations showed only slight improvement.

And the percentage of 17-year-olds who can find, understand, summarize and explain complicated materials showed no gains between 1971 and 1996. Yet the number of 13-year-olds who could complete those tasks increased.

The writing skills of both 11th- and eighth-graders showed significant declines. Fewer 11th-graders were able to write focused and clear responses to tasks or write complete responses with enough information in 1996 compared to 1984, the first year of the exam. And the number of eighth-graders who can write even partial or vague responses to tasks or write focused clear responses dropped.

The long-term data also show that, compared to their peers in 1977, higher percentages of nine- and 13-year-olds in 1996 knew everyday science facts, understood some simple principles and had some knowledge of plants and animals.

And more 17-year-olds have detailed scientific knowledge and can determine proper scientific procedure.

Single copies of "NAEP 1996 Trends in Academic Progress" are free from National Library of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 555 New Jersey Ave.

NW, Washington, DC 20208-5641, (202)219-1651, or on the Internet at <http://www.ed.gov/NCES/naep>. -Regina Lightfoot-Clark ■

CONGRESS GETS SET FOR A NEW SESSION WITH OLD BATTLES

By LIZETTE ALVAREZ

WASHINGTON, Sept. 1 — Basking in the accomplishment of its balanced-budget and tax-cutting agreement with the President, Congress returns to the Capitol this week to confront the mechanics of making the historic deal work and to wrangle over several prickly issues, including welfare, education and campaign finance.

First, the House and Senate will usher spending bills to passage before the Sept. 31 deadline. Although there is little talk of the kind of warfare that shut down the Government in 1995, battles loom over the National Endowment for the Arts, the census, abortion and national standardized testing.

And Republican leaders expect to plunge back into two of the more controversial provisions of the balanced-budget deal, even though some of those leaders have taken pains to emphasize the benefits of pragmatism over partisanship in their workings with President Clinton.

One provision centers on Clinton Administration rules requiring states to pay welfare workers the minimum wage, which Republicans oppose. The other involves tax-free savings accounts that could be used to pay for tuition at private and parochial schools, a favorite idea of Republican leaders.

Despite the pending issues, this September arrives with an eye already on January, the start of the next Congressional session, and a lingering sense of victory on the budget and taxes — unlike years past, when Congress returned from the summer recess primed for a host of formidable tasks, like overhauling welfare and tackling health care. In many ways, members say, the fall session already appears to be something of an anticlimax.

"When you've got the big balanced budget and the big tax program, saved Medicaid for a few years, yeah, it feels that way," said Representative Bill Goodling, the Pennsylvania Republican and chairman of the Education and Workforce Committee who is leading the effort against new national basic skills tests for schoolchildren. "It's not going to be as sexy as the last six or eight months, obviously. Not many people read too much about appropriations bills unless they have some specific interest in them."

The Senate returns on Tuesday, but no votes will be held until Wednesday, which is when the House resumes business. There is already talk about going home for the year in October, although a few veteran lawmakers call that wishful thinking.

Several battles are shaping up in the coming months, some fueled by partisan rumblings among Republican House members displeased with Speaker Newt Gingrich's perceived concessions in the balanced-budget agreement. Mr. Gingrich, who was the target of a coup attempt in July by a core of disgruntled conservatives, has been on a two-week tour of the country trying to rehabilitate his image and prop up his numbers in the polls.

One task at hand will be to take up the welfare issue once again. The Labor Department recently ordered states to treat welfare recipients in community service jobs as regular employees, with protections and benefits like the minimum wage. During negotiations in July, the issue of whether welfare recipients should be paid the minimum wage for work "was a real sticking point," said Michele Davis, press secretary for Representative Dick Armey of Texas, the majority leader.

While Republicans chose not to upend the budget agreement over that matter, Mr. Gingrich and Mr. Armey have now pledged to introduce a bill to alter those perceived weaknesses, an effort they plan to turn into a national campaign. Senator Trent Lott of Mississippi, the majority leader, will also seek to address the issue.

Another sticking point centers on a proposal by Senator Paul Coverdell, Republican of Georgia, to institute tax-free savings accounts to pay for education, including primary and secondary school tuition, thereby promoting the idea of what Republicans call school choice. The measure, which has the unwavering backing of the Republican leadership, was dropped from the budget deal at the last minute under a veto threat from the President.

One of Mr. Clinton's stated priorities — legislation that would give him greater freedom to negotiate free-trade agreements — is likely to face considerable resistance in Congress, even within his own party.

Anticipating this, Mr. Clinton assembled a special team to draft the legislation, and he had a group of Democratic lawmakers go to the White House in late July to drum up support for it. Two Democratic Senators, Ernest F. Hollings of South Carolina and Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia, have said they may filibuster the proposal.

