

Washington D.C. – Congressman Kevin McCarthy today commended the Defense Department’s approval of \$57,161,689 to replace Murray Middle School and make improvements at Burroughs High School in Ridgecrest. These funds will help ensure that the children of our military men and women at Naval Air Weapons Station, China Lake and families in Ridgecrest have modernized learning facilities:

“Today’s announcement will help ensure that Sierra Sands Unified School District can continue to provide a world-class education to the children of the men and women who serve at and support China Lake in Ridgecrest,” said Congressman McCarthy. “Many of our families in Ridgecrest who work on the base do cutting-edge research in state-of-the-art facilities, yet their children may go to school in buildings from the 1940s or ‘50s. Replacing Murray Middle School and renovating Burroughs High School will help ensure that our students are able to learn in a similar state-of-the-art environment. As a parent, I know that teachers are critical to our children’s education, and ensuring students learn in updated facilities enhances our teachers’ ability to provide them a first-rate education. That is why as Majority Whip, I led my colleagues in passing two bills that provided these funds for Murray, Burroughs and other public schools on military installations. Strong schools are the foundation of our communities so that we can educate the next generation of leaders. Strengthening our schools increases opportunities for our students and quality of life for our families in Ridgecrest.”

Local parents, educators and business and military leaders agree that replacing Murray Middle School and renovating Burroughs High School will help meet the needs of the students and families at China Lake and Ridgecrest:

Joanna Rummer, Superintendent, Sierra Sands Unified School District – “We are so grateful to the Department of Defense and our Navy partners at NAWS for this wonderful opportunity to enhance and improve our school facilities, and we thank Congressman McCarthy for his support and closely working with us on these projects. With these grants we will be able to offer our students broadened opportunities in a 21st

century setting. This is a chance for the District to do what it has long wanted to do for the students, the community, and all of its partners.”

▯ **Tim Johnson, President, Sierra Sands Unified School District Board of Trustees** – “This is a great opportunity to further progress into the future with new facilities to support our awesome programs.”

▣ **Bill Farris, Vice President, Sierra Sands Unified School District Board of Trustees** – “We are very excited to be able to realize these excellent opportunities for the kids in our district.”

▣ **Dave Ostash, Principal, Burroughs High School** – “New and improved facilities will be the perfect complement to our award winning instructional and extra-curricular programs already in place.”

▣ **Kirsti Smith, Principal, Murray Middle School** – “We are so excited to have this wonderful opportunity to bring state-of-the-art educational facilities to our deserving students, staff, families, and community.”

Julie Stephens, President, Burroughs High School Parent Teacher Organization – “It will be a huge benefit for the city, the school district, and our community.”

▣ **Stephanie Hudson, President, Murray Middle School Parent Teacher Organization** - “I am so excited to learn that the new facilities for the kids will finally become a reality and I wish to commend the district for working so diligently to secure this grant. With these funds, a new and improved campus will be built adjacent to Burroughs High School, which will allow many generations of Ridgecrest residents to gain access to the phenomenal teachers and staff of Murray for many years to come. Congratulations on being able to create your new Murray Middle School memories!”

Captain Dennis Lazar, United States Navy, Commanding Officer, Naval Air Weapons Station, China Lake – “We are thrilled this grant has been approved. Not only do Murray Middle School and Burroughs High School provide a stellar education for all of our children here at China Lake, they also serve to springboard a large number of them into future careers as scientists and engineers. There is a tremendous need in our country for that type of talent and it is highly valued here amidst China Lake’s culture of innovation. Doing the work Sierra Sands School District does out of these old buildings is a testament to their commitment and dedication to our children’s education here at China Lake. This grant is well deserved and will be a true blessing. As far as the Navy’s piece in this, we are providing the space and have been standing by to support SSUSD as much as possible throughout the grant request process. Their goals are our goals – we know the importance of what they do and we’re standing shoulder to shoulder with Sierra Sands to turn this grant opportunity into the best possible schools for our China Lake family.”

Steve Boster, President, Ridgecrest Chamber of Commerce - "Murray Middle School and Burroughs High School are both tied to our community in Ridgecrest and have excelled in providing a wonderful education for the children of our military families. Considering the needed improvements to these facilities and the need to preserve China Lake's and Ridgecrest's history of excellence, the Ridgecrest Chamber of Commerce applauds the efforts of Congressman McCarthy and our local education leaders in continuing to improve our community's quality of life."

□ **Eileen Shibley, Interim Executive Director, China Lake Alliance** – "At China Lake Alliance it is our mission to advocate for the best quality of life for our China Lake and Ridgecrest community. We are thrilled about the news that Murray Middle School and Burroughs High School will be able to receive much-needed improvements that were long overdue. Our community is made up of hardworking individuals who have excelled in their academic careers and have had the chance to work at one of our nation's centers of excellence for defense. It is important that their children are allowed the same educational opportunities and the same chance to excel in their own careers. We congratulate the Sierra Sands' Unified School District's continuous hard work and Congressman Kevin McCarthy's efforts in making this happen."

Background: In 2011, Congress enacted the Department of Defense and Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2011 (Public Law 112-10) and the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2012 (Public Law 112-74) that together included \$500,000,000 "to construct, renovate, repair, or expand elementary and secondary public schools on military installations in order to address capacity or facility condition deficiencies at such schools." With these provisions, Congress recognized the need to update aging public schools on military installations and the importance of ensuring students of military families and communities that support these defense installations have access to modern facilities. Murray Middle School was built in 1945, currently serves 610 students, and was the original high school on Naval Air Weapons Station. Burroughs High School was built in 1958, and currently serves 1,461 students. This funding will be used to rebuild Murray Middle School on base property outside the main gates and adjacent to Burroughs High School. This will allow for easier community access to the school, and also facilitate a synergistic learning community for our students. In addition, the District will use the funds to make significant improvements to instruction and educational life on the campus at Burroughs High School.