

MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Congressman Baron Hill 

RE: Clinton Administration Small, Safe, and Successful High Schools Initiative

I was pleased to hear Vice President Gore's recent announcement of the Administration's Small, Safe and Successful High Schools initiative. This initiative seeks to make our schools better by focusing on reducing their size. I am very glad Vice President Gore and others have been raising the national profile of this issue.

Since I entered Congress last year, I have been talking about school size. I have been working very hard to bring the benefits of smaller learning communities to the attention of my colleagues and constituents. Enclosed are some materials about this effort and a bill I introduced early last fall, the Smaller Schools, Stronger Communities Act, H. R. 3044.

A growing body of research points to the academic and social benefits of teaching our children in smaller schools. As I understand the Administration's Small, Safe, and Successful Schools initiative, local school districts could use competitive grant money for the purposes proposed in H. R. 3044--the planning, development, and implementation of smaller learning communities.

I look forward to working with you on this important area of education policy and would appreciate your keeping me informed about your work on this matter. I would be pleased to share with you the extensive research I have done on this issue.

Smaller Schools, Stronger Communities Act (H. R. 3044)
Congressman Baron Hill (IN-09)

Since World War II, educators have followed the rule that bigger schools are better. Experts have assumed that bigger schools are superior because they offer students more courses, more extracurricular activities, and save school districts money.

The statistics on schools size show how dramatically this "bigger is better" approach has changed the way we educate our children. In 1930, there were 262,000 elementary, middle and high schools in America, while today there are only 88,000 schools. In 1930, the average school had 100 students, while today's average school has 510 students.

Many education experts today, however, are questioning this "bigger is better" approach to education. New research is showing that children do better academically and socially in smaller schools that are closer to their homes and their parents. In addition, smaller schools appear to have higher attendance rates and higher participation in school activities.

Students who come from more disadvantaged economic and educational backgrounds show the greatest achievement gains in smaller schools. Larger school size tends to stratify students into different tracks which are often based on children's educational and social backgrounds.

The *Smaller Schools, Stronger Communities Act* provides grants to school districts that want to develop a school size reduction strategy. It supports school districts that want to reduce the size of their school units, either through new building space or through "schools within schools."

The Smaller Schools, Stronger Communities Act:

- authorizes flexible challenge grants to local school districts (local education agencies - LEAs) to develop and implement plans to create smaller schools. LEAs with well thought out plans to create smaller schools or "schools within schools" could receive grants of up to \$2 million.
- provides a clear and simple application and reporting process that holds LEAs accountable for how they spend the grants, but keeps paperwork and administrative costs to an absolute minimum.

Congressional Record

OUR SCHOOLS ARE TOO BIG AND TOO IMPERSONAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. HILL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HILL of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, last April, shortly after the terrible tragedy that occurred at Columbine High School in Colorado, I spoke with my freshman colleague from the State of Washington (Mr. BAIRD). My colleague from Washington is a trained psychologist, so I asked him for his thoughts about the Columbine tragedy. Since Mr. BAIRD is a trained psychologist, I was expecting a long academic explanation using lots of psychological terms regular people do not understand. Instead, he had a simple solution, an explanation. He looked at me and said, "Baron, our schools are too big, and these kids do not know one another."

The Columbine tragedy and other recent events of violence in our schools have made all of us take a serious look at our children, our schools, and ourselves. These recent tragedies have forced us to think about how we educate our children and how we can make our schools safer and better.

This is a personal issue for me, for my wife, Betty, is a middle school teacher, and my youngest daughter is in the eighth grade at a public school in my hometown of Seymour, Indiana. I do not believe that there is one easy solution to all of the problems our schools and our children face today, nor do I believe that we politicians in Congress could pass some law that would solve every school's and every child's problem. I strongly believe that the people who work with children every day, the parents, the teachers and local school administrators, are in the best position to make decisions about their schools.

But this week I am introducing a bill that I hope will make some small contribution to addressing a problem that I and other people have been talking about for many years. It is a problem that the recent episodes of school violence in Colorado and Georgia and other places around the country have once again brought to the forefront of our national debate. It is the problem that my colleague Dr. BAIRD was talking about.

Our schools are too big and too impersonal. Too many of our children wake up every day and go to schools that make them feel disconnected and detached from their teachers, their parents and their communities. The goal of my bill that I am introducing, the Smaller Schools Stronger Communities Act, is to make our schools smaller and to help parents, teachers and administrators and students strengthen the sense of community that many of our schools today are lacking.

