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NPR

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BYLINE: Claudio Sanchez, Washington, DC; Bob Edwards, Washington

HIGHLIGHT:

NPR's Claudio Sanchez reports on the Republican plan for education reform. The plan calls for more testing for teachers, an end to the tenure system, and tuition vouchers for poor school children.

BODY:

BOB EDWARDS, HOST: President Clinton has made his proposals on education. Republicans in Congress are taking their own education plan to the public and to the education groups, who up until now have been wary of their proposals.

Those proposals include introducing tuition vouchers and reducing the role of the federal government in education. Republican leaders say public support for their ideas is growing, but support for some of those ideas is not proving easy.

NPR's Claudio Sanchez reports.

CLAUDIO SANCHEZ, NPR REPORTER: House Majority Leader Richard Armey, Republican of Texas, may or may not be the best salesman when it comes to the Republicans' education agenda, but no one will defend that agenda more vigorously; in this case, in front of school board members from Armey's home state, some even from his own party.

SOUNDBITE OF A CROWD AT CONFERENCE

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE RICHARD ARMEY (R-TX), HOUSE MAJORITY LEADER: How are you?

GREG GIFFORD (PH), TEXAS SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER: Representative Armey, I'm Greg Gifford from Mesquite (ph), Texas.

ARMEY: Greg -- Mesquite.

MORNING EDITION (NPR), FEBRUARY 3, 1998

GIFFORD: Yes, sir.

ARMEY: All right. I like that.

SANCHEZ: Most members of the Texas delegation at this conference of school boards disagree with the Republicans' education proposals -- tuition vouchers for low-income school children, a \$2,500 tax subsidy for all parents of school-age children, and the restructuring of targeted federal aid into block grants for schools. Armeý argues, though, that the Republican plan means smaller government and less intrusive education policies.

Assembled in a huge ballroom in a downtown Washington, DC hotel were 700 school board members from across the country waiting to be persuaded.

ARMEY: And let me just say from the beginning, there is no Republican that I know anywhere in public office, at any level, who does not appreciate and cherish the role of public education. And the assertion that we are somehow or another people lacking in appreciation for public education is a bum rap.

SANCHEZ: And to prove it, Armeý said, Republicans this year will demand that nine out of every 10 dollars that the federal government spends on education be spent on classroom needs. Teachers should be tested and tenure must end, Armeý said.

ARMEY: Now, I believe, on one hand, you've gotta fight off the teachers unions and so forth, and on the other hand, you've gotta fight off a bunch of wise guys in Washington who think they know your business better than you do. And I say give you the money back.

APPLAUSE

SANCHEZ: People applauded, but they stopped when Armeý made his pitch for the hardest sell of all: tuition vouchers for poor school children. Vouchers will force public schools to compete with private and parochial schools, Armeý said.

ARMEY: When the schools see that the children and the parents are moving things, the schools do better, because they want those children. We can't put the well being of institutions ahead of the children.

SANCHEZ: Robert Seward (ph) is a lifelong Republican and a school board member from Mesquite, Texas, who worked on two of Armeý's reelection campaigns. He says that the Republican agenda is weak because it focuses too much on the narrow issue of vouchers. It does not focus enough on the issue that concerns school officials everywhere: local control of education.

ROBERT SEWARD, REPUBLICAN PARTY MEMBER AND SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER FROM MESQUITE, TEXAS: And every time the federal government says that we're gonna get involved in this issue that they haven't been into and expand their role, they have now stepped on the toes of the local control of the state, and even lower than that to the city and school district level.

SANCHEZ: Some school board members say that's the weakness of the Clinton education agenda. Repairing old schools, hiring more teachers, reducing class size or putting an end to social promotion are, after all, local matters. They always have been.

MORNING EDITION (NPR), FEBRUARY 3, 1998

So, President Clinton and Republicans in Congress can argue all they want about which education plan is better, but the way many people here see it, it'll be tough to root for either side.

Claudio Sanchez, NPR News, Washington.