Republicans indicate that they strongly oppose another of the President's quests: new national tests in reading and math for fourth and eighth graders that school districts could choose to use. Mr. Goodling, who heads the House education panel, spent part of the recess rallying support for an amendment that would bar financing for the tests, which he deems unnecessary.

So far, 8 of the 13 appropriations bills have been passed by the House and 10 by the Senate, but none have reached Mr. Clinton's desk. All the bills are supposed to be voted on by Congress and signed into law by the President by Oct. 1, the start of the Federal Government's budget year.

A few more familiar controversies will be recycled this session. The debate over the financing for the National Endowment for the Arts will continue, as will the issue of how to conduct the 2000 census. And, as always, efforts to restrict or ban abortion are expected.

On campaign financing, Senators John McCain, Republican of Arizona, and Russell D. Feingold, Democrat of Wisconsin, said that as hearings on that issue resumed on Thursday in the Senate, they hoped to infuse energy into their stalled campaign to overhaul campaign finance laws. They have found only lackluster support so far in their effort to do away with the "soft money" contributions — the less regulated donations to political parties — that have tainted both Republicans and Democrats. Mr. McCain said he had tried — with no success — to get Mr. Lott to schedule the bill for floor debate. The two Senators said they wanted to step up their pressure before the campaign-finance hearings ended in the Senate, which could dissipate any momentum for an overhaul.

"We intend to bring the issue out in September," Mr. McCain said. "If not, we'll try to force it up. We've got to address it."

Senators McCain and Feingold are seeking the backing of Mr. Lott and are already supported by Senator Tom Daschle of South Dakota, the minority leader.

"I think it's going to be very difficult," Mr. McCain added. "You are asking incumbents to change a system that keeps incumbents in office."

Mr. Lott has said he is reluctant to bring the bill to the floor until the Senate committee hearings are over, which is expected to occur by the end of the year, and it becomes clear which campaign finance laws, if any, have been broken or skirted.

Susan Irby, Mr. Lott's press secretary, responding to Mr. McCain and Mr. Feingold's plan to force the issue of a campaign financing overhaul, said senators were not likely to risk a Government shutdown for an issue on which there was no consensus.

Two other longstanding measures are expected to move forward after months of debate and compromise.

Representative Bud Shuster, Republican of Pennsylvania and the chairman of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, said he planned to introduce the highway reauthorization bill, the nation's main transportation law.

The bill would revise the formula for how gasoline taxes are distributed, an issue that pits the South and the Midwest against the Northeast, which has typically benefited from the existing rules. The Senate is still working on its version, but both chambers anticipate that the debate will be charged, as usual.

"It's always a difficult one to do because people have strong feelings about it," Senator Don Nickles of Oklahoma, the majority whip, said of the transportation bill. "And it's a bill that will impact every state."

Also on the agenda is legislation to revamp the Food and Drug Administration. The bill would permit the approval of certain drugs after less study than required now and would turn the review of some medical devices over to the private sector. The bill is expected on the floor of both chambers this month.

In addition, Republicans said they hoped to deal with religious persecution around the world, an issue that garnered attention earlier this year after the State Department issued a report on the persecution of Christians in many nations. Both the House and Senate plan to push bills to create a special White House office to monitor religious persecution and provide for sanctions against countries with poor records.

Some of these issues are likely to be shuttled over to next year, members and staff say.

"In everyone's mind, the next two months are kind of a wrap-up," said Ms. Davis, Mr. Arney's press secretary. "As far as planning, we're looking to next year." ■

1. The Wall Street Journal

09/02/97

School Reform: What Remains to Be Done

By William J. Bennett

This morning a record 52 million children will walk into America's classrooms. And this year Americans will spend more than a quarter-trillion dollars trying to educate them. These numbers alone ensure that education will be at or near the top of the national political agenda. In addition, there is greater political emphasis on social issues — and education is how many people talk about the condition of our children, cultural decline and the nation's moral well-being. As the debate intensifies, I think it is useful to discuss how much progress has been made in education reform; the obstacles that remain; and how Republicans can do a better job at winning the education debate.

Some progress is being made on the educational front. A variety of indicators — including the National Assessment of Educational Progress math test scores, high school dropout rates, and American College Testing scores — have shown some improvement in the last few years. (Scholastic Assessment Test scores received artificial boosts because of changes made since 1994.)

But almost 15 years after a presidential commission warned in a report titled "A Nation at Risk" that "a rising tide of mediocrity" threatened America's public schools, student achievement is still mediocre at best. In recent international comparisons, U.S. eighth-graders placed an embarrassing 28th in the world in math and 17th in science. Grade inflation continues unabated. According to the College Board, since 1987 the portion of students with an A average rose to 37% of SAT test-takers from 28% — even though those A students' combined verbal and math scores dropped 14 points at the same time. Pernicious ideas like "whole-language reading," "constructivist [fuzzy] math" and radical multiculturalism infect much of the curriculum. Good ideas like voluntary national testing have been politicized and undermined by the Clinton administration. A recent NBC/Wall Street Journal poll shows that only 27% of the public thinks public schools adequately prepare students for the job market. And teachers rightly complain that more and more parents are not upholding their end of the education bargain (for example, by turning off the TV and making sure children do their homework).