My strong feelings about this issue come from my own experience growing up in southern Indiana. When I was growing up in Jackson County, there were more high schools than there are today in towns like Tappico and Clear Spring and Cortland. There were high schools that local kids attended and local families supported. These communities were proud of their schools. Their schools brought people together and helped keep their towns strong and vital places to live.

These schools were the hearts of the communities, and when we consolidated, when school consolidation forced their high schools to close, it tore the heart out of these communities. These high schools along with thousands of other smaller schools around America were closed because for many years educators have followed the rule that bigger schools are better. For a long time we all assumed that bigger schools were better because they could offer students more courses, more extracurricular activities, and could save school districts money.

The statistics on school size show how dramatically this bigger-is-better approach has changed the way we educate our children. In 1930 there were 262,000 elementary, middle and high schools in America. Today there are only 88,000 schools. In 1930 the average school had 100 students. Today's average school has 500 students.

Some education experts are now arguing that school consolidation has gone too far. More and more educators today believe that our children do better academically and socially in smaller schools that are closer to their homes and their parents than in the big schools with thousands of students. Because many schools have become too big, they sometimes harm the students they are supposed to be helping. Many students in big schools never develop any meaningful relationships with their teachers and never experienced a sense of belonging in their schools.

When I start looking at the issue of big schools, I was surprised to find that some of the biggest critics of big schools are high school principals. The men and women who run our high schools, who work with our teenagers every day, say that schools are too big and too impersonal. In 1966 the national association of secondary school principals released a report criticizing the bigness of today's high schools. The principals recommended that the high school of the 21st century be much more student centered and personalized.

Here is what the high school principals said: students take more interest in school when they experience a sense of belonging. Some students cope in large impersonal high schools because they have the advantage of external motivation that allows them to transcend the disadvantage of school size. Many others, however, would benefit from a more intimate setting in which their presence could be more readily and repeatedly acknowledged. Experts have found that achievement levels in smaller schools are higher especially among children from disadvantaged backgrounds who need extra help to succeed.

A recent study of academic achievement and school size concluded that high schools and smaller schools perform better in course subjects of reading, math, history, and science. Students in smaller schools also have better attendance records, are less likely to get in fights or join gangs. A principal of a successful small high school recently wrote that small schools offer what metal detectors and guards cannot, the safety and security of being where you are well known by the people who care for you the most.

The bill that I am introducing, the Smaller School Stronger Stronger Communities Act provides grants to school districts that want to develop school size reduction strategy. This bill does not introduce a new mandate or try to micromanage local education authority. It simply supports education leaders in school districts who decide they want to implement a plan to reduce the size of their school units either through new building space or through schools within schools.

I hope this bill will encourage local school districts to take a look at this idea and perhaps think about ways they can make their schools smaller and to find ways to help students feel connected again to their schools and their communities and their parents. This bill and the academic research I have been discussing here today make a very simple point about our schools, our kids, and ourselves. Our lives are better when we feel connected to the people we live and work with.



Education on a smaller scale is an advantage

When I was growing up in Jackson County, there were more high schools than there are today. In towns like Tampico, Clear Spring and Cortland, there were high schools that local kids attended and local families supported. These communities were proud of their schools. Their schools brought people together and helped keep their towns strong and vital places to live. When school consolidation forced their high schools to close, it tore the heart out of those communities.

These high schools, along with thousands of other smaller schools around America, were closed because for many years educators have followed the rule that bigger schools are better. For a long time we all assumed that bigger schools were better because they could offer students more courses, more extracurricular activities and could save school districts money.

The statistics on school's size show how dramatically this "bigger is better" approach has changed the way we educate our children. In 1930, there were 262,000 elementary, middle and high schools in America, while today there are only 88,000 schools. In 1930, the average school had 100 students, while today's aver-

age school has 510 students.

Some education experts are now arguing that school consolidation has gone too far. More and more educators today believe that our children do better academically and socially in smaller schools that are closer to their homes and their parents than in big high schools with thousands of students. Because many schools have become too big and bureaucratic, they sometimes harm the students they are supposed to be helping. Students get lost in larger schools and spend their days lost in "a cloak of anonymity," where they do not interact with anybody outside their small group of friends. Many students in big schools never develop any meaningful relationships with their teachers and never experience a sense of belonging in their schools.

Recent research on school size and academic achievement shows that larger schools tend to "stratify" students. In large schools, the

top academic students and the star athletes develop personal relationships with the teachers, coaches and administrators and their grades and attendance are strong. The other 70 to 80 percent of the students never develop close relationships with the adults in their schools and their academic performance suffers. Most high school students do not know a teacher they can go to when they have a problem or need a letter of recommendation for a job or for a college application.