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LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: February 3, 1998

Q's and A's on GOP Education Agenda

Q: Today Senate Republicans held a press conference outlining their education agenda for the year. Their "BOOKS" package will reportedly include Sen. Coverdell's \$2.6 billion K-12 education IRAs, \$200 million to train teachers and parents to teach reading, \$75 million for vouchers, and more funds for disabled students, anti-drug programs, and charter schools. The package will also include provisions requiring that federal funds go to the classroom level and allowing states to use federal funds for teacher testing and merit pay increases. What is the Administration's response to the Republican proposal?

A: If the Republicans are serious about improving education, not undermining it, we welcome their help. (As the President likes to say, he's a Baptist -- he believes in deathbed conversions.) We believe there should be strong bipartisan support for the President's agenda of raising standards, promoting public school choice and charter schools, ending social promotion, improving the quality of teaching, connecting every classroom to the information superhighway, rebuilding crumbling schools, and making sure every child can read by the end of third grade. The President will build on that agenda in next week's State of the Union address. Some of the Republican proposals suggest they still have a lot to learn on this issue, but we hope we can work together across party lines to do what's right for America's children.

Q: The Republican agenda seems to include several items that the Administration rejected in the last session of Congress: the Coverdell proposal, a voucher demonstration, and the Gorton bill. What is the Administration's reaction specifically to those proposals and do you expect to reach some kind of agreement on these proposals in order to move forward with your education agenda?

A: The President's agenda is to strengthen public schools through high standards, greater choice in public education and more accountability for results. He remains strongly opposed to legislation that would undermine public schools or substitute arbitrary block grants for key investments in such areas as technology, school safety, and charter schools.

Q: What about the Republican proposals to allow states to use federal funds for teacher testing and merit pay?

A: The President has said many times that he thinks that good teachers should be rewarded and bad teachers should be counseled to improve or removed from the profession. The President's new proposals, such as the Education Opportunity Zones, will stress the importance of teacher and school accountability for raising student achievement, and we will continue to encourage states to reward master teachers who attain national certification. We would also point out that some federal program funds, such as Goals 2000, could already be used for these purposes if states wish to do so as part of their school reform efforts.

Q: Could you explain again why you object to the Coverdell proposal, given that you supported education IRAs for postsecondary education?

- A:
- The Coverdell provision, as proposed in the last session of Congress, would have diverted attention and resources from public schools, where 90% of the nation's students attend.
 - The Coverdell Amendment would have disproportionately benefited the most affluent families and provided little benefit to lower- and middle-income families.
 - As Secretary Rubin noted, the legislation provided virtually no guidance in identifying appropriate expenses and would have led to significant additional tax complexity for families.
 - Finally, the legislation would have essentially rewarded families, especially upper-income families, for what they would have done anyway.

Q: You spent much of 1997 fighting with Republicans over the Administration's proposal for Voluntary National Tests in reading and math. Republicans have signaled that they expect to continue their efforts to kill the tests in 1998, and many Democrats are sympathetic. Do you plan to continue to work for the national tests this year?

A: Absolutely. High national standards and national tests in the basics are critical for our students, especially students in our poorest communities. There is nothing worse that we can do than allow the tyranny of low expectations to limit a child's future. We need to have rigorous expectations for students and then do everything we can to help them succeed. Last year we worked hard to reach a bipartisan agreement allowing the tests to move forward under an independent board, and I will work with Congress in a bipartisan fashion this year to insure continued progress.

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01-20 8:12a

GOP education plan gets prominent spot in 1998 agenda

Eds: INSERTS new grafs 17-18, bgng, Former President... to UPDATE with former President Gerald Ford's comments on GOP and abortion issue; picks up 17th graf pvs, bgng, The year,,,

By ALAN FRAM

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - Republicans hope their multibillion-dollar plan to offer tax breaks to parents of private school students and boost other education aid will help Congress swipe the political spotlight from President Clinton.

Senate GOP leaders planned to unveil an eight-point education package today, a week before lawmakers return from a winter break that began in mid-November. Since then, Clinton has reigned over the political landscape, unwrapping headline-grabbing plans to balance the budget next year, ease access to Medicare and child care, and other proposals.

Republican leaders of the House and Senate foresee a year dominated by attempts to help schools, cut taxes, revamp the Internal Revenue Service and fight illegal drugs. With the entire House and one-third of the Senate up for re-election in November, the GOP wants to contrast its solutions to Clinton's on problems such as child care.