Faced with these problems, some public schools are trying to mend their ways. In the notorious Chicago public school system, poorly performing elementary schools have been put on academic probation. 1,100 employees of failing schools must reapply for their jobs, and a back-to-basics curriculum is under consideration. Even teachers' unions are beginning to acknowledge the need for change. In January, a Washington, D.C., consulting group prepared an internal document for the National Education Association urging that the NEA position itself as an agent of reform or risk "further marginalization and possibly even organizational death."

But the NEA still can't abide the change we need — more choice in education. Earlier this year University of Chicago economist Derek Neal released a statistical analysis of Catholic school performance. It confirms (once again) that students from poor, disadvantaged urban communities who attend Catholic schools perform much better than those who attend public schools. Because of growing evidence like this, school choice can no longer be considered a fringe issue, as it was a decade ago.

Today, choice is a central part of the education debate — and public support for it continues to grow. According to last week's Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll, 55% of public-school parents favor vouchers. This is the first time a majority of parents with children in public schools have voiced support for choice for those attending public, private and religious schools. Other encouraging signs abound:

- In Minnesota, GOP Gov. Arne Carlson won a major victory when he persuaded the Democratic legislature to provide every family either a tax deduction or tax credit if it is used for public, private or religious school expenses. In the process, the governor dealt a body blow to his state's teachers unions.

- Charter schools — public schools that are freed of many regulations in exchange for greater autonomy and more accountability — are flourishing. There are now more than 700 charter schools in 28 states.

- Cleveland is the first city in the nation with a state-supported voucher program that allows children from disadvantaged homes to attend religious schools. In Milwaukee, private donors have given enough money to allow thousands of low-income children to attend religious schools, a state court ruling having denied children public funds to do so. In New York, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani backed a scholarship program to send 1,300 of the city's lowest-achieving public school students to religious and other private schools; more than 17,000 children applied. In California, the grass-roots group English for the Children is working to put a referendum on the 1998 ballot to end "bilingual education" — a euphemism for many programs that essentially keep Hispanic children from learning English.

Some congressional Republicans are trying to expand those local gains. In the last congressional session, Sen. Paul Coverdell (R., Ga.) introduced an innovative Education Savings Account proposal for a tax-free savings account in which \$2,000 a year can be placed toward any child's cost of schooling.

In short, there is momentum for education reform and there are solid gains to show. Opponents are increasingly on the defensive. Social science research confirms traditional, common-sense views about education. And the national debate continues to move in the direction of greater competition. Nevertheless, many high hurdles still have to be cleared. President Clinton, the teachers' unions and the courts continue to obstruct genuine reform. The congressional GOP leadership has lost its nerve — witness its quick capitulation when Mr. Clinton threatened to veto the budget deal if it included Sen. Coverdell's proposal.

Clearly, much work remains to be done. Who will do it? Education is and should remain primarily a state, local and family matter. But there is an important place for political leadership. The Democratic Party is beholden to the education special interest groups, with a few honorable exceptions like Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D., Conn.), Rep. Floyd Flake (D., N.Y.) and Chicago Mayor Richard Daley. So it is mostly up to the Republican Party to provide that leadership.

Right now, however, the GOP is not winning the public's confidence. Here's why: Republicans have not offered a sufficiently compelling vision of what would replace the existing monopoly-run public school system. Too often, they sound as if they are on a search-and-destroy mission, or they speak about education the way many husbands speak about, say, interior decorating: stiffly, halfheartedly, without a sense of familiarity, nuance or confidence. In either case, it is better to say nothing at all.

Republicans should speak with passion and conviction on behalf of achievement, assessment and accountability. They need to explain why there is less human misery, more justice and greater opportunity when sound education ideas prevail. It is not mere speculation when we declare our ideas are better. We know what works in American education. Republicans should publicize and replicate success stories, and fashion public policies that foster, encourage and reward success.

A final point: Often, Republicans talk about education in terms of economic competitiveness. That is appropriate but insufficient. We should also talk about education as a way of conveying America's moral and political principles and nurturing the character of the young. We should speak about education in the context of human excellence, high standards and national greatness. We must demonstrate an understanding of, and a willingness to articulate and defend, the fundamental purpose of education, which is to engage in the architecture of the soul. That is not only the best way to win; it is also the best way to justify the public's trust.

Mr. Bennett was President Reagan's secretary of education from 1985 to 1988. He is currently a co-director of Empower America and a fellow at the Heritage Foundation. ■