Experts have found that achievement levels in smaller schools are higher, especially

among children from disadvantaged backgrounds who need extra help to succeed. A recent study of academic achievement and school size concluded that high school students in smaller schools perform better in the core subjects of reading, math, history and science. Students in smaller schools also have better attendance records

and are less likely to get in fights or join gangs. A principal of successful small high schools recently wrote that small schools "offer what metal detectors and guards cannot — the safety and security of being where you are well known by people who care for you."

All of this academic research makes a very simple point about our schools, our kids, and ourselves — our lives are better when we feel connected to the people we live and work with. It is painful to think about all of the children in America who wake up every day and go to schools that make them feel disconnected and detached from their teachers, their parents and their communities. I believe this sense of disconnection contributes to horrible incidents of school violence such as the recent shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo.

There is not one easy solution to all of the problems our schools and our children have. But I believe we can help out our parents, teachers and kids by making our schools smaller and helping them create a sense of community and connection that we took for granted in previous generations.

BARON
HILL



Ninth District
Congressman

... educators today believe that our children do better academically and socially in smaller schools that are closer to their homes and their parents ...

New Albany Tribune 8/6/99 A4

BARON P. HILL
9TH DISTRICT, INDIANA

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GENERAL FARM COMMODITIES,
RESOURCE CONSERVATION, AND CREDIT
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS,
OVERSIGHT, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1409

1208 LONGWORTH BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-5315

DISTRICT OFFICE:
1201 10TH STREET, SUITE 107
JEFFERSONVILLE, IN 47130
(812) 288-3999
(800) 892-3232

Smaller Schools are Better!

Become an Original Co-Sponsor of the "Smaller Schools, Stronger Communities Act"

Dear Colleague:

Since World War II, educators have followed the rule that bigger schools are better. They have assumed that bigger schools are superior because they offer students more courses, more extracurricular activities, and save school districts money.

The statistics on schools size show how dramatically this "bigger is better" approach has changed the way we educate our children. In 1930, the average school had 100 students, while today's average school has 510 students.

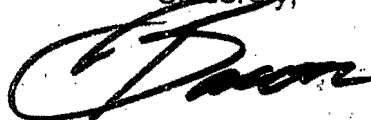
Many education experts today, however, are questioning this "bigger is better" approach to education. New research is showing that children do better academically and socially in smaller schools that are closer to their homes and their parents. In addition, smaller schools appear to have higher attendance rates and higher participation in school activities.

Students who come from more disadvantaged economic and educational backgrounds show the greatest achievement gains in smaller schools. Larger school size tends to stratify students into different tracks which are often based on children's educational and social backgrounds.

The ***Smaller Schools, Stronger Communities Act*** provides grants to school districts that want to develop a school size reduction strategy. It supports school districts that want to reduce the size of their school units, either through new building space or through "schools within schools."

If you would like information about the advantages of smaller schools or would like to be an original co-sponsor this bill, please contact Martin Kifer at 5-5315.

Sincerely,



BARON P. HILL
9TH DISTRICT, INDIANA

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GENERAL FARM COMMODITIES,
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September 29, 1999

STUDENTS NEED TO FEEL "CONNECTED"

SUPPORT THE SMALLER SCHOOLS, STRONGER COMMUNITIES ACT

For a long time, our approach to schools has been "bigger is better." In 1930, the average school had 100 students, while today's average school has 510 students. Some education experts are now arguing that school consolidation has gone too far. More and more educators today believe that our children do better academically and socially in smaller schools that are closer to their homes and their parents than in big high schools with thousands of students.

Because many schools have become too big and bureaucratic, they sometimes harm the students they are supposed to be helping. Students get lost in larger schools and spend their days lost in "a cloak of anonymity," where they do not interact with anybody outside their small group of friends.

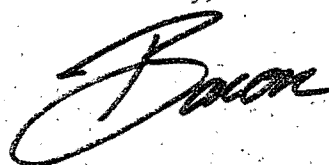
Experts have found that achievement levels in smaller schools are higher, especially among children from disadvantaged backgrounds who need extra help to succeed. Students in smaller schools also have better attendance records and are less likely to get in fights or join gangs.

This academic research makes a very simple point about our schools, our kids, and ourselves -- our lives are better when we feel connected to the people we live and work with. I believe that a sense of disconnection contributes to horrible incidents of school violence such as the recent shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado.

The **Smaller Schools, Stronger Communities Act** provides grants to school districts that want to develop a school size reduction strategy. It supports school districts that want to reduce the size of their school units, either through new building space or through "schools within schools."

If you would like information about the advantages of smaller schools or to be an original co-sponsor of this bill, please contact Martin Kifer at 5-5315.

