10-17-1980

Montana Education Association

Max S. Baucus

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Senator * or Department*: BAUCUS

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GOOD MORNING, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

I'D LIKE TO EXPRESS MY APPRECIATION TO THE MEA, AND ESPECIALLY JOHN BOARD, FOR EXTENDING THIS INVITATION TO BE WITH YOU TODAY.

I AM DELIGHTED, AS ALWAYS, TO BE BACK HOME, AND DELIGHTED AT THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET AND TALK WITH ALL OF YOU.

I WON'T TALK AT GREAT LENGTH OR IN GREAT DETAIL.

I HAVE A FEW POINTS I'D LIKE TO MAKE. BUT I'M ALSO HERE TO LISTEN AND LEARN FROM ALL OF YOU.
YOU, AFTER ALL, ARE THE EDUCATION EXPERTS -- AND I WILL CONTINUE TO RELY ON MEA MEMBERS FOR ADVICE AND COUNSEL ON WHAT IS RIGHT AND BEST FOR EDUCATION IN MONTANA.

I UNDERSTAND YOUR THEME IS: "REALITIES IN EDUCATION."

WHAT, THEN, ARE SOME OF THE "REALITIES" FACING EDUCATION -- BOTH TODAY IN CONGRESS, AND MORE GENERALLY, THE REALITIES WHICH THE 1980s WILL CERTAINLY BRING TO BEAR ON OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM?

IN THE PAST YEAR, ONE REALITY ABOVE ALL OTHERS HAS DOMINATED IN WASHINGTON. THAT REALITY IS THE GROWING PRESSURE TO BRING GOVERNMENT SPENDING INTO BALANCE WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S REVENUES.

THAT BUDGET BALANCING FEVER RAGED THROUGH WASHINGTON EARLY THIS YEAR AFFECTED ALL AREAS OF THE FEDERAL BUDGET -- PERHAPS EDUCATION MORE PROFOUNDLY THAN ANY OTHER.

WHEN IT COMES TIME TO CUT BUDGETS AND RESTRAIN FEDERAL SPENDING, EDUCATION PROGRAMS ARE OFTEN THE MOST VULNERABLE. PERHAPS BECAUSE EDUCATION'S "VALUE" IS NOT IMMEDIATELY APPARENT.

BUT THE FACT IS THAT EVERY SINGLE AMERICAN IS A DIRECT BENEFICIARY OF OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM. THAT IS WHY THE MEA, ALONG WITH ITS NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS IN WASHINGTON, MUST CONTINUE TO BE VIGOROUS AND RESPONSIBLE FOR EDUCATION. ONLY THEN WILL "THE REALITY" OF BUDGET BALANCING FEVER BE HANDLED IN A WAY THAT DOES NOT CAST DOUBT ON OUR COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENT EDUCATION FOR ALL AMERICANS.
I AM HERE -- AS YOU ARE -- TO AFFIRM THAT EDUCATION OF THE HIGHEST QUALITY IS AN ESSENTIAL PRIORITY, NO MATTER WHERE THE ECONOMIC ROULETTE WHEEL STOPS.

SO FAR, FORTUNATELY, THE CONGRESS HAS DUE IN LARGE PART TO THE NEA’S STRONG AND EFFECTIVE EFFORTS, CONGRESS HAS, TO DATE, RESISTED THE “MEAT AX” APPROACH TO THE EDUCATION BUDGET. ALTHOUGH THE SENATE HAS NOT YET CONSIDERED THE EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS BILL FOR THE COMING YEAR, I AM PLEASED TO SAY THAT THE HOUSE JUST PASSED AN APPROPRIATIONS BILL TOTALING OVER $14 BILLION.

TO PUT THIS FIGURE INTO PERSPECTIVE, CONSIDER THAT THE 1970 FUNDING LEVEL FOR EDUCATION PROGRAMS WAS LESS THAN $4 BILLION.

IN OTHER WORDS, FEDERAL FUNDING FOR EDUCATION HAS QUADRUPLED IN THE LAST DECADE.

