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Date: Sat, 16 Jun 2001 14:36:45 EDT
Subject: Legal Requirements for Testing Students with Learning Differences, Preventin
g Starvation in Developing Nations, and Capping Wholesale Energy Prices v. Capping HM
O Liability
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To: Religious Leaders, Members of Government, the Media, Anti-Hate
Groups, and others
From: Hilda Coyne, 2026 Harman Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21230

Thank you to the Senate for the earlier vote on distributing federal funding
more evenly to schools in impoverished districts. Thank you also to Senator
Edward (Ted) Kennedy, D-MA, for recognizing that private school vouchers
would shortchange children with learning differences, 20% of the population,
and others. The majority of private schools do not have the facilities for
the identification and treatment of students with these differences.

Those who voted for vouchers that want to give the impoverished parents of
children in poor school districts the same opportunity as those in more
affluent ones may not have visited these schools. In the wealthier
communities, school personnel may line the halls with the posters delineating
the salaries for professionals with advanced degrees.

In contrast, the children in poor school districts may sit with their coats
on all winter because there is insufficient funding for heat. They generally
are unable to learn when they feel frozen. Additionally, the paint is
peeling in some of the schools, and there may be thick chains and padlocks on
the doors of unusable rooms. There is generally insufficient personnel,
which lessens supervision and tends to contribute to violence.

The Clinton and Gore administration has proven that national funding directly
to schools for basic repairs, up to date textbooks in sufficient supply,
additional teachers and police deterrence in schools is not only possible, it
produces outstanding results. The SAT scores rose across the country while
crime reached its lowest levels in 42 years.

In addition, please consider that students with learning differences are
legally entitled to a free and appropriate public education, including
whatever accommodation, e.g., untimed testing, is necessary. Please
federally mandate that publication of test results include whether those stude
nts received the opportunity for that accommodation.

The danger is that schools often have budgets so low that students with
special needs who score a year below grade level may not be eligible for
appropriate services. The school may require that students be two years below
grade level before they are eligible to receive the appropriate care. The
eligibility guidelines may vary from school to school, for example, the
school may require students to be in the 31st percentile to receive

specialized care. Therefore, students who are in the 35th percentile may fail to qualify for that care although they require it.

Furthermore, education and issues that concern students and personnel extend beyond teaching reading. They include protection against school violence as demonstrated by the Clinton and Gore administration, and funding that benefits students, not the personal expense accounts of local administrators, shared with the distributors of that funding. They also include provision for repairs, supplies, texts, and adequate numbers of personnel in schools that will be testing students.

There should be separate classes and specialized provisions to meet the needs of students with learning differences, including special needs materials, texts and qualified professionals who have the required training and experience to assist them.

There is a link between illiteracy, dysfunction and crime. Those who are unable to overcome their learning differences may be unable to support themselves in a civilized and complex society. It is less expensive to provide the funds for an adequate education, which tends to prevent crime, than to pay to incarcerate those that never received the education to which they were entitled. One third of juvenile delinquents is dyslexic. Those without care may resort to crime more. Conversely, those who receive appropriate educations and interventions as needed may become productive members of society. President John F. Kennedy, his son John F. Kennedy, Jr. and brother, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, were all dyslexic.

Next, please consider finding funds to assist those starving abroad. Former President Clinton helped the American farmer when he initiated school lunch programs for children overseas. While there are times that drought and civil wars contribute to starvation, in some countries, agribusiness reportedly pays employees too little to buy sufficient food to sustain life. A few who head those companies reputedly have even bribed legislators in some developing nations to enact laws preventing others from paying adequate wages lest agribusiness lose their employees to those companies. Small loans might help individuals succeed with their own farms.

Lastly, Big Oil Bush is unwilling to cap wholesale energy and gas prices, enabling providers to price gouge Americans. Where's the catch? Last year, Clinton and Gore initiated investigations that helped lower those prices significantly. Oddly, Bush likes caps. He plans to use them to limit victims of medical malpractice in claims against HMO's to keep the amounts so low they do not allow the victims to recover the costs from that malpractice.