Sincerely,



BARON P. HILL
9TH DISTRICT, INDIANA

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
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1201 10TH STREET, SUITE 107
JEFFERSONVILLE, IN 47130
(812) 288-3999
(800) 892-3232

September 27, 1999

SUPPORT SMALLER COMMUNITY SCHOOLS!

BE AN ORIGINAL COSPONSOR OF THE SMALLER SCHOOLS, STRONGER COMMUNITIES ACT

When I was growing up in Jackson County, Indiana, there were more high schools than there are today. In towns like Tampico, Clear Spring, and Cortland, there were high schools that local kids attended and local families supported. Those schools brought people together and helped keep their towns strong and vital places to live. When school consolidation forced their high schools to close, it tore the heart out of those communities.

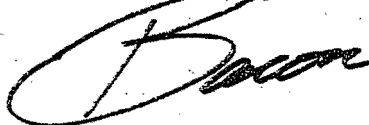
These high schools, along with thousands of other smaller schools around America, were closed because for many years educators have followed the rule that bigger schools are better. For a long time we all assumed that bigger schools were better because they could offer students more courses, more extracurricular activities, and could save school districts money.

We need to rethink our assumptions about larger schools. New research shows that achievement levels in smaller schools are higher, especially among children from disadvantaged backgrounds who need extra help to succeed. This academic research makes a very simple point about our schools, our kids, and ourselves--our lives are better when we feel connected to the people we live and work with.

The *Smaller Schools, Stronger Communities Act* provides grants to school districts that want to develop a school size reduction strategy. It supports school districts that want to reduce the size of their school units, either through new building space or through "schools within schools." It strengthens our communities by returning schools to the hearts of the places we live.

If you would like information about the advantages of smaller schools or to be an original cosponsor of this bill, please contact Martin Kifer at 5-5315.

Sincerely,





NEWS

Congressman Baron Hill

www.house.gov/baronhill

9th District, Indiana

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
PRESS RELEASE**

Contact: Angela Belden, 202/226-6856
Friday, November 19, 1999

HILL SMALL SCHOOLS CONCEPT ACCEPTED BY CONGRESS

WASHINGTON, D.C.— For some time, Congressman Baron Hill has been saying that when it comes to our schools, bigger is not always better. Today, Hill applauded the United States Congress for agreeing with him. The end-of-the-session spending bill passed by the House of Representatives contains funds to help local school districts make their schools smaller.

“Reducing the size of our schools has been at the top of my agenda this year,” Hill said. “I am very pleased that my smaller schools concept is now on the Congress’ agenda too.”

“School size reduction is one of the many positive educational achievements in this bill,” said Bruce Reed, President Clinton’s Domestic Policy Adviser. “I am very proud of the leadership Congressman Hill has taken in pushing the smaller schools concept. This initiative takes an important step in creating learning environments where kids feel safe and connected to their teachers, parents, and communities.”

The Omnibus Appropriations Agreement (H.R. 3194) passed in the House of Representatives today, contains a \$45 million appropriation to the Department of Education to promote smaller schools. The Department would distribute grants to local school corporations that want to reduce the size of their high schools. Earlier this year, Hill introduced a bill (H.R. 3044), the “Smaller Schools, Stronger Communities Act,” with both Democratic and Republican support, that proposed a similar concept.

“The tragedy at Columbine and other recent violent events at our schools have forced us to think about how we educate our children and how we can make our schools safer and better,” Hill said. “Many of our schools are too big and too impersonal.”

Hill said there is not one easy solution to all of the problems our schools and our children have. He says, however, that making our schools smaller will help parents, teachers and students create a sense of community and connection within their schools.

Washington Times

MONDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1999 ***

Congress seeks to shrink size of U.S. high schools

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Congress has decided that President Clinton's push for smaller class sizes is not enough — that America also needs to shrink many of its high schools.

A provision in the \$390 billion, end-of-the-year budget bill sets aside \$45 million for school districts to create programs and make physical changes at large high schools so students attending them have a more intimate experience.

"Smaller is better," said Rep. Baron P. Hill, Indiana Democrat and the program's author, who added that smaller spaces "create this feeling that kids know their teachers... and that they feel connected again."

Education Department officials say it will take months to set up the program. But as they envision it now, by the end of next year, school districts will be able to apply for grants to redesign space to create smaller "schools within schools."

Districts also could use the money to experiment with different schedules, research how other large schools create intimate settings or start new programs such as "career academies" that put students in touch with career mentors.

"We regard it as a very significant amount of money," said Mike Cohen, assistant secretary for elementary and secondary education at the Education Department. "It can focus the attention on educators all over the country — it can help them think why it's important to create smaller high schools."