THAT’S NOT TO SAY

THAT BUDGETARY PRESSURES HAVEN’T THREATENED SEVERAL IMPORTANT EDUCATION PROGRAMS DURING THE PAST YEAR -- PROGRAMS THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO MONTANA.

FOR EXAMPLE, IMPACT AID. EARLY IN THE YEAR, THE ADMINISTRATION PROPOSED A DRASTIC CUT IN IMPACT AID. IMPACT AID IS VITAL TO GREAT FALLS AND MANY OTHER MONTANA COMMUNITIES.
DUE LARGELY TO A VIGOROUS GRASS ROOTS LOBBYING EFFORT BY EDUCATORS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY, I AM PLEASED TO REPORT THAT IMPACT AID, FOR BOTH "A" AND "B" CHILDREN, WILL BE ALMOST FULLY FUNDED THIS YEAR.

ANOTHER PROGRAM WAS THREATENED BY BUDGET CUTS THIS PAST YEAR -- SUPPORT AND INNOVATION GRANTS -- UNDER TITLE IV-C OF THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT. THIS PROGRAM IS, A MODEL FEDERAL PROGRAM, OFFERING A GOOD DEAL OF DISCRETION FOR LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS' PARTICULAR NEEDS. FLEXIBILITY IS THE KEY TO TITLE IV-C'S SUCCESS.

YET, AN ADMINISTRATION DECISION REQUEST EARLIER THIS YEAR WOULD HAVE SLASHED MONTANA'S TITLE IV-C FUNDS FROM OVER ONE-HALF MILLION DOLLARS TO LESS THAN $60,000 -- AN AMOUNT SO LOW AS TO BE UTTERLY USELESS.

AGAIN, AN INTENSIVE EFFORT, JOINED BY MANY CONCERNED EDUCATORS IN MONTANA AND ELSEWHERE THROUGHOUT THE NATION HELPED RESTORE THESE IMPORTANT DOLLARS.

TOO OFTEN, IT IS THOSE PROGRAMS -- LIKE IV-C AND IMPACT AID -- OVER WHICH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EXERCISES THE LEAST CONTROL AND WHICH REQUIRE THE LEAST PAPERWORK, THAT ARE CUT FIRST. THIS, IN MY VIEW, IS SHORTSIGHTED. EDUCATORS ON THE LOCAL AND STATE LEVEL KNOW BEST HOW TO ALLOCATE PRECIOUS EDUCATION DOLLARS.
This leads to a second reality: the continued efforts of some to divert public funds to non-public schools. The usual form is tuition tax credits.

I recognize that in a country as vast and diverse as ours, the public school system will not be the first or best choice for all Americans in all situations. Freedom of choice is a fundamental American freedom, and private schools of all sorts will continue to be an important and significant part of our educational system.

But, private schools must not exist at the expense of public schools. Our responsibility, as citizens, teachers, and legislators is to insure that all Americans are guaranteed access to a quality education appropriate to their needs.

Quite frankly, I do not think proposals, such as tuition tax credits, are a wise or judicious way to insure access to a quality education for all Americans.

Besides costing the taxpayer millions of dollars -- thereby fueling an already severe inflation rate -- such proposals raise clear church-state constitutional questions.

Most fundamentally, I am concerned that tuition tax credits would seriously erode the strength and vigor of our public school system. For these reasons, I will continue to strongly oppose tuition tax credits.
A THIRD REALITY I SEE FACING EDUCATION, AND PARTICULARLY EDUCATION IN MONTANA, IS THE NEED FOR WASHINGTON TO HAVE A FAR MORE PROFOUND AND SENSITIVE AWARENESS OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN STATES' NEEDS.

AS YOU ALL KNOW, THE NEW DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OPENED ITS DOORS THIS MAY. THIS WAS NO OVERNIGHT DEVELOPMENT. EFFORTS TO CREATE A CABINET LEVEL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION HAVE BEEN ON-GOING FOR THE PAST 125 YEARS.

THE NEW DEPARTMENT BRINGS TOGETHER OVER 150 PROGRAMS FROM SIX DIFFERENT FEDERAL AGENCIES, AND IS AN IMPORTANT STEP TOWARD MORE EFFICIENCY AND COORDINATION AMONG EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE NEW DEPARTMENT WILL GIVE EDUCATION THE ATTENTION AND RESPECT IT DESERVES.

