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Floor Statement on Proposed Education and Health Care Funds

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United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 91st CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 116

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 1970

No. 2

Mr. MUSKIE. Mr. President, the threat of a Presidential veto hangs over the present version of the Labor-Health, Education, and Welfare appropriations bill for fiscal year 1970. The threat is based on a claim that the aid we propose for education and health care programs and facilities will be inflationary.

We have been told by the administration that we are appropriating \$1.3 billion too much for education and health. We have not been told by the administration why \$1.3 billion is more inflationary than \$7.5 billion, which is the amount the Senate cut from the President's budget requests.

The issue comes down to a question of priorities.

Mr. President, last year Congress took several important steps toward reordering our national priorities at the same time that it demonstrated a continuing concern with the inflationary aspects of the Federal budget. To accomplish these twin goals Congress cut overall appropriations by \$7.5 billion from what the President had originally requested. The \$5.6 billion of this amount represented cuts in the administration's military appropriations requests.

The \$1.3 billion in additional funds that Congress has proposed for education and health amount to just 20 percent of the savings which the Congress made in the President's military budget alone. In addition, these savings just about equal congressional cuts from the President's foreign aid request.

The conference report before us reflects a reordering of our national priorities in favor of vitally needed health and education programs. The \$1.3 billion of increased funding in this bill, to which the President apparently objects, would support hospital construction, health library facilities, elementary and secondary school aid, vocational education, educational instruction equipment, and aid to higher education.

These are not luxury items in the Federal budget. They are expenditures designed to meet some of the most essential needs in our society today.

We may defer the purchase of a new car, a television set, or a boat. If we care about our children, we do not put off health care or necessary supplies for school. Deferred health facilities are lost opportunities for better care for those who need it most. Deferred expenditures for education are lost opportunities for young people, who cannot afford to be shortchanged.

Mr. President, the fight against inflation should not be paid by those who can least afford to pay—the poor, the ill, and the young. The fight against inflation should be waged to strengthen the Nation's economy, not to weaken essential public services.

I am particularly encouraged to learn how the additional \$1.3 billion proposed by this conference report will affect small States like Maine.

Total appropriations proposed by this conference report for education in Maine are set at \$16.8 million, as compared with only \$12 million in the administration's request.

Congress has proposed \$5.9 million for elementary education in Maine. The administration requested only \$4.9 million, a decrease of about \$600,000 from 1969 spending.

Congress has proposed \$3.9 million in Federal assistance to impacted areas in Maine. The administration requested \$2.2 million. I can assure the President and the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare that there are no wealthy communities in Maine.

Congress has proposed \$3.25 million for vocational education in Maine. The administration requested only \$1.9 million. This figure represents a significant increase in an area of education which has too often been neglected in the past.

Such is the bill which the President

has threatened to veto. The final test of this question will come with the 1971 budget, as the President reveals the degree to which he is willing to trim back on military expenditures and other items such as space and the SST, in order to direct funds to programs designed to re-order our national priorities.

I urge my colleagues, and the President of the United States, to reaffirm our national commitment to improving the quality of life for all our citizens by accepting the conference report before us.