More than one in 10 of the nation's high schools have enrollments of 1,500 or more, according to the National Center of Education Statistics. Mr. Hill and others believe that "learning communities" of 600 students or fewer are ideal.

Educators say large high schools can reduce safety, hurt student achievement and make students feel isolated.

In Oregon's Salem-Keizer School District, where all five public high schools have more than 1,800 students, Kathleen Hanneman said problems range from crowded hallways to students with learning difficulties not getting the help they need.

"We're spread thin in counseling," said Miss Hanneman, director of secondary education.

Rep. Brian Baird, a Democrat from Washington state who is a co-author of the legislation, said he went to a 500-student high school where almost everybody knew everyone else. Joining sports teams and the band was a cinch.

"A big school is an overmanned society. People are expendable," Mr. Baird said. "In a small school, you matter."

He talked with a fellow Democratic freshman, Mr. Hill, who since January had been gathering research showing students in small schools perform better.

"I didn't think there was any way I was going to get this passed the first time out," Mr. Hill said. "It was a surprise, but it was a good surprise."

for smaller schools

30 November 1999

Messenger-Inquirer

ROCKPORT -- A spending package passed by the U.S. House of Representatives this month included funding designed to help local school districts make their schools smaller.

The \$45 million was included at the urging of U.S. Rep. Baron Hill, an Indiana Democrat whose congressional district includes Perry and Spencer counties.

"The tragedy at Columbine (the Colorado high school where two students opened fire on classmates earlier this year) and other recent violent events at our schools have forced us to think about how we educate our children and how we can make our schools safer and better," Hill said in a statement. "Many of our schools are too big and impersonal."

Under the bill, the funding will be distributed by the Department of Education to local school corporations that want to reduce the size of their high schools.

"This initiative takes an important step in creating learning environments where kids feel safe and connected to their teachers, parents and communities," Bruce Reed, domestic policy adviser to President Clinton, said in a statement.

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5TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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Gannett News Service

November 20, 1999, Saturday, FINAL EDITION.

SECTION: Pg. ARC

LENGTH: 195 words

HEADLINE: Initiative for smaller schools included in budget bill

BYLINE: PAUL BARTON; Gannett News Service

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

WASHINGTON -- The year 2000 omnibus-spending bill includes a program directing the U.S. Education Department to promote the creation of smaller local schools -- an initiative advocated by Rep. Baron Hill, D-Seymour, Ind.

Hill introduced legislation last month calling for the Education Department to offer more incentives to creation smaller schools in response to the April massacre at Columbine High School in Colorado, where 15 died, and similar violent events at other schools across the nation.

A version of his legislation was included in the giant spending bill that passed the House Thursday and the Senate Friday.

Hill thinks smaller schools would create more of a sense of community among students and result in less alienation.

Budget negotiators included \$ 45 million for the Education Department to use in promoting the smaller-school idea.

"The tragedy at Columbine and other recent violent events at our schools have forced us to think about how we educate our children and how we can make our schools safer and better," said Hill, a first-term member. "Many of our schools are too big and too impersonal."

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LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: November 22, 1999

Hill introduces smaller schools initiative

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Indiana's Ninth District Congressman Baron Hill says that when it comes to school size, bigger isn't necessarily better. Perry County's voice in the House of Representatives recently introduced his first major education bill last week. Nearly 150 middle school students from southern Indiana were on hand.

The *Smaller Schools, Stronger Communities Act* would provide grants to school districts that want to develop a school size reduction strategy. It supports school districts that want to reduce the size of their school units, either through new building space or through "schools within schools."

Under Hill's proposal, local school superintendents who want to reduce the size of their schools

could receive a grant from the Department of Education to develop and implement their smaller school plan. School districts could receive a one-time grant of up to \$2 million.

"When I was growing up in Seymour, there were more high schools than there are today," Hill said. "Those communities were proud of their schools. The schools brought people together and helped keep their towns strong and vital places to live."

Hill said school consolidation brought about a "bigness" factor that forces many students to attend schools that make them feel disconnected and detached from their teachers, parents and communities. He introduced the smaller school bill to encourage school districts to create strategies that reduce the

size of their schools and give students a stronger sense of community.

"The tragedy at Columbine and other recent violent events at our schools have forced us to think about how we educate our children and how we can make our schools safer and better," Hill said. "Many of our schools are too big and too impersonal."

Hill said he has found many school principals support his initiative. He quoted a principal of a small high school as saying small schools "offer what metal detectors and guards cannot - the safety and security of being where you are known well by people who care for you."