I WOULD CAUTION, HOWEVER, THAT CREATION OF A NEW DEPARTMENT DOES NOT GUARANTEE SMOOTH SAILING.
THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, LIKE ANY OTHER BUREAUCRATIC INSTITUTION, MUST BE WATCHED CLOSELY, PRODDED, REBUKED AND REDIRECTED WHEN NECESSARY. CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT MUST BE ON-GOING AND SHARPLY DIRECTED.

AS MONTANANS, WE CANNOT ALLOW WASHINGTON BUREAUCRATS TO MAKE ALL-IMPORTANT EDUCATIONAL DECISIONS THAT SHOULD BE MADE HERE AT HOME. WE CANNOT ALLOW MONTANA'S NEEDS AND CONCERNS TO GO UNVOICED OR UNHEEDED. A RESPONSIVE EFFICIENT DEPARTMENT IS IN ALL OUR INTERESTS, BUT WE WILL HAVE TO WORK TO KEEP IT SO.

FOR TOO LONG, SMALL INSTITUTIONS IN MONTANA, LIKE SCHOOLS, HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO BURDENSOME, INAPPROPRIATE FEDERAL REGULATIONS, DRAFTED WITH LITTLE IF ANY THOUGHT TO THE UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF A VAST, SPARSELY POPULATED WESTERN STATE LIKE MONTANA.

THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S PROPOSED BILINGUAL EDUCATION REGULATIONS MAY WELL BE AN EXAMPLE.

WITH THIS CONCERN IN MIND, I CO-SPONSORED THE REGULATORY FLEXIBILITY ACT, NOW SIGNED INTO LAW. THE MEASURE SIMPLY REQUIRE THAT FEDERAL REGULATIONS BE FLEXIBLE AND TAILORED TO THE SIZE AND RESOURCES OF THE INSTITUTION BEING REGULATED.
I have also co-sponsored a measure with Senator Melcher urging the Secretary of Education to appoint a Rural Education Coordinator within the Department of Education. Two weeks ago, I was informed that Secretary Hufstedler has directed all Assistant Secretaries within the Department of Education to designate Rural Education "contact" persons.

A small, but significant victory for rural education.

I refer to "Washington policy makers." Also includes the National Educational Association.

The NEA is a powerful and effective voice for teachers. But you must remember that the NEA represents all of its nearly two million members, the vast majority of whom are not from the Rocky Mountain region, much less from Montana. You as Montana educators cannot assume that the NEA knows or articulates Montana's unique concerns.

You must/let them know. Let me know. Frequently and forcefully.

There is a fourth reality: that is the need for us, as parents and as teachers, to inspire our children as we enter the 1980s.
I KNOW THESE ARE TOUGH TIMES FOR TEACHERS AND FOR SCHOOLS. MANY OF YOU WORK LONG, HARD HOURS, OFTEN WITH LITTLE REWARD. "TEACHER BURN OUT" IS A GROWING CONCERN MANY OF YOU KNOW AS A DAILY REALITY. I KNOW IT IS EASY TO GET DISCOURAGED AS STRESSES AND PRESSURES BUILD.

BUT I URGE EVERY ONE OF YOU TO KEEP UP THE FIGHT. FOR -- PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT REALITY FACING EDUCATION TODAY IS ALSO THE SIMPLEST: TO INSPIRE YOUR STUDENTS TO ACCEPT THE CHALLENGES THAT THE FUTURE BRINGS. THEY ARE THE FUTURE'S LEADERS -- IT IS UP TO US TO TEACH THEM NOT ONLY TO READ AND WRITE, BUT TO THINK AND CARE ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THIS COUNTRY.

A MONUMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY, BUT ONE I KNOW YOU CAN HANDLE.

GROWING UP IN HELENA, I WENT THROUGH MONTANA'S EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. I HAD SOME GOOD TEACHERS. I ALSO HAD SOME BAD TEACHERS. BUT THE TEACHERS I REMEMBER MOST, AND WHO MADE THE MOST DIFFERENCE IN MY LIFE, WERE THOSE WHO GAVE ME AN ENTHUSIASM AND AN EAGERNESS TO LEARN AND EXCEL.