"It's an issue that we know is of concern to a lot of Americans," Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., said Sunday on CNN's "Late Edition." "And we want to look at how to best help them with caring for their children rather than turning it over to some government organization."

But that's not enough for many conservatives, who are already accusing Lott and House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., of timidly avoiding hard fights with Clinton over top-tier issues like national defense and overhauling the tax system.

"Conservatives must cease shadow boxing," 1996 GOP presidential hopeful Steve Forbes wrote in an open letter to Republicans on Jan. 11. "They must be willing again to fight for substance and principle rather than trying to hold on to office for the sake of holding office."

GOP leaders plan an Oct. 9 adjournment this year, plus several lengthy recesses, to give lawmakers time to campaign for re-election. While in session, Republicans hope their education proposals will help replace voters' memories of earlier GOP efforts to cut school spending and abolish the Education Department.

Gingrich has said education also will be a priority in the House, where initiatives are likely to include education savings accounts and federal aid for private school tuition.

The Senate package, described by a GOP aide who spoke on condition of anonymity, will focus on primary and secondary schools and will be called BOOKS - the Better Opportunities for Our Kids in School bill. It will include \$2.6 billion for a plan by Sen. Paul Coverdell, R-Ga., to create tax-advantaged savings accounts to help parents pay education costs, including private school tuition. Democrats stalled that last year in the Senate.

Also included will be \$200 million to better train teachers and parents to teach reading, a \$75 million pilot program of vouchers for low-income students and more money for disabled students, anti-drug programs and publicly financed charter schools that operate free of many regulations.

It also will require that most federal aid be spent for classrooms, not education bureaucracies, and allow states to use

suc] funds to test teachers' skills and give them merit pay raises.

The legislation will compete directly with an education package Clinton will include in the 1999 budget he will introduce next month. He would spend billions to recruit teachers, rebuild crumbling schools and help Hispanic students.

Tax cutting will be another Republican theme this year, coupled with a drive to balance the federal budget this year or next. But though Republicans agree on the goal, their tax-cutting proposals vary widely.

Some favor across-the-board rate reductions while others want targeted reductions such as eliminating the tax increase - the so-called "marriage penalty" - that hits many people when they marry. Chairman Bill Archer, R-Texas, of the tax-writing House Ways and Means Committee plans to spell out his preferences Tuesday.

Other areas the GOP may push include child care, where Republicans may answer Clinton's proposals with tax breaks of their own, and tighter control of health maintenance organizations used by growing numbers of Americans.

Also certain is an effort to override Clinton's veto of legislation banning some late-term abortions. The Senate is expected to fall short, but Republicans value the issue because the procedure - called "partial-birth abortion" by those who oppose it - is highly unpopular.

Former President Gerald Ford, however, is warning the GOP not to become preoccupied with the abortion issue, which he said could splinter the party and threaten its chances of regaining the White House in 2000.

"If we get way over on the hard right of the political spectrum, we will not elect a Republican president," Ford said in an interview in today's New York Times. "I worry about the party going down this ultra-conservative line," Ford said.

The year also will likely see:

- Early votes on revamping the federal campaign finance law, with no big changes expected.

- Talk but no real action about overhauling Social Security and Medicare in preparation for a fiscal crunch when baby boomers start retiring in a decade.

- An uncertain attempt to approve a mammoth settlement with the tobacco industry.

[federal&education&department]

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm

Support
B.O.O.K.S.
 for America!

U.S. SENATOR PAUL COVERDELL (R-GA)
*The Better Opportunities for
 Our Kids and Schools Act*

Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

GOP EDUCATION MEDIA HOTLINE: Phone 202-224-8049 FAX 202-228-3196

Better Opportunities for Our Kids and Schools Act (B.O.O.K.S.)

Title I: A+ Accounts for Public and Private Schools.

Allows parents to contribute to an "A+ Account" to be used for a child's education at any school -- public, private, religious or home school -- from kindergarten through high school. Parents, grandparents, or scholarship sponsors may contribute up to \$2,500 a year per child in post-tax dollars. The buildup of interest within that account is tax-free if used for the child's education.