Hill cited research that illustrates how much schools have grown in size. In 1930, Hill said,

there were 262,000 elementary, middle and high schools in America, while today there are only 88,000 schools. In 1930 the average school had 100 students. Today, the average school has 510 students.

Hill's research shows children can achieve more in a smaller school than in a larger school. His findings show students in smaller schools perform better in the core subjects of reading, math, history and science.

"This bill and the research I have collected make a very simple point about our schools, our kids and ourselves," Hill said. "Our lives are better when we feel connected to the people we live and work with."



Ninth District Congressman Baron Hill, left, listens to Corydon Junior High School Principal Mark Eastridge speak at a Washington, D.C., press conference on Oct. 7. Hill asked students from the Corydon and South Central junior highs to join him when he introduced an education bill called the "Smaller Schools, Stronger Communities Act."

Junior high students get up-close look at government

By RANDY WEST
Editor

Students from two fairly small junior high schools, Corydon and South Central, had an experience earlier this month that they'll never forget.

They got up very early on Thursday, Oct. 7, flew to Baltimore, got on a bus for Washington D.C., and took part in Ninth District Congressman Baron Hill's televised press conference calling for legislation to make schools smaller, safer and more personal.

It was Hill's first major piece of education legislation.

In the wake of the Columbine High School massacre and other recent school shootings, Hill has introduced a bill called the Smaller Schools, Stronger Communities Act. It would provide grants to school districts that want to develop a school-size reduction strategy through new building space or "schools within schools."

"When I was growing up in Seymour," the first-year Congressman said, "there were more high schools than there are today. They were high schools that neighborhood kids attended and local families supported. Those communities were proud of their schools. The schools brought people together and helped keep their towns strong and vital places to live."

Corydon Junior High School

Principal Mark Eastridge, who was invited to speak at the press conference, echoed those comments. He said the opportunity for the students, their chaperones and teachers to see how a live press conference works in a garden outside the Capitol in Washington D.C., — and then be a part of it — was "very special, something you normally don't get to see."

And, perhaps, even more important, it all reinforced what Eastridge and his staff tries to do at his relatively small school: foster good relationships between students, faculty and parents, so "people get to know each other as people."

Corydon eighth graders Kimberly Spieth and Jessica Pack and South Central seventh graders Jenny Babcock and Brittany Tuell also spoke, and then TV and newspaper reporters asked other students for their comments following the press conference.

The students toured the Capitol Hill, watching the U.S. House of Representatives at work, and peering into the Senate chamber.

During their four-day whirlwind tour, they also spent a good deal of time on a special guided tour of the Gettysburg Civil War battlefield. Corydon Junior High students and teachers are all involved in a multi-discipline, in-depth study of the Civil War period of American history.

Eastridge said the new Holocaust Museum in Washington was "absolutely overwhelming." Some

students took it in stride and some took it to heart, the principal said. As for Eastridge, he just tried to go through it without crying.

The photographs of innocent Jews being executed on the edge of a pit by Nazi soldiers, the infamous gas chambers, and Jewish prisoners packed in train cars were all very powerful, he said, but it was the film stories of the survivors who stayed alive because close family members, usually mothers and fathers, who had given them morsels of bread or kept hope alive so their children might live, that were particularly wrenching, Eastridge said.

"I was crying when I came out," he said.

The students toured a new outdoor exhibit dedicated to the famous words of inspiration and lasting legacy of Depression-era president Franklin Delano Roosevelt. It features large granite figures of people doing things like listening to his "fireside chats" or lining up in soup lines.

The teachers bought many books and artifacts that they can use in their thematic instruction program on the Civil War, as well as the new daily 20-minute silent reading program that everyone, students and teachers alike, are responding to well, said Eastridge.

The group of 80 children and parents plus eight chaperones returned home late Sunday, Oct. 10.

Corydon Oct 20 PZ

Hill Introduces Smaller School Initiative

Bigger is not always better. That's why Ninth District Congressman Baron Hill said about our schools as he introduced his first major piece of education legislation. Hill filed his new bill, the Smaller Schools, Stronger Communities Act last Thursday. He unveiled the bill in Washington, joined by nearly 150 middle school students from southern Indiana.

The Smaller Schools, Stronger Communities Act would provide grants to school districts what want to develop a school size reduction strategy. It supports school districts that want to reduce the size of their school units, either through new building space or through "schools within schools". Under Hill's proposal, local school superintendents who want to reduce the size of their schools could receive a grant from the Department of Education to develop and implement their smaller school plan. School districts could receive a one-time grant of up to \$2 million.

