

1624 ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION AMENDMENTS

SUMMARY OF THE BASIS AND GENERAL CONTENT OF THE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AMENDMENTS OF 1967

General

The Economic Opportunity Amendments of 1967 consist of a section authorizing fiscal year 1968 appropriations for various Economic Opportunity Act programs, and three titles. Only title I includes amendments to the Economic Opportunity Act itself. Title II would establish a program to aid in the provision of summer camp opportunities for disadvantaged children, pursuant to a recommendation of the President in his recent Message on Children and Youth. Title III would provide certain criminal sanctions to cover cases of embezzlement, willful misapplication, theft or kickbacks involving financial assistance funds under the Economic Opportunity Act.

Authorizations

Section 2 of the bill would authorize appropriation of \$2.06 billion for programs under the Economic Opportunity Act for fiscal year 1968, including \$874 million for carrying out the Job Corps and work-training programs under title I of the Act, \$1.022 billion for community action programs under title II, \$47 million for the rural loan, and migrant and seasonal farm worker programs under title III, \$70 million for work-experience programs under title V, \$16 million for administration and coordination activities under title VI, and \$31 million for VISTA and volunteer programs under title VIII.

Amendments to the Economic Opportunity Act

Title I includes a large number of amendments to the Economic Opportunity Act. These are sufficiently numerous and comprehensive that—partly for technical reasons and partly for greater clarity—major parts of the Act, including Job Corps and Community Action, have been rewritten.

Although the amendments are substantial both in number and in anticipated over-all impact, they would not change the fundamental character of existing programs. To the contrary, they are predicated on the view that those programs are—and have proved themselves to be—sound and effective in basic concept. Yet no one would pretend that, today, the several programs are simply an extension of what they were in the beginning. They have, to some extent, developed along unanticipated paths; they have encountered some unforeseen problems.

Policies once tentative, but of major importance, have been tested. And the experience, not only of the Office of Economic Opportunity, but of the State and local agencies, and many private groups that have participated in these programs is now sufficient to permit decisions governing long-run program direction that were not possible three years ago. Cumulatively, the adjustments suggested by these considerations add up to a law which will be in some respects less useful than the present Act for the processes of trying, testing and learning. But it will be a law which, while still retaining flexibility for needed innovation, is better suited to the complexities of effective and efficient administration.

Many of the amendments are technical. Some, such as provisions defining the structure and powers of community action boards,¹ are designed to deal with specific problems peculiar to a particular program. There are, however, several features which recur repeatedly. Among these are—

1. *A better focusing of programs on the goal of helping people to help themselves to become self-sufficient.*—The Economic Opportunity Act represents a national commitment to the elimination of poverty. The needs of the poor are, however, so great and so extensive that it is frequently difficult to maintain a focus upon the causes of poverty as distinguished from its symptoms. Yet for Economic Opportunity Act programs that focus is critical. The bill undertakes to sharpen this focus in a number of ways. For example—

(a) It contains a new employment program designed to reach thousands of unemployed or underemployed slum residents many of whom are at best only marginally employable, and to provide them, for the first time, with the kind of intensive help and support needed to enable them to secure and hold the substantial number of meaningful jobs that today exist or can be made available in many urban areas.²

¹ New title II (sec. 103 of the bill), sec. 211.

² New title I-B (sec. 102 of the bill), sec. 123.