



CONGRESSMAN KENDRICK MEEK

REPRESENTING THE 17TH DISTRICT OF FLORIDA



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WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Rep. Kendrick B. Meek (D-FL) met yesterday with U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan and Florida Education Association (FEA) Vice President, Joanne McCall to discuss the issue of Florida's \$2.7 billion in education stimulus dollars and the waiver Florida is expected to need to be eligible for those dollars.

"The Secretary and his staff are anxiously awaiting Florida's application and are sympathetic to the challenges that Florida is facing in terms of budget shortfalls and cuts. They are inviting Florida to not only submit a DRAFT application, but are standing by to walk state education officials through the process," said Rep. Meek.

"I can tell you unequivocally that there is no desire by the U.S. Department of Education to exclude any state from needed federal stimulus dollars," added Rep. Meek. "The funds from the economic stimulus bill will provide an unprecedented amount of money for schools throughout Florida and in turn make a positive difference in the lives of school administrators, educators and young people. While saving jobs and laying the groundwork for a generation of education reform, I am positive that these funds will do much to lessen the hardship our educational system has endured through this depression."

Florida Department of Education officials have not yet submitted the Application for Initial Funding under the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund Program. Florida is eligible for \$2.7 billion in education funding for grades K-12 over the next few years, but must first submit its application and may need an additional waiver because of reductions in education funding levels since 2006. Funding for public education has been reduced by approximately \$1.1 billion in the last two years. The state's budget has been reduced by approximately \$13 billion over the last two years, while Florida's taxable base for schools has declined from \$344.8 billion to roughly \$342.2 billion since 2006.

U.S. Rep. Kendrick B. Meek represents the 17th Congressional District of Florida which includes parts of Miami-Dade and Broward Counties. He serves as the lone Florida Democrat sitting on the House Committee on Ways and Means.

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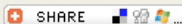
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