"When I was growing up in

Seymour, there were more high schools than there are today. They were high schools that neighborhood kids attended and local families supported," Hill said. "Those communities were proud of their schools. The schools brought people together and helped keep their towns strong and vital places to live."

Hill said school consolidation brought about a "bigness" factor that forces many students to attend schools that make them feel disconnected and detached from their teachers, parents and communities. He introduced the smaller schools bill to encourage school districts to create strategies that reduce the size of their schools and give students a stronger sense of community.

"The tragedy of Columbine and other recent violent events at our schools have forced us to think about how we educate our children and how we can make our schools safer and better," Hill said. "Many of our schools are too big and too impersonal."

Hill said he has found many school principals support this

initiative. He quoted a principal of a small high schools as saying small schools "offer what metal detectors and guards cannot—The safety and security of being where you are known well by people who care for you."

Hill cited research that illustrates how much schools have grown in size. In 1930, Hills said, there were 262,000 elementary, middle and high schools in America, while today there are only 88,000 schools. In 1930, the average school had 100 students. Today the average school has 510 students.

Hill's research shows children can achieve more in a smaller schools than in a larger school. His findings show students in smaller schools perform better in the core subjects of reading, math, history, and science.

"This bill and the research I have collected make a very simple point about our schools, our kids, and ourselves," Hill said. "Our lives are better when we feel connected to the people with whom we live and work."

Crothersville

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OPINION

A4 • SATURDAY, OCTOBER 9, 1999

Madison

School plan makes sense

Congressman Baron Hill has introduced his first major piece of education legislation since being elected to Congress. And it sounds like a good idea.

OUR VIEW Hill is proposing legislation called the "Smaller Schools, Stronger Communities Act."

The bill would provide grants of up to \$2 million to school districts that want to develop a school size reduction strategy.

We believe smaller, community-based schools provide children with a better learning atmosphere. The legislation could help some school districts achieve

that goal.

Years ago, educators felt the need to consolidate smaller schools into larger facilities. Economics drove those decisions, and at the time it made sense.

Today, however, there's been a shift in thinking. In education, small is good. But reversing direction is costly - prohibitively costly in some cases.

Hill correctly stated that it's the "bigness" factor that forces some students to feel disconnected and detached from their teachers, parents and communities.

Smaller, local schools certainly would enhance community pride.

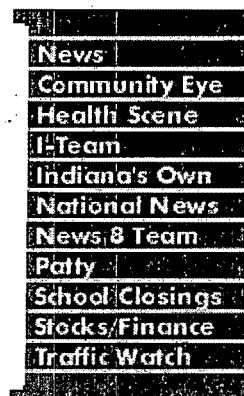
Here's a staggering fact that illustrates

how the face of education has changed. In 1930 there were 262,000 elementary, middle and high schools in the United States. Today there are 88,000 schools with an average attendance of about 500 children.

Some students, of course, will thrive in any setting, but most will have a better chance at success in a more intimate setting.

We hope Hill's proposal gets the attention of other legislators and is given serious consideration.

It sounds like a wise investment in our children's future.



NEWS 8

Small School Plan

October 7, 1999

Carmel High School has 3,340 students this year, making it the largest school in the state.

For several years Carmel administrators have been discussing ways of creating a smaller feeling in the huge facility. One idea under consideration is creating small schools within the school.

Dr. William Duke/Carmel Principal: "I think typically what it means is that you construct yourself or you structure yourself into units of students or groups of students in various ways. It can be done by curricular emphasis or it can be done geographically.

Duke applauds legislation introduced in congress by Baron Hill that would make a one-time-only grant of up to \$2 million available to help large schools reduce their size.

Congressman Baron Hill/(D) Seymour: "There's an abundance of evidence that shows that smaller schools and the students in smaller schools not only do better academically, but they do better socially and so that's the reason I'm introducing the bill."

The money says hill, would come from the National Department of Education's budget.

Hill: "I'm hopeful this is going to gain some momentum. We have 25 co-sponsors on the bill already. Its a bi-partisan bill and so hopefully some time in the future we'll be able to pass it."