SO -- I SAY TO ALL OF YOU TODAY -- GIVE YOUR STUDENTS A SOLID FOUNDATION. FURNISH THEM WITH THE FUNDAMENTAL SKILLS THEY WILL NEED AS THEY VENTURE INTO THE WORLD. BUT DON'T STOP THERE. CHALLENGE YOUR STUDENTS.
CONCLUSION

THIS HAS BEEN A YEAR OF MANY CHALLENGES FOR EDUCATION.

THE 1980s PROMISE TO BE A CHALLENGING DECADE.

DEMOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REALITIES WILL CONTINUE TO SHAPE AND CHANGE OUR SOCIETY. OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM MUST CHANGE AND EVOLVE AS WELL.

AS OUR POPULATION AGES, AND AS MORE AND MORE INDIVIDUALS CHOOSE TO PURSUE THEIR EDUCATIONAL GOALS IN LATER LIFE, EDUCATION WILL BECOME LESS A MANDATORY 12-YEAR STINT, AND MORE A LIFE-LONG ENDEAVOR.

THIS IS AN ENCOURAGING TREND. AS ERICH FROMM ONCE SAID, "WHY SHOULD SOCIETY FEEL RESPONSIBLE ONLY FOR THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN, AND NOT FOR THE EDUCATION FOR ADULTS AT EVERY AGE?"

EQUAL ACCESS TO PUBLIC EDUCATION CONTINUES TO BE A BURNING ISSUE. THE BASIC GRANTS PROGRAM, THE EDUCATION FOR THE HANDICAPPED ACT, TITLE I, AND COURT DECISIONS FOLLOWING THE BROWN VS. BOARD OF EDUCATION DECISION IN 1964 ALL DEMONSTRATE CONCERN IN THIS AREA.
HERE I MIGHT ADD, PARENTHESESICALLY, THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MUST PUT ITS DOLLARS WHERE ITS LAWS ARE. IN PARTICULAR, I AM THINKING OF THE EDUCATION OF THE HANDICAPPED ACT. CLEARLY, WE CAN'T EXPECT TEACHERS TO CARRY OUT THE LEGISLATIVE MANDATE WITHOUT CLEAR GUIDELINES AND SUFFICIENT FUNDS.

AS FRUSTRATED TAXPAYERS ARE INCREASINGLY LIKELY TO REJECT HIGHER PROPERTY TAXES AT THE BALLOT BOX, EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS WILL BE SQUEEZED EVER HARDER. IT WILL BE ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO CONSISTENTLY AND CONVINCINGLY FULFILL ITS COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MUST CONTINUE TO BE A RESPONSIBLE, RELIABLE PARTNER.

THIS IS A "REALITY" I BELIEVE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD FACE ENTHUSIASTICALLY. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MUST PLAY A DYNAMIC AND POSITIVE ROLE IN STRENGTHENING THE AMERICAN PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM.

WE ALL CARE ABOUT THE QUALITY AND INTEGRITY OF OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. WE MUST WORK TOGETHER TO MAINTAIN IT.
YOU, AS EDUCATORS ARE ON THE FRONT LINE. YOU KNOW THE REALITIES YOU FACE BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE. IT IS UP TO YOU TO GET THE MESSAGE TO LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL OFFICIALS. USE THE POWER AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE MEA TO COMMUNICATE YOUR NEEDS AND CONCERNS.

ABOVE ALL, DON'T BE DISCOURAGED. DON'T LET THE NAYSAVERS GET YOU DOWN. YOU ARE DOING A GOOD JOB. A RECENT GALLOP POLL INDICATES THAT THE NATION'S SCHOOLS RANK SECOND ONLY BEHIND THE CHURCH ON THE LIST OF AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS IN WHICH AMERICANS HAVE A "GREAT DEAL" OF CONFIDENCE.

AND, 82 PERCENT OF THOSE POLLED FELT THAT SCHOOLS ARE "EXTREMELY IMPORTANT" TO ONE'S FUTURE SUCCESS.