For a child attending public school, this money could be used for after-school tutoring, carpooling or other transportation costs, school uniforms, or for a home computer. "A+ Accounts" could pay for the costs of private or home schooling, including tuition. And parents of special needs children could use this money for lifelong educational expenses such as tutoring, skill development for independent living, occupational therapy, or vocational training.

Title II. Dollars to the Classroom

Redirects federal K-12 education dollars away from Washington and toward states and local school districts where these funds can better and more efficiently serve children. States would receive funds through a block grant, administered by the Governors, which then could be used by states and local school districts for those purposes they think most important, for example, by hiring more teachers or building more schools -- without direction from Washington. Requires that a minimum of 95% of about \$10 billion of federal funds reach the classroom in order to ensure that most of the dollars are not wasted on excess administrative overhead.

Title III. Educational Opportunity and Safety for Low-Income Children

Authorizes a 5-year demonstration program, funded at \$75 million in the first year and with such monies as necessary in the subsequent years, that provides for grants to education entities that would provide educational certificates ("vouchers") to low-income parents whose children attend an "unsafe school." The vouchers could be used at any other school, including public, charter, private, and sectarian schools. "Low-income" is defined as 185% of the poverty line. "Unsafe school" is defined as a school that has high rates of criminal, drug, and/or disciplinary problems. The demonstration program would be for between 20 and 30 pilot programs nationally.

Title IV. Testing and Merit Pay for Teachers

This title is designed to help states reward good teachers, and weed out the bad. Makes clear that federal education funds may be used by states to carry out an assessment of the performance of each elementary school or secondary school teacher; and to establish merit pay programs for teachers.

Title V. Reading Excellence

This title seeks to turn around our nation's alarmingly high illiteracy rates by focusing on training teachers to teach reading, increasing parental involvement and sending more dollars to the classroom.

Provides \$210 million for research, teacher training and individual grants for K-12 reading instruction. Requires that funds for teacher training be spent on programs that are demonstrated by scientific research to be effective, such as phonics.

Authorizes grants to parents for tutorial assistance for their children. Requires states to use a portion of their grant to fund tutorial assistance programs for Title I schools in Empowerment and Enterprise Communities. Parents with children experiencing reading difficulties could apply for these funds and purchase additional help for their children. Also provides literacy and other appropriate assistance for parents of these children to help them become their child's first and most important teacher.

Ensures that 95% of the funds go to successfully teaching children to read, not on administrative overhead.

Title VI. Teacher and Student Safety

This title is designed to protect schoolchildren and teachers from harm by ensuring that victims and witnesses of crimes at school are protected, and to encourage states and local communities to provide stronger responses to criminal and drug activities on school property.

Subtitle A. Student Safety and Family Choice

Amends the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to remove any federal barrier to the use of state and local funds -- and allow the use of federal funds -- to pay the costs of a student who has been a victim of a violent criminal offense at his or her school to attend another school, whether public, private or sectarian.

Subtitle B. Victim and Witness Assistance Programs for Teachers and Students

Amends the Victims of Crime Act to allow funds to be used to provide compensation and services to elementary and secondary school students who are the victims of school violence, as defined by the state; and authorizes the Department of Justice to make grants for demonstration projects to assist local education agencies in developing, establishing, and operating programs designed to A) protect victims and witnesses of incidents of school violence; and B) support student safety toll-free hotlines for confidential reporting of crimes and drugs use in schools.

Subtitle C. Innovative Programs to Protect Teachers and Students

Establishes a grant program for innovative programs to improve unsafe schools. States, or state or local education agencies that have implemented policies which provide protections for victims and witnesses to a school crime; which provide for the expulsion of students who sell drugs or commit a violent offense that causes serious bodily injury (as defined by the state); and which require referral to law enforcement/juvenile authorities of any such offense shall be eligible to receive such funds.

