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### Report to the People Vol. 1 No. 15

Florence P. Dwyer

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# REPORT TO THE PEOPLE

by CONGRESSWOMAN



FLORENCE P. DWYER

Volume I, Number 15

May 23, 1957

As this session of Congress heads into the early summer months, it is becoming increasingly evident that - in the face of growing demands for economy - President Eisenhower's program is going to encounter formidable opposition unless there is a strong resurgence of grassroots support.

Federal aid to education is a particularly important example of how this legislative program has been endangered by an abrupt change in the attitude of the Congress, and of a large segment of our population, in less than a year's time.

In recent months, my mail from Union County citizens urging governmental economy has been extremely heavy. I have been particularly surprised - in view of past records - by the increasing number of letters against Federal aid to education.

## SCHOOL AID QUESTION

Last year, in reply to a questionnaire circulated by my predecessor, 74 percent of the more than 19,000 Union County residents participating in the poll favored Federal school aid.

My own experiences - as a member of the State Legislature actively interested in education legislation, as a delegate to the White House Conference on Education and as a candidate campaigning for Congress - indicated a similar strong support in Union County for Federal school aid.

This year, however, many of the letters I have received from Union County residents on the school aid question have indicated opposition to such a program.

## CITIZENS URGED TO WRITE

Because of this apparent sudden shift in thinking in my District, I would appreciate receiving letters from as many persons as possible, expressing their views on the question of Federal school aid.



Although I believe a lawmaker should vote on the basis of personal convictions and knowledge, such letters will be most helpful in more accurately determining the thinking of my District on this question.

In seeking such a widespread expression of the public viewpoint, however, I feel I have an obligation to do more than merely ask the people if they are for or against Federal school aid. I believe the public should be fully informed on certain basic facts, and on the arguments for and against this legislation.

#### COMPROMISE BILL READY

After months of study and controversy over Republican and Democratic versions of school aid legislation, the House Education and Labor Committee recently reported out a compromise bill. This bill now must go to the Rules Committee, to await designation for House action.

The compromise bill calls for a temporary program of Federal aid for school construction, with an expenditure of \$300 million per year in Federal grants-in-aid to the States over a five-year period. Each State and participating municipality would be required to match the Federal funds allocated to them on a 50-50 basis for the first two years of the program, with the States continuing on a matching basis for the final three years.

#### NEW JERSEY'S SHARE

It is estimated, under this compromise bill, New Jersey would receive \$6,480,000 per year, or \$6.20 per school child.

There is no way, at present, to determine how much Union County would receive as its share, for the legislation provides that it is up to the States to establish priority systems for the allocation of funds to the local districts.

Under this system, the States will be expected to take into consideration, in allocating funds to the Districts, the financial resources of local school districts and the critical needs of the school districts.

However, if the State should apportion the Federal funds on the basis of school construction needs estimated for New Jersey by the 1955 White House Conference on Education, Union County would receive \$401,760 per year. This would be based on the Conference's estimate that Union County's need was 6.2 percent of the State's total need.



#### FACTS TO CONSIDER

As I see it, an individual should view the school aid question from two basic points before making a decision - first, the national need, and, second, the State's need.

From a State viewpoint, I believe we must consider the fact the State platforms of both parties this year are against any new taxes.

This stand against new taxes means there probably will be no increase in State aid for schools, even though public school enrollments in New Jersey are continuing to increase in excess of 40,000 pupils per year. Are our municipalities now ready to take more responsibility for school construction to keep pace with this enrollment increase? They will have to assume this responsibility if they are confronted by the prospect of no Federal aid and only limited State aid.

From a national viewpoint - even though it is true New Jersey has shown more local and State initiative than many States in meeting its school needs - I believe we must consider the fact that the Iron Curtain countries are undertaking vast new school programs for the education of their young people.

Can we, as a nation, afford to lose this vital education race to the Communist world because we are not willing to help share the education burdens of less prosperous States faced with critical classroom shortages?

#### PRO AND CON STANDS

Many arguments have been advanced, both for and against Federal school aid. Supporters of such legislation say that deficiencies in school systems, particularly in low-income States, are depriving many of our children of adequate educational opportunities at a time when our nation's skilled manpower needs are constantly growing.

Opponents, however, claim that State and local responsibility for education is clearly established by the Constitutions of the States, and should not be infringed upon by the Federal government; that most States have the economic capacity to support schools at a higher level if they so desire.

The opponents also argue that the money for such a Federal program comes from the citizens of the various States anyway, and that a reduction of Federal taxes, through curtailment of such programs, would give the States more money to utilize for school buildings if they were desired.

Supporters, however, say that such action by the States would be too slow to meet the present school emergency.

These are just a few of the important arguments, but they should be considered, along with other basic factors, in reaching a decision on this vital question.