

## EDUCATION

### Situation

Elementary and Secondary Education programs have fallen victims to the budget cutting proposals of President Reagan. Twenty-five education programs were consolidated into a block grant and funding priorities will be determined by state and local educational agencies. Perhaps even more damaging than the consolidation of education programs, are the changes to the Title I program of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The new Title I program no longer requires parental advisory councils or even parental input in developing Title I programs at the local level. Further, states will now have more discretion as to which schools will receive Title I funding. Previously, the Title I program mandated a focus on low-income and disadvantaged children. Finally, Title I programs may face additional cuts in the authorized level of \$3.8 billion in order to reduce the federal budget deficit.

Higher education fared slightly better during the Congressional budget process. Student Financial Assistance Programs retained a focus on the disadvantaged. Title III, of the Higher Education Act, which provides the lion's share of federal assistance to Black colleges was actually increased by \$9.6 million over the previous year's funding level to support the Challenge Grant Program. Two higher education programs, Teacher Corps and Teacher Centers, however, were consolidated as part of the education block grant.

Desegregation in Higher Education has become more controversial under the Reagan Administration than previously. Many civil rights groups view desegregation agreements in North Carolina and Louisiana as indicative of the non-aggressive approach of the Reagan Administration on civil rights issues.

The debate over the benefits of private schools continues to rage as the 97th Congress nears the end of its first session. While little or no effort has been made to promote vouchers at the federal level, tuition tax credit legislation received an additional boost from two federally funded studies demonstrating that minority students, regardless of income, did better at private schools. President Reagan's support for tuition tax credits adds new impetus to the passage of this legislation. Constitutional as well as severe fiscal questions would arise if Congress enacts tuition tax credits. The potential loss of \$500 million in revenues, suggests that federal support for public education may be sacrificed to promote private schools.

The Education Braintrust will examine the implications of budget reductions in elementary, secondary and higher education. The meeting will also discuss the impact of government support of private education on Black children, particularly the children of the poor.

### Supporters

The House Education and Labor Committee has been the most vocal champion of education programs which serve the disadvantaged. The NAACP is a strong opponent of tuition tax credits and vouchers. Educational groups such as NEA, AFT, and the Education Coalition have supported full funding for education programs and have opposed block grants and tuition tax credits.

### Opposition

The Reagan Administration has indicated its determination to block grant education programs and allow states to prioritize funding for federal programs. Further, the Administration's opposition to "active" civil rights enforcement and its announced support for government financing of private schools bodes ill for Black children, who are largely low-income, and 90% of whom attend public schools. Additionally, religious groups are pushing hard for tuition tax credit legislation to increase their enrollment. Black middle class parents are increasingly supportive of tuition tax credits because they believe that public education, particularly urban schools, are not educating their children.

### Mission

To retain a focus on disadvantaged minority children in Federal educational policy.

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