Report Cards on School Violence

Priority is given to those eligible states, or state or local education agencies which also institute innovative programs that:

- provide an annual report to parents and teachers listing all incidents at school involving physical violence, weapon possession, or drug activity;
- provide immediate parent/teacher notification about incidents involving physical violence, weapon possession, and drug use at school;
- establish enhanced security measures at schools, such as metal detectors and canine patrols;

Title VII. Charter School Expansion

This title encourages the growth of high-quality charter schools (independent public schools), by better directing funds to states which are committed to strong charter schools; ensuring that charter schools are eligible for their fair share of federal funding, e.g., Title I and IDEA; and increasing financing options available to charter schools and allowing them to utilize funds from the Title VI block grant program for startup costs.

Title VIII. Full Funding of Part B. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

This title provides an authorization level of an additional \$9.3 billion over 6 years to keep the commitment toward fully funding IDEA.

NEWS RELEASE
Paul Coverdell
United States Senator - Georgia

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE
2 p.m. Tuesday, January 20, 1998

CONTACT: Jonathan Baron
(202) 224-8049

GOP SENATE LEADERSHIP UNVEILS EDUCATION PLAN

--"B.O.O.K.S." bill puts more money in the classroom--

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- U.S. Senator Paul Coverdell (R-GA), Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-MS), and other members of the Senate GOP Leadership today unveiled the details of their ambitious primary and secondary education proposal for 1998. The legislation -- titled *The Better Opportunities for Our Kids and Schools Act* (B.O.O.K.S.) -- would allow local school districts greater autonomy to hire teachers, buy computers, build schools, or address other problems identified by individual communities.

"This comprehensive legislation is designed to help parents send their children to the very best schools possible. By making sure more money goes directly to the classroom, our proposal gives local school districts greater freedom to solve the specific challenges confronting their communities.

"From hiring teachers to buying computers, our initiative will help local schools improve student performance and reward teachers for classroom excellence," remarked Coverdell at an afternoon press conference with Senators Lott, Asst. Majority Leader Don Nickles (R-OK), Conference Chairman Connie Mack (R-FL), NRSC Chairman Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Judd Gregg (R-NH), and Alfonse D'Amato (R-NY).

Coverdell -- who serves as GOP Conference Secretary and head of the Education Task Force created by Lott last year -- is the principal author and sponsor of the B.O.O.K.S. bill. The initiative contains Coverdell's A+ Education Savings Accounts (ESAs), block grants for states and local school districts, school safety voucher programs, teacher testing and merit pay, a literacy initiative, expansion of charter schools, and funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

"Our education plan could pay the salaries of over 50,000 teachers and buy over 1 million new computers every year; or school districts could construct 500 new elementary schools. The main point is that the decision is made by parents and communities, not Washington bureaucracies. Congressional Democrats and the President should embrace this common-sense education reform plan," Coverdell concluded.

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Office of the House Majority Leader

For immediate release --
January 20, 1998

Contact: Michele Davis
(202) 225-6007

House Majority Leader Dick Armey made the following comments on the Senate Republican Leadership's education agenda unveiled today:

"I applaud Senate Republicans for proposing a comprehensive agenda to encourage local innovation and increase parental involvement in schools across America.

"Every parent holds as their highest goal and greatest responsibility raising their children to be the best that they can be. Parents deserve the freedom to meet that responsibility. Returning power from Washington to the states and school boards across America means parents have a place to go to make their concerns heard and see them addressed. And giving parents options -- through low-income scholarships, charter schools, and education savings accounts -- gives parents greater influence and allows them to choose schools that reinforce values like responsibility and honesty that parents try so hard to teach at home.

"The BOOKS Act, together with the House Republican Agenda for the American Learner unveiled last September, make clear this Congress' dedication to preparing our children for success in the 21st century. We are determined to make children's learning once again the highest priority in education policy."



U.S. Senator for Kentucky
MITCH McCONNELL

For Immediate Release
January 20, 1998
98-3

McCONNELL PUSHES 1998 EDUCATION PLAN

-- McConnell says every school needs "B.O.O.K.S." --

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY) along with other members of the Senate GOP Leadership held a press conference today to discuss one of the top priorities of 1998 – Education. The Better Opportunities for Our Kids and Schools Act (BOOKS), which puts more money in the classroom, was unveiled today on Capitol Hill.