EDUCATION IS A MOST PRECIOUS FREEDOM. LET US WORK TOGETHER TO PRESERVE IT.

AS PRESIDENT LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON ONCE SAID, "AT THE DESK WHERE I SIT, I HAVE LEARNED ONE GREAT TRUTH. THE ANSWER FOR ALL OUR NATIONAL PROBLEMS -- THE ANSWER FOR ALL THE PROBLEMS OF THE WORLD -- COMES TO A SINGLE WORD, THAT WORD IS: "EDUCATION."

THANK YOU.
REALITIES AND EDUCATION

GOOD MORNING, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

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IN OTHER WORDS, FEDERAL FUNDING FOR EDUCATION HAS QUADRUPLED IN THE LAST DECADE.

NOT THAT BUDGETARY PRESSURES HAVEN'T THREATENED SEVERAL IMPORTANT EDUCATION PROGRAMS DURING THE PAST YEAR -- PROGRAMS THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO MONTANA.

FOR EXAMPLE, IMPACT AID. EARLY IN THE YEAR, THE ADMINISTRATION PROPOSED A DRASTIC CUT IN IMPACT AID MONIES. YET, AS YOU ARE ALL KEENLY AWARE, IMPACT AID IS VITAL TO GREAT FALLS AND MANY OTHER MONTANA COMMUNITIES.
DUE LARGELY TO A VIGOROUS GRASS ROOTS LOBBYING EFFORT BY EDUCATORS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY, I AM PLEASED TO REPORT THAT IT APPEARS AS THOUGH IMPACT AID, FOR BOTH "A" AND "B" CHILDREN, WILL BE ALMOST FULLY FUNDED THIS YEAR.

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TOO OFTEN, IT IS THOSE PROGRAMS -- LIKE IV-C AND IMPACT AID -- OVER WHICH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EXERCISES THE LEAST CONTROL AND WHICH REQUIRE THE LEAST PAPERWORK, THAT ARE CUT FIRST. THIS, IN MY VIEW, IS SHORTSIGHTED. EDUCATORS ON THE LOCAL AND STATE LEVEL KNOW BEST HOW TO ALLOCATE PRECIOUS EDUCATION DOLLARS.
THIS LEADS TO A SECOND REALITY: THE CONTINUED EFFORTS OF SOME TO DIVERT PUBLIC FUNDS TO NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLS. THE USUAL FORM IS TUITION TAX CREDITS.

OF COURSE, I RECOGNIZE THAT IN A COUNTRY AS VAST AND DIVERSE AS OURS, THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM WILL NOT BE THE FIRST OR BEST CHOICE FOR ALL AMERICANS IN ALL SITUATIONS. FREEDOM OF CHOICE IS A FUNDAMENTAL AMERICAN FREEDOM, AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS OF ALL SORTS WILL CONTINUE TO BE AN IMPORTANT AND SIGNIFICANT PART OF OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM.

BUT, PRIVATE SCHOOLS MUST NOT EXIST AT THE EXPENSE OF PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS. OUR RESPONSIBILITY, AS CITIZENS, TEACHERS, AND LEGISLATORS IS TO INSURE THAT ALL AMERICANS ARE GUARANTEED ACCESS TO A QUALITY EDUCATION APPROPRIATE TO THEIR NEEDS.

QUITE FRANKLY, I DO NOT THINK PROPOSALS, SUCH AS TUITION TAX CREDITS, ARE A WISE OR JUDICIOUS WAY TO INSURE ACCESS TO A QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL AMERICANS.

BESIDES COSTING THE TAXPAYER MILLIONS OF DOLLARS -- THEREBY FUELING AN ALREADY SEVERE INFLATION RATE -- SUCH PROPOSALS RAISE CLEAR CHURCH-STATE CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS.

