



## Feinstein Announces Opposition to Labor/HHS Conference Report

*- Bill fails to adequately fund health, education, and workforce programs -*

December 15, 2005

**Washington, DC** – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today announced she would oppose the FY06 Labor/HHS Conference Report. Senator Feinstein criticized the bill for cutting total health funding by \$466 million, cutting total education funding by \$59 million, and slashing millions of dollars from various federal workforce programs.

**“This bill shortchanges American families,”** Senator Feinstein said. **“The cuts in this bill for vital health, education and workforce programs are a direct result of the agenda of this administration and the leadership in Congress: to pass tax cuts for the wealthy and reconciliation bills that actually worsen the deficit, all the while doing nothing to address the long-term fiscal picture of entitlement spending.”**

Feinstein decried the harmful impact these cuts would have on programs for No Child Left Behind, biomedical research, pandemic flu preparedness, and job training, among others. Specifically this bill:

- Cuts No Child Left Behind programs by \$779 million or three percent and shortchanges the authorized funding level for No Child Left Behind by \$13.1 billion,
- Cuts Even Start literacy programs that help disadvantaged children and their parents increase their English skills by 56 percent, from \$200 million to \$100 million,
- Provides a less than one percent increase in funding for the National Institutes of Health and cuts the number of new research grants that NIH can fund by 355, from 9,612 to 9,257,
- Cuts \$120 million in pandemic flu preparedness funding, and
- Cuts job training programs, dislocated worker assistance, and employment services by \$530 million.

**“This bill represents a failure by the leadership of this Congress to adequately fund health, education, and workforce programs,”** Senator Feinstein said. Senator Feinstein was deeply concerned that for California, this means:

- A loss of almost \$3 million for the state’s schools under the No Child Left Behind cuts,
- No increase in Pell Grant maximum amount for the over 500,000 low and middle income students in California who need them, and
- The elimination of federal funding for the Northern California Geriatric Education Center at UCSF.

The following is her statement inserted into the Congressional Record:

**“Mr. President, I rise today to oppose the Fiscal Year 2006 Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies Conference Report.**

**As my colleagues know, this is the second conference report to come out of the Labor, HHS, Education Subcommittee this year. This bill, which passed the House yesterday by two votes, represents a failure by the leadership of this Congress to adequately fund health, education, and workforce programs.**

**The first conference report - the one defeated by the House - contained drastic cuts to existing programs like the Title VII health professions programs and No Child Left Behind.**

**So what’s different between the bill before us today and the one that failed? Does the second conference report restore the harmful cuts to health and education that were supported by the republican leadership in the House and Senate? Does the bill contain even one dollar more than the bill that was defeated by the House?**

**The answer to those questions is no.**

**The first conference report included \$201 million worth of cuts to rural health programs identified by the National Rural Health Association. The bill before us restores a few of these programs but it still retains \$137 million, or 68 percent, worth of those cuts.**

**The bill before us restores a provision costing \$90 million that would have prohibited Medicare and Medicaid from covering prescription drugs for erectile dysfunction.**

**And how does this bill pay for these provisions? It is not with new money, but rather with \$120 million that was designated for the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund for pandemic flu preparedness and \$60 million that was supposed to go**

**to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' Administrative account for implementation of the new Medicare prescription drug benefit.**

**At a time when seniors are struggling to understand and sign up for the new Medicare drug benefit, this bill cuts the account needed to run Medicare's 1-800 help line, run its website Medicare.gov, conduct outreach and provide technical assistance to millions confused seniors.**

**And, at a time when public health experts across the globe are warning countries to act now to prepare for a pandemic influenza, this bill cuts \$120 million in pandemic flu preparedness funding.**

**In total, this bill cuts health funding by \$466 million.**

**That includes:**

- **A cut of \$185 million for the Bureau of Health Professions Title VII programs, making it harder to recruit and retain qualified health professionals.**
- **The elimination of nine vital health programs including trauma care, rural emergency medical services, the geriatric education centers, health education training centers, and the health community access program.**