The BOOKS Act responds to the primary concerns of parents and local school systems – more money for classrooms, greater flexibility for productive reforms, and school safety. Highlights of the bill include A+ Accounts to help parents save for the cost of their child's education, public or private, from kindergarten through college. The bill sends more federal dollars to the classroom (95% of \$10 billion in federal education funds must go to local classrooms). It promotes school safety through school choice demonstration projects and innovative programming to protect students and teachers.

"Quality education is a priority for every American, however parents today have serious doubts about the federal government's commitment to our children's future," said McConnell. "The BOOKS Act provides parents and educators with the resources and flexibility they need to make our nation's schools safe and successful."

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REPUBLICAN GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION

N E W S
R E L E A S E

For Immediate Release:
January 20, 1998

Contact: Kirsten Fedewa
Tel: 202/863-8587

GOP GOVERNORS AND CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS PLACE EDUCATION REFORM AT TOP OF '98 AGENDA

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Republican Governors Association (RGA) Chairman David M. Beasley (SC) today warmly praised the efforts of U.S. Senator Paul Coverdell (R-GA) and the Senate Republican leadership for introducing innovative education legislation this week to improve the nation's schools.

The legislation will establish tax-free education savings accounts for tuition for kindergarten through college, move more education dollars from bureaucracies to students to enhance learning in the classroom, improve safety in schools, reward good teachers and achieve better reading skills.

"Senator Coverdell's 'Better Opportunities for Our Kids and Schools' bill takes great strides at moving toward safer learning environments, rewarding good teachers, improving reading skills, and targeting more dollars to enhance learning for students in the classroom," said Beasley.

"Improving education performance -- by supporting parents and teachers -- is a joint goal of Republican governors and our friends in Congress. Senator Coverdell's proposal will help ensure that young Americans are ready to compete in the global economy of the 21st century," said Governor Terry E. Branstad (IA), immediate past chairman of the RGA.

The legislation includes the following provisions:

- Creates "A+ accounts" that allow parents, grandparents or scholarship sponsors to contribute post-tax dollars to be used for a child's education;
- Provides students who are currently condemned by economic circumstances to attend unsafe schools with an opportunity to attend schools where the emphasis is on learning, not survival;
- Focuses on training teachers to teach reading, increasing parental involvement and sending more dollars to the classroom;
- Protects schoolchildren and teachers from harm by ensuring that victims and witnesses of crimes at school are protected, and to encourage states and local communities to provide stronger responses to criminal and drug activities on school property.

-MORE-



Now America's Majority

2-2-2

Improving education through an exchange of ideas was the primary focus of the Republican governors during their 1997 Annual Conference in November in Miami. During the meeting, Republican governors joined with Republican leaders in Congress in announcing the creation of a joint task force to continue to pursue further education reforms. Details of the task force will be released after Congress reconvenes later this month.

"We applaud the efforts of Republicans in Congress to begin to give GOP governors the flexibility to do with federal education funding exactly what they did with welfare three years ago," said former RGA Chairman John Engler (MI).

"I am particularly impressed with the local control provisions in Senator Coverdell's proposal. The states and local districts and schools certainly know what's better for students than the federal government. I also am pleased with the parental involvement included in the bill. It's time to give parents more control and choice in deciding how well their children are educated. It's not just a question of how much we spend on education, but how we spend it and what we expect from our public education system. The higher the expectations, the better the product," said Governor Frank Keating, vice chairman of the RGA.

"From parental school-choice and vouchers, to class-size reductions to distance learning, GOP governors are about real education reform," said Governor Tommy G. Thompson (WI), who headed an RGA task force on education in 1997.

"When it comes to education, Republican governors believe parents – not government – should be making the decisions," said Thompson.

"Republican governors will continue to work with the Senate and the House to build upon states' education reform accomplishments. Republican leaders in Congress know what we've proven to be true at home: meaningful education reform occurs at the state, local and parental level," said Beasley.

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RELEASE NEWS RELEASE NEWS RELEASE NEWS RELEASES

Republican Leadership Masquerades as Booster of Beleaguered Public Schools

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, January 20, 1998

Contact: Jennifer Helburn
(202) 675-2312

Washington – The American Civil Liberties Union greeted the “new” Republican eight-point education package with skepticism today, saying that the plan appears to include more attacks on public education under the guise of school vouchers and tax credits for religious and private school tuition.

