

PREPARED REMARKS
for
U.S. SECRETARY OF EDUCATION MARGARET SPELLINGS
before the
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
FOR LABOR, HHS, AND EDUCATION
THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 2006

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on behalf of the President's 2007 budget for education. I know you have received our Congressional justifications and other background materials laying out the details of our request, so I will concentrate on a few key highlights.

President Bush is requesting \$54.4 billion in discretionary appropriations for the Department of Education in fiscal year 2007. We are proposing significant increases in key areas, as well as substantial savings from reductions in other programs. The result would be a discretionary total that is up more than \$12 billion, or 29 percent, since fiscal year 2001.

We know the 2007 budget process will involve difficult trade-offs among existing programs, just as was the case with the 2006 appropriations bill. In 2006, you balanced funding for priority programs with reductions and eliminations in other activities, and we hope you will take the same approach in 2007.

For example, our budget would save \$3.5 billion by eliminating funding for 42 programs. These reductions and terminations reflect the Administration's longstanding goals of providing local control, streamlining government to avoid unnecessary duplication, and targeting taxpayer

dollars to those programs with the greatest promise of improving student outcomes. Let me add that we very much appreciate the efforts of this Subcommittee last year in eliminating five Department programs, and making significant reductions in several others, in order to better target existing resources. We look forward to working with you on this goal again this year.

A BROAD EMPHASIS ON COMPETITIVENESS

President Bush has made ensuring American competitiveness in the global economy a strong priority in his overall 2007 budget, primarily through his American Competitiveness Initiative. Several of the increases in the Department's request are part of that Initiative, and I'll say more about them in a minute, but I think most of you would agree that we need to address the competitiveness issue in America's schools now, this year. This is why most of our major increases for 2007—not just those included in the President's Initiative—are aimed at keeping our students, and our workforce, competitive for the 21st century.

In that context, a key proposal for 2007 is a renewed request for High School Reform, a \$1.5 billion initiative to support a wide range of locally determined reforms aimed at ensuring that every student not only graduates from high school, but graduates with the skills to succeed in either college or the workforce. The High School Reform proposal also would require States to assess students, in reading or language arts and math, at two additional grades in high school. NCLB currently requires assessments in these subjects for just one high school grade. We believe the additional assessments are needed to increase accountability and give parents or teachers the information they need to keep all students on track toward graduation. And more

generally, these assessments will help researchers and policymakers understand more about what works and what doesn't work in our high schools, a key goal when about 1 million high school students a year get so frustrated that they drop out altogether, at great cost to our economy and society. Too many students drop out, and too many of them are minority students.

We also are seeking \$100 million for the Striving Readers program, which is applying the lessons of the successful Reading First model, which translates research into practice to improve reading instruction for young children, at the secondary school level. The \$70 million increase for this program would expand support for the development and implementation of research-based methods for improving the skills of teenage students who are reading below grade level, and who otherwise might end up dropping out of school. It's hard to compete with anyone if you don't finish high school.

MATH AND SCIENCE

A critical new focus for 2007 is on improving student achievement in math and science from the early grades through high school, and the President is seeking \$380 million in new funding to support this goal through his American Competitiveness Initiative (ACI). That total includes \$250 million for two proposed programs we call Math Now, one focused on developing and implementing proven instructional practices for students in grades K-6, and one to support research-based interventions for middle school students. Both initiatives would be guided by the recommendations of a National Mathematics Panel that I will appoint soon, and that will be

charged with identifying essential math content and sound instructional principles, just as the National Reading Panel did for reading instruction.

Another key ACI request is a \$90 million increase for the Advanced Placement program, to expand incentives for training teachers and encouraging students, particularly in high-poverty schools, to take high-level Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses in math, science, and critical foreign languages. We also are proposing a new requirement for State or private-sector matching funds to expand the reach of the AP program, so that we can train an estimated 70,000 teachers over the next five years. Over the long term, this proposal would increase the number of students taking AP-IB exams in math, science, and critical foreign languages from 380,000 today to 1.5 million in 2012, and triple the number of students passing these tests to 700,000 by 2012.

I believe that increasing the number of American students studying and gaining fluency in critical foreign languages is essential not only for our national security, as suggested by the President's National Security Language Initiative, but also to maintain our economic competitiveness. That's why I'm very pleased that our request includes \$35 million in new funds for a package of proposals that would encourage more students to master a critical foreign language. The largest proposal is \$24 million for Advancing America Through Foreign Language Partnerships, a new program that would link postsecondary institutions with school districts to support language learning from kindergarten through high school, as well as advanced language study at the postsecondary level.

BUILDING STATE CAPACITY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

We continue to make good progress in implementing No Child Left Behind, with scores on State assessments up significantly across the country, and the National Assessment of Educational Progress showing real improvements in closing achievement gaps, especially in the early grades that NCLB programs like Title I focus on. Our 2007 request would help maintain that positive momentum, while providing a new push in the area of school improvement. Our budget would provide \$12.7 billion for Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies, which is the foundation of NCLB, while funding a \$200 million School Improvement Grants program. This initiative would help States to establish and expand the statewide systems of improvement and support that are essential to the long-term success of NCLB. If we're going to reach the 100-percent proficiency goal by 2013-14, we need to make continuous improvement our watchword, and our request would help States do just that.

Our request also would support additional options for students enrolled in schools that have been identified for restructuring—these are chronically low-performing schools that have not made adequate yearly progress under NCLB for at least 5 years. The \$100 million America's Opportunity Scholarships for Kids program would permit the parents of such students to transfer their children to a private school, or to obtain intensive tutoring or other supplemental services, including after-school and summer-school instruction. The President believes that for accountability to be meaningful, there must be real consequences for schools and real options for students and parents.

OTHER PROGRAMS

The 2007 budget would provide a \$100 million increase for the reauthorized Special Education Grants to States program, for a total increase of \$4.3 billion, or 69 percent, over the past five years. We also would maintain a \$4,050 Pell Grant maximum award with a \$12.7 billion request for that program, while continuing to support the new Academic Competitiveness Grants and National SMART Grants program. I want to thank the Members of this Subcommittee, along with your colleagues in the House, for supporting these critical new grant programs. In particular, SMART Grants complement the President's American Competitiveness Initiative by awarding up to \$4,000 annually to third- and fourth-year postsecondary students majoring in physical, life, or computer sciences, mathematics, technology, engineering, or a critical foreign language.

CONCLUSION

These highlights of our 2007 request show that within the very tight constraints required by the need to reduce the Federal budget deficit in a time of war, we are proposing a strong education budget, one that will maintain progress under No Child Left Behind, while making key new investments in critical areas designed to ensure our future competitiveness in the 21st century global economy.

I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.