

May 3, 2001

Honorable Thad Cochran
United States Senate
326 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Cochran:

I am writing to you with my concerns regarding the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

As you know, the overall structure of the bill is to provide funding to state and local education entities while holding states accountable for performance. Given that states are going to be held accountable, the bill should be amended to require that all state education plans which are submitted to the federal government be jointly signed by the State Education Agency and the Governor.

I also urge you to take legislative action to ensure that the bill preserves state and local authority for realistic and practical accountability systems. The federal government should not create new accountability systems, but should utilize and build upon the existing systems in states. As you know, Mississippi is implementing its new accountability and assessment system. The federal government should also provide and ensure adequate funding of new accountability provisions, including full funding for the new testing requirements and a yearly appropriation to cover the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

I look forward to working with you to ensure a quality education for Mississippi's children, our state's greatest resource. As always, thank you for your service to our state and our country.

Very truly yours,

RONNIE MUSGROVE

RM:klr