

does not need to ensure that as a matter of Federal policy, it will: support public-private efforts designed to assist in the Capital's revitalization; support creative, imaginative, and unique approaches; support the streamlining of the Federal and District review and regulatory processes, where appropriate, to encourage revitalization; and exercise appropriate oversight to ensure that the District honors all of its contractual and financial commitments.

It is well understood by the Congress that the District of Columbia continues to suffer from past financial problems. For example, D.C. has experienced issues with a number of its current vendors as a result of its prior reputation of poor payment performance. A recent newspaper article documented that one of the reasons for schools not having textbooks was "... twelve textbook companies refused to ship books because the District still owes for previous orders."

Prior negligence in these matters created a ripple effect that has a broad and negative reach. Vendors have been discouraged from responding to DC RFP's because of concerns over the selection process. Congress can assist in eliminating this perception without direct intervention. Congress can also assure all current and prospective private sector partners and their respective lenders that it will monitor and respond appropriately to any failing by the government of D.C. to meet acceptable government contracting practices.

VETERANS' BENEFITS ACT OF 1997

SPEECH OF

HON. ENI F.H. FALEOMAVAEGA

OF AMERICAN SAMOA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Sunday, November 9, 1997

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of S. 714, the Veterans' Benefits Act of 1997. I very much appreciate the efforts of Chairman BOB STUMP and Senior Democrat LANE EVANS for their assistance in moving this bill forward this year. Subcommittee Chairman JACK QUINN and Senior Democrat BOB FILNER also deserve special recognition for their assistance and support. Senator DANIEL AKAKA of Hawaii and Congressman NEIL ABERCROMBIE of Hawaii also deserves special recognition for introducing this legislation and the companion bill in the House, H.R. 2317.

Even though we are continuing to reduce the size of our military forces, we have a sizable number of veterans who served this Nation both in times of war and peace. Many of these veterans now suffer from physical injuries or mental illness directly attributable to their military service. Today's legislation will provide further assistance to these individuals who sacrificed so that we may all enjoy our liberties.

Mr. Speaker, of particular importance to the veterans in my congressional district is section 201 of this legislation, which extends and improves the Native American Veteran Housing Loan Program.

It was only 5 years ago with the implementation of the Native American Veterans Housing Pilot Program that there has been a mechanism for the U.S. veterans residing in American Samoa to obtain home loans through the

Department of Veterans Affairs. It took about 2 years for the Department and the American Samoa government to work out an agreement implementing the law.

To the credit of the Department of Veterans Affairs, 48 American Samoan veterans were able to obtain loans under the pilot program and they are now either living in those homes or the homes are under construction. The Department has not had to repossess any of these loans because of a lender default. The pilot program has been equally successful for native Hawaiians living on Hawaiian homelands.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the authorization for the pilot program expired on September 30, 1997, and since that time, veterans in Samoa are again left with no VA home loan program in operation. The prompt action by the Senate and today by the House will renew this necessary authorization for the VA to begin again making home loans in American Samoa.

While the bill has met with considerable success in Samoa, many of our American Indians living on reservations in the continental United States still are not eligible for loans under this program. I am pleased that we are able to achieve agreement on the outreach provisions, which should be of some assistance.

NATIONAL TESTING

HON. WILLIAM F. GOODLING

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 13, 1997

Mr. GOODLING. Mr. Speaker, over the past few weeks there has been much debate in this body and across the country about whether we should have national testing of fourth and eighth graders as proposed by the Clinton administration.

Just a few days ago, the Congress said "no." The conference report on the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bill, H.R. 2264, prohibits any pilot testing, field testing, implementation, administration or dissemination of national tests in fiscal year 1998. And, I might also add, during the course of 1998, the National Academy of Sciences will be conducting three studies related to testing and reporting back to Congress.

Next year the Committee on Education and the Workforce, which I chair, will hold several hearings on the authorization of the National Assessment of Educational Progress and the National Assessment Governing Board. At that time, the issue of national testing will be back before the Congress.

In the regard, I wanted to bring to the attention of my colleagues a well-thought-out letter and op-ed article "The Tyranny of Testing", The New York Times, October 2, 1997, I recently received from Dr. Mark F. Bernstein, Superintendent of Schools in North Merrick, NY. In his letter and article, Dr. Bernstein points out how national tests could nationalize school curriculum. I commend his letter and article to my colleagues, both of which are attached to this statement.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES,
NORTH MERRICK, NY,
October 9, 1997.

Hon. WILLIAM GOODLING,
Chairman of the Committee on Education and Work Force,

U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC

DEAR CONGRESSMAN GOODLING: Enclosed is a copy, which you may have already seen, of my recent submission that appeared in The New York Times Op-Ed page (October 2, 1997) entitled "The Tyranny of Testing." I believe this topic to be extremely important to the future of public education. I'd like to share my thinking with you and ask for your advice.

The main premise of my piece is that national testing and national curriculum are one and the same. In spite of Secretary of Education Riley's assertion that one can differentiate between supporting national testing (which he does) and opposing national curriculum (which he also does), educators agree that "what is tested is what will be taught." Teachers and administrators spend incredible amounts of time pouring over test questions to analyze the content of each question so to assure that no curriculum gaps exist. And, when a significant number of students answer certain questions incorrectly, teachers rework the curriculum to guarantee that students will be taught that specific material so to answer these questions correctly the next time around. We call this process "item analysis." In addition to using tests for the purpose of differentiating among students through grades, tests are specifically developed to drive curriculum and textbook selection. If one accepts my premise that national testing is synonymous with the development of national curriculums, then one must decide if it is in the best interests of our children to have a uniform curriculum in the areas of reading and mathematics (and perhaps social studies, language arts and science). Though a good argument can be offered to support such a decision, the inherent risks far outweigh the potential benefits.

People who support a national testing program believe that too many students are failing and drastic steps must be taken to improve their education. And, they hold, the Federal government is the only one who can do it. Through a series of national tests which will point-out failing schools, the argument goes, learning will be improved as a result of increased public attention. They point to student populations in many of our large cities or rural areas where student results are absolutely dismal. (There are probably some suburban communities that have less than stellar results as well.) If only parents were aware of how poorly their children's schools were performing, increased competition and accountability would force schools to improve. How simplistic! Ignored is the research which strongly suggests that poor student performance is significantly correlated with low per-public expenditures, parents' own educational attainment levels, and family poverty. Though we all want higher educational standards and improved student achievement, national testing poses real dangers to public education, and to the role delineation between the Federal government and the states.

One has only to recall our recent experience with the process of developing history standards to shudder at the prospect of national tests. A panel of "recognized experts" was brought together after the panel membership was debated ad nauseam to insure a proper balance of ethnicity, gender, religion, geography, etc. These well-intentioned individuals then embarked on the never-ending task of determining what all American school children should learn about their