MOST FUNDAMENTALLY, I AM CONCERNED THAT TUITION TAX CREDITS WOULD SERIOUSLY ERODE THE STRENGTH AND VIGOR OF OUR PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM. FOR THESE REASONS, I WILL CONTINUE TO STRONGLY OPPOSE TUITION TAX CREDITS.
WE MUST CONTINUE TO RESIST THE MOUNTING PRESSURE FOR PUBLIC FUNDING OF NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLING AND DEVOTE OUR ENERGY INSTEAD TO STRENGTHENING OUR PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM, WHICH REMAINS ONE OF THE CORNERSTONES OF AMERICAN SOCIETY.

A THIRD REALITY I SEE FACING EDUCATION, AND PARTICULARLY EDUCATION IN MONTANA, IS THE NEED FOR WASHINGTON POLICY MAKERS TO HAVE A FAR MORE PROFOUND AND SENSITIVE AWARENESS OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN STATES' NEEDS.

AS YOU ALL KNOW, THE NEW DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OPENED ITS DOORS THIS MAY. THIS WAS NO OVERNIGHT DEVELOPMENT. EFFORTS TO CREATE A CABINET LEVEL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION HAVE BEEN ON-GOING FOR THE PAST 125 YEARS.

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WITH THIS CONCERN IN MIND, I CO-SPONSORED THE REGULATORY FLEXIBILITY ACT, NOW SIGNED INTO LAW. THE MEASURE SIMPLY REQUIRES THAT FEDERAL REGULATIONS BE FLEXIBLE AND TAILORED TO THE SIZE AND RESOURCES OF THE INSTITUTION BEING REGULATED.

COMMON SENSE, IT WOULD SEEM.
I HAVE ALSO CO-SPONSORED A MEASURE WITH SENATOR MELCHER URGING THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION TO APPOINT A RURAL EDUCATION COORDINATOR WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION. TWO WEEKS AGO, I WAS INFORMED THAT SECRETARY HUFSTEDLER HAS DIRECTED ALL ASSISTANT SECRETARIES WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO DESIGNATE RURAL EDUCATION "CONTACT" PERSONS.

A SMALL, BUT SIGNIFICANT VICTORY FOR RURAL EDUCATION.

I REFERRED EARLIER TO "WASHINGTON POLICY MAKERS."

THAT INCLUDES THE NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION.

THE NEA IS A POWERFUL AND EFFECTIVE VOICE FOR TEACHERS' CONCERNS. BUT YOU MUST REMEMBER THAT THE NEA REPRESENTS ALL OF ITS NEARLY TWO MILLION MEMBERS, THE VAST MAJORITY OF WHOM ARE NOT FROM THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION, MUCH LESS FROM MONTANA. YOU AS MONTANA EDUCATORS CANNOT ASSUME THAT THE NEA KNOWS OR ARTICULATES MONTANA'S UNIQUE CONCERNS.

LET THEM KNOW. LET ME KNOW. FREQUENTLY AND FORCEFULLY.

THERE IS A FOURTH REALITY THAT I'D LIKE TO TOUCH UPON. THAT IS THE NEED FOR US, AS PARENTS AND AS TEACHERS, TO INSPIRE OUR CHILDREN AS WE ENTER THE 1980s.
I know these are tough times for teachers and for schools. Many of you work long, hard hours, often with little reward. "Teacher burn out" is a growing concern many of you know as a daily reality. I know it is easy to get discouraged as stresses and pressures build.

But I urge every one of you to keep up the fight. For -- perhaps the most important reality facing education today is also the simplest: to inspire your students to accept the challenges that the future will bring. They are the future's leaders -- it is up to us to teach them not only to read and write, but to think and care about the future of this country.

A monumental responsibility, but one I know you can handle.

Growing up in Helena, I went through Montana's educational system. I had some good teachers. I also had some bad teachers. But the teachers I remember most, and who made the most difference in my life, were those who gave me an enthusiasm and an eagerness to learn and excel.

So -- I say to all of you today -- give your students a solid foundation. Furnish them with the fundamental skills they will need as they venture into the world. But don't stop there.

Challenge your students.
PUSH THEM TOWARD NEW FIELDS AND NEW IDEAS, AND HELP THEM TO APPRECIATE THE IMPORTANCE OF LIFE-LONG LEARNING AND SELF-ENRICHMENT.

