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## **Statement by Senator Edmund S. Muskie on Vocational Education Week 1972**

Edmund S. Muskie

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FEBRUARY 16, 1972  
A STATEMENT BY  
SEN. EDMUND S. MUSKIE

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION WEEK 1972

The week of February 13-19 has been designated by the American Vocational Association as National Vocational Education Week. Throughout the Nation, government officials at State and local levels are proclaiming this period as a time to recognize the unique contributions of vocational education in helping youth and adults to cope with the social, economic, and technological changes in our society. I take this opportunity to join with citizens all over America to recognize the important contributions of vocational education in meeting the educational, economic, and social needs of the Nation.

The Federal interest in vocational education goes back more than fifty years to the time of the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917. This Act created educational programs to meet the demands of an economy that was beginning to reach industrial maturity. Since that time, a series of Federal enactments has continued to provide financial support for the Federal-State-Local partnership in vocational education. Through vocational education programs, many thousands of young people and adults have been preparing for rewarding and satisfying careers in the fields of agriculture, home economics, trades and industries, distribution and marketing, health and technical areas, and the business and office fields. Supportive services for occupational training have been provided by guidance counselors, administrators, teacher educators and researchers, as well as National, State, and local advisory councils. Vocational education programs are conducted in all States, and in many types of institutions, including comprehensive secondary schools, area vocational

schools, technical institutes, community colleges, and some four-year colleges and universities.

Vocational education programs, operated through our system of public education, have become an important instrument for implementing the social and economic policies of the Nation. America is committed to the ideal of full employment. As a Nation, we are also committed to the ideal of equality of educational opportunity. These two ideals converge in programs of vocational education that prepare persons for productive jobs in our economy and, at the same time, make our educational system truly comprehensive by offering a broad range of career opportunities that take account of varying abilities and aptitudes of all students. If vocational education did not exist in our public school system, we could meet neither the manpower demands of our economy nor the educational needs of people.

The Vocational Education Amendments of 1968 were a landmark in the field of vocational education. The financial support they provided for exemplary programs at the elementary and junior high school level has permitted our schools to implement model programs that focus on preparing students for the world of work. Students are given an opportunity to learn that "working with one's hands" is just as important as "working with one's head." Vocational education is a process to integrate practical and academic skills. These exemplary programs should serve to broaden the occupational aspirations of all students, give them greater appreciation and understanding for the dignity of all types of work and help them appreciate the value and worth of every individual who performs useful and needed work.

In fiscal year 1971, vocational education enrollments were at an all-time high. An estimated 9.5 million youth and adults were enrolled in some type of vocational education program. Federal, State, and local expenditures for these programs are reported

at \$2.1 billion. Some 190,000 persons were employed as full-time, part-time teachers, and teacher aides in vocational education.

Although enrollments have continued to increase and expenditures are at an all-time high, we cannot afford to relax our efforts to expand vocational-technical education opportunities. Vocational programs form an educational continuum which begins with the elementary grades and continues throughout the working life of adults. Thus the responsibility of education becomes critical because of the new and emerging occupations created by technological change and economic growth. Broader training is a necessity for high school students in vocational education. Such programs must encourage students to stay in school and to undertake technical training or other occupational programs at the postsecondary level. Adults must be retrained for three to four new careers in their lifetime. Men and women must be educated, and re-educated, for their dual roles as homemakers and wage earners.

I commend the American Vocational Association for designating a national vocational education week, and I salute the parents, students, teachers, community leaders, lay advisory committees, administrators, teacher-educators, and all those who have helped to make vocational education an integral and important part of American education.

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