**In California, the elimination of the geriatric education program will eliminate funding for the Northern California Geriatric Education Center at the University of California San Francisco, the only source of federal funding for geriatric education from the Bay Area to Oregon.**

- **It provides a less than one percent increase in funding the National Institutes of Health, the smallest percentage increase to NIH since 1970. This bill cuts the number of new research grants that NIH can fund by 355, from 9,612 to 9,257.**

**Last September, 91 of my colleagues joined me in sending a letter to President Bush supporting the administration's goal of eliminating cancer death and suffering by 2015. The wholly inadequate funding for NIH in this bill dims the hope of reaching this 2015 goal.**

**The conference report harms all working American families:**

- **First, the conference report slashes the Office of Disability Employment Policy to \$20 million, close to half of the funding in Fiscal Year 2005. The disabled community will no longer have the training, employment, and education needed to earn a decent wage. This is a community that already faces a 68% unemployment rate.**

- **Second, reducing job training programs, dislocated worker assistance, and employment services by \$530 million will make it close to impossible for dislocated workers to re-enter the workforce. This is particularly appalling given the recent bankruptcy and layoff announcements by Delta, Northwest, and General Motors, just to name a few.**
- **Lastly, the reduction in Trade Adjustment Assistance will leave workers to fend for themselves when industries change and jobs shift overseas. This is vital to the nation's economic stability. The fast moving pace of innovation requires that we have a flexible workforce provided with the training needed to transition to the next opportunity. Reducing this type of program will leave American workers behind.**

**The ability to work is the path to financial independence, economic stability, and the key to earning a better life. This conference report shamefully denies that opportunity to dislocated and disabled workers wanting to earn a better life.**

**And finally, this bill hurts our nation's schools, educators and students.**

**It cuts total federal education funding by \$59 million for the first time in over a decade.**

**Within education, No Child Left Behind is significantly cut by \$779 million or 3 percent that will ultimately result in an estimated \$3 million loss for California schools.**

**Furthermore, this bill shortchanges the authorized funding level for No Child Left Behind programs by \$13.1 billion.**

**This major cut and underfunding is being done when the required math and reading performance levels under the law are increasing for school districts and schools are struggling to find the funds necessary to meet the law's requirements.**

**This bill also fails to provide any increase to the Pell Grant student aid award of \$4,050 for the fourth year in a row, even though a \$100 increase was promised in the budget resolution.**

**Federal Pell Grants are the cornerstone of our need-based financial aid system ensuring that all students have access to higher education.**

**Pell Grants help over 5.3 million low and middle income students attend college, over 500,000 of them in California.**

**There could not be a worse time for freezing student's financial grant aid as the costs of attending a four-year public college or private college have dramatically increased both nationwide and in California.**

**According to the College Board, the average cost nationwide of attending a public university for one year has increased 66 percent to \$5,132 within the last ten years, and yet Pell Grant aid continues to remain stagnant.**

**This bill also drastically cuts other important education programs, such as:**

- Even Start literacy programs that help disadvantaged children and their parents increase their English skills is cut by 56 percent, from \$200 million to \$100 million.**
- Education technology state grants are cut by 45 percent, from \$496 million to \$275 million.**
- State grants for keeping schools safe and drug-free are cut by 20 percent, from \$437 million to \$350 million.**

**Mr. President, the bill before us shortchanges American families and I believe America can do better. The cuts in this bill for vital health, education and workforce programs are a direct result of the agenda of this administration and the leadership in Congress: to pass tax cuts and reconciliation bills that actually worsen the deficit, all the while doing nothing to address the long-term fiscal picture of entitlement spending.**

**As an appropriator, I recognize that tough decisions have to be made. However, the policy choices of this administration have put members of this body in the position of having to vote on the elimination of health programs for the poorest and sickest of Americans and for cuts to education programs for low-income students. I reject that choice and believe we must rebalance our priorities.**

**The choice we should be making today is to improve our healthcare safety net, to fully fund our schools, and to help American workers find the path to financial independence and economic stability.**

**This conference report fails Americans on all those fronts, and I urge my colleagues to reject it.”**

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