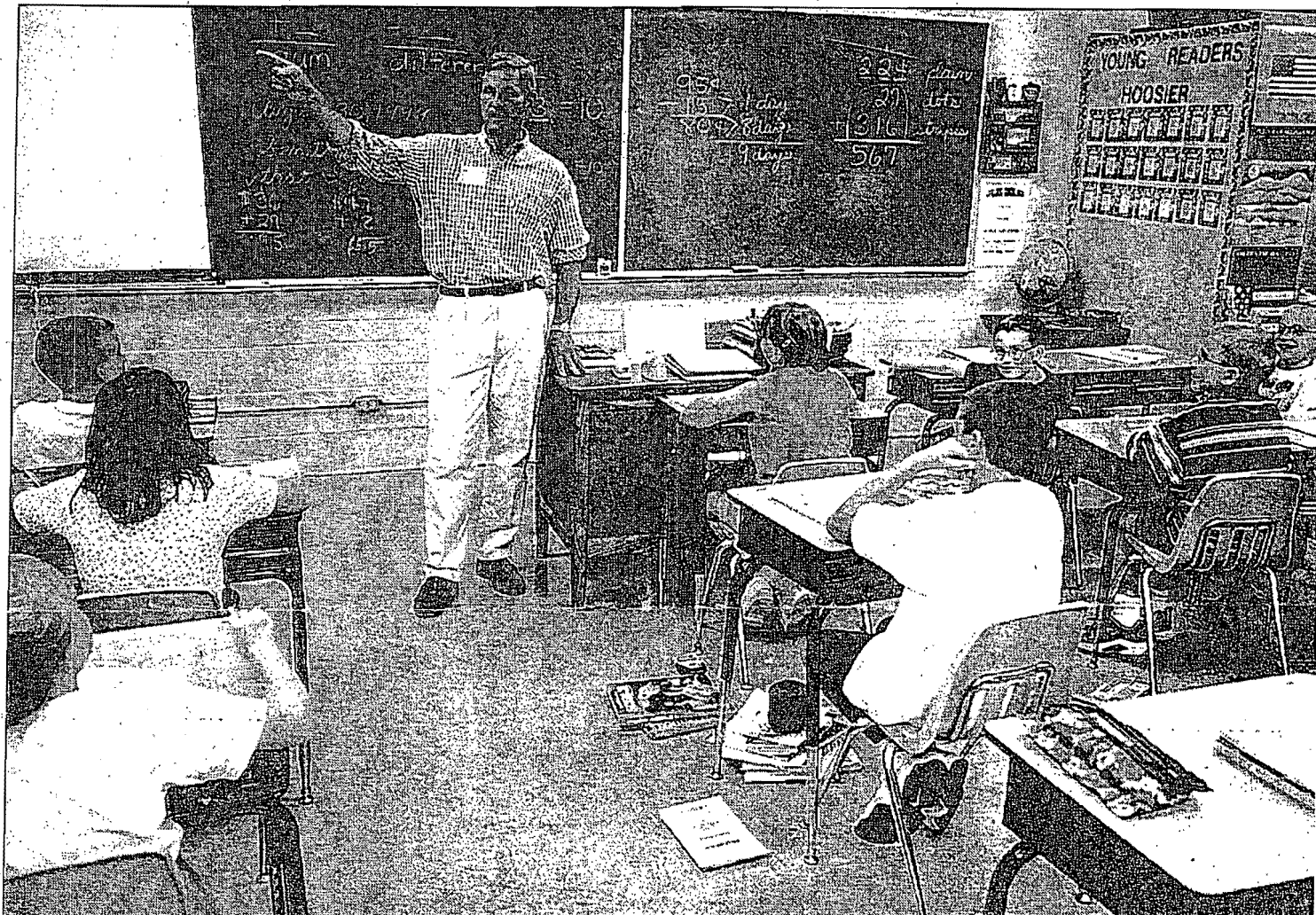
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Wendy Hayes
8/31/99
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FAXED

Pointing the way



U.S. Rep. Baron Hill spoke to school children in Mrs. Lockmand's fourth-grade class at Borden Elementary School. Hill was in Borden touting a new small schools initiative he will take back to Congress when they reconvene in a couple weeks.

STAFF PHOTO BY TONY MATKE

BORDEN

Congressman takes time out to teach a few lessons about Washington

Before setting off on his 13-mile and four hour walk from Borden to Salem, Ninth District Rep. Baron Hill visited with kids at Borden Ele-

mentary School.

Borden Elementary Principal Myra Powell said her fourth graders are currently studying state history and the electoral process, and that Hill happily answered a multitude of questions from the students.

Then it was on to the second graders where Powell said Hill read

Miss Rumphius, a book about plants and the environment.

"He was really great and the kids were really excited to have him visit," Powell said of Hill's 40-minute visit.

From Borden, Hill walked 13 miles to Salem where he was expected to visit with constituents at the Washington County Courthouse.

Since Aug. 16, Hill has been using Congress' month-long break to walk over 140 miles throughout the Ninth District. Hill is expected to visit at least 25 cities before the walk is done.

"I really can't think of a better way to spend my time this month," he said.

—Joshua Hammann