While stressing that the entire platform was not yet available for review, Terri Schroeder, Legislative Representative for the ACLU, reacted to initial reports indicating the GOP leadership’s platform includes school voucher schemes and tax credits for religious and private school tuition:

“This appears to be yet another attempt to wipe away the mark of shame they carry as a party that has consistently attacked quality public education for all children. Unfortunately, it appears that through this platform, the GOP leadership is yet again pushing measures that will take taxpayers’ money from public school children to benefit religious and private schools,” said Schroeder.

The ACLU has long opposed these unconstitutional voucher schemes. Among the ACLU’s concerns is that vouchers could divert millions of taxpayers’ dollars to schools which are not subject to common standards of accountability, including compliance with federal anti-discrimination laws.

“I do not think the American public would favor their tax dollars funding parents who wish to send their children to schools run by people like David Koresh. Yet that is just what previous voucher and tax credit schemes would have allowed,” said Schroeder.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

FAX TRANSMITTAL

TO: Mike / Bill / Allison

ORGANIZATION: APC

PHONE NUMBER: _____

FAX NUMBER: 436-5581

FROM: Julie Green

PHONE NUMBER: _____

MESSAGE: Revised / final stmt

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FOR RELEASE: January 20, 1998

Contact: Julie Green (202) 401-3026

**STATEMENT BY U.S. SECRETARY OF EDUCATION RICHARD W. RILEY
regarding release of Senate Republican education agenda**

The American people have made education a national issue and President Clinton has made education his number one priority. I look forward to working with members of both parties to advance the President's agenda. The Senate Republicans have come a long way since the days when they wanted to eliminate the U.S. Department of Education. I appreciate their focus on reading, charter schools and support for special education.

Unfortunately, the Senate agenda is too narrow. School construction is an urgent concern in many states, yet the Senate leadership proposal pays scant attention to this pressing need. This proposal also includes plans to divert public tax dollars to support private school vouchers, unaccountable block grants and provisions that would divert resources from America's public schools that educate 90% of America's children. Many of these same proposals were rejected by the full Congress last year.

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THERE THEY GO AGAIN: CUTTING STUDENT LOAN BENEFITS

DRAFT

Student loan borrowers next year will benefit from an estimated *full percentage point reduction* in the interest rate they pay on their loans. But a plan being considered in the House of Representatives would reverse that change, costing students \$5.6 billion on the loans they take out over the next five years.

Under current law, students will save \$7.3 billion (NPV) on loans made over the next five years. The Student Loan Reform Act of 1993 changed the formula for determining the interest rate on student loans from the 91-day Treasury bill plus 3.1 percentage points (or 2.5 during the in-school and deferment periods), to the 10-year Treasury note plus one percentage point. On a cash basis, students who borrow over the next five years will pay \$10.9 billion less, using CBO interest projections. On a net present value basis (discounting the savings to the time the loan is originated), borrowers will save \$7.3 billion.

All estimates point to significant savings for students. This is not an issue of one expert's estimates versus another's. Interest rate projections from CBO, OMB, and the private sector's Blue Chip projection all show that students will benefit from a significant reduction in the interest rate paid. For example, for 1998, both the Blue Chip and CBO forecast a reduction of 1 percentage point, while OMB forecasts a reduction of 1.14 percentage points. *In fact, students come out better under the 1998 scenarios forecast by all 50 of the private sector economists that make up the Blue Chip consensus.*

The Congressional proposal would cost students \$5.6 billion over five years. The draft legislation purports to "reduce" interest rates and origination fees. But it increases costs by more than four times as much as it reduces costs, forcing students to dig deeper into their pockets to keep bank profits high. The net cost to students is \$5.6 billion on a net present value basis or \$9 billion on a cash basis. .

They are holding low-income students hostage to protect bank profits. The interest rate provisions are included in a draft bill that also makes important changes to ensure that all deserving low-income students have access to Pell Grants. Supporters are cynically holding those students hostage in order to increase student loan interest rates at the behest of banks.