CONCLUSION

THIS HAS BEEN A YEAR OF MANY CHALLENGES FOR EDUCATION.

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THIS IS AN ENCOURAGING TEND. AS ERICH FROMM ONCE SAID, "WHY SHOULD SOCIETY FEEL RESPONSIBLE ONLY FOR THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN, AND NOT FOR THE EDUCATION FOR ADULTS AT EVERY AGE?"

EQUAL ACCESS TO PUBLIC EDUCATION CONTINUES TO BE A BURNING ISSUE. THE BASIC GRANTS PROGRAM, THE EDUCATION FOR THE HANDICAPPED ACT, TITLE I, AND COURT DECISIONS FOLLOWING THE BROWN VS. BOARD OF EDUCATION DECISION IN 1964 ALL DEMONSTRATE CONCERN IN THIS AREA.
HERE I MIGHT ADD, PARENTHESELICALLY, THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MUST PUT ITS DOLLARS WHERE ITS LAWS ARE. IN PARTICULAR, I AM THINKING OF THE EDUCATION OF THE HANDICAPPED ACT. CLEARLY, WE CAN'T EXPECT TEACHERS TO CARRY OUT THE LEGISLATIVE MANDATE WITHOUT CLEAR GUIDELINES AND SUFFICIENT FUNDS.

AS FRUSTRATED TAXPAYERS ARE INCREASINGLY LIKELY TO REJECT PROPERTY TAXES AT THE BALLOT BOX, EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS WILL BE SQUEEZED EVER HARDER. IT WILL BE ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO CONSISTENTLY AND CONVINCINGLY FULFILL ITS COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MUST CONTINUE TO BE A RESPONSIBLE, RELIABLE PARTNER.

THIS IS A "REALITY" I BELIEVE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD FACE ENTHUSIASTICALLY. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MUST PLAY A DYNAMIC AND POSITIVE ROLE IN STRENGTHENING THE AMERICAN PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM.

WE ALL CARE ABOUT THE QUALITY AND INTEGRITY OF OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. WE MUST WORK TOGETHER TO MAINTAIN IT.
THE 1980s SHOULD BE A TIME OF HIGHER EXPECTATIONS, NOT LOWER EXPECTATIONS. WE MUST CONTINUE TO IMPROVE THE PROFESSIONAL STATUS, WELFARE AND PERSONAL FINANCIAL SECURITY OF TEACHERS IN THIS COUNTRY.

MORE THAN EVER, THE 1980s WILL BE A TIME FOR ALL OF US TO GET INVOLVED IN EDUCATION -- PARENTS, TEACHERS, STUDENTS AND ENTIRE COMMUNITIES.

YOU, AS EDUCATORS ARE ON THE FRONT LINE. YOU KNOW THE REALITIES YOU FACE BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE. IT IS UP TO YOU TO GET THE MESSAGE TO LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL OFFICIALS. USE THE POWER AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE MEA TO COMMUNICATE YOUR NEEDS AND CONCERNS.

ABOVE ALL, DON'T BE DISCOURAGED. DON'T LET THE NAYSAYERS GET YOU DOWN. YOU ARE DOING A GOOD JOB. A RECENT GALLOP POLL INDICATES THAT THE NATION'S SCHOOLS RANK SECOND ONLY BEHIND THE CHURCH ON THE LIST OF AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS IN WHICH AMERICANS HAVE A "GREAT DEAL" OF CONFIDENCE.

AND, 82 PERCENT OF THOSE POLLED FELT THAT SCHOOLS ARE "EXTREMELY IMPORTANT" TO ONE'S FUTURE SUCCESS.

EDUCATION IS A MOST PRECIOUS FREEDOM. LET US WORK TOGETHER TO PRESERVE IT.

AS PRESIDENT LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON ONCE SAID, "AT THE DESK WHERE I SIT, I HAVE LEARNED ONE GREAT TRUTH. THE ANSWER FOR ALL OUR NATIONAL PROBLEMS -- THE ANSWER FOR ALL THE PROBLEMS OF THE WORLD -- COMES TO A SINGLE WORD. THAT WORD IS "EDUCATION."

THANK YOU.