

1402 ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION AMENDMENTS

TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM SIMMONS, DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT,
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee: I am William Simmons, Deputy Superintendent of Schools in Detroit, Michigan. I also serve as the staff chairman of the fifteen largest school districts in the nation. I appreciate very much this opportunity to join with my long-time colleagues from the Impacted Areas Districts to discuss the amendment and extension of Public Laws 815 and 874. While my viewpoint today will reflect the position of the largest cities receiving financial assistance under the impacted area legislation, my former involvement in the program, when superintendent of schools in a rural suburban school district, makes it possible for me to understand and support the unique problems of my fellow panelists. Since the Great Cities Superintendents have discussed in full the amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, I will make specific reference to H.R. 5471, H.R. 6118, and H.R. 6558.

The school districts of the Great Cities are now active participants in the impacted area assistance programs. Prior to the adoption of the new uniform eligibility requirements by the 89th Congress for P.L. 874, only three of these districts received assistance: Philadelphia, San Francisco, and San Diego. This year all the large school districts and many in between will be eligible for assistance under P.L. 874. The major problem in this regard is the lack of an appropriation to fund the most recent amendments to the law. San Diego has received construction aid and is a current applicant under the most recent filing date.

Each year since 1950 I have followed with great interest the extension and expansion of these two laws by the Congress through the efforts of this Committee. On several occasions I have had the pleasure of appearing before this Committee to discuss such proposals. A review of a few notes from the historical record relating to these two laws seems pertinent at this time because of the similarity of the questions that seem to reappear with each annual congressional appraisal of the two laws in both the authorization and appropriation process.

A summary of the arguments, pro and con, summarized from the records of the 1953 and 1956 debates include the following points:

The arguments against the legislation were directed toward: (1) the need for a balanced federal budget, (2) the increased wealth of local communities, (3) the inherent autonomy of local communities, (4) the varied degrees of federal responsibility, (5) the real benefits of widespread federal activities, (6) the inconsistent features of federal support programs, (7) the liberal administration of grant-in-aid programs, (8) the emergency nature of Public Law 815 and Public Law 874, (9) the unrealistic requirements of the program, (10) the support of segregated school systems, (11) the welfare state philosophy of all federal programs, and (12) the limited relief offered under any federal program.

Arguments supporting the program of federal assistance offered under Public Law 815 and Public Law 874 include: (1) the vital role of education in national defense, (2) the nationwide scope of the problem of impacted school districts, (3) the bipartisan support of defense programs, (4) the excellent administration of the impact program, (5) the efficiency of the federal government as a tax collection agency, (6) the inadequacy of the local property tax, (7) the complete absence of federal interference, (8) the need for good schools in defense areas, (9) the unfairness of federal property tax exemption, (10) the adequate eligibility requirements found in Public Law 815 and Public Law 874, (11) the lasting nature of federal impact programs, and (12) the unfairness of the unequal educational opportunities created by federal activities.

Now, of course, there has been added a new, forceful dimension, the federal educational programs authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the National Defense Education, the Economic Opportunity Act, the Vocational Education Act, and several other programs with widespread application. These programs are making tremendous changes in the educational process, as the record of these hearings will show, and require appropriations far beyond the requirements of P.L. 815 and P.L. 874. While the enactment of these laws would seem to indicate a broadening in the congressional viewpoint in regard to federal financial assistance programs, I am realistically aware that the debatable points mentioned will, once again, be part of the congressional