



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

September 24, 2003
(Senate Floor)

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY

(THIS STATEMENT HAS BEEN COORDINATED BY OMB WITH THE CONCERNED AGENCIES.)

S. 1583 – District of Columbia Appropriations Bill, FY 2004

(Sponsors: Stevens (R), Alaska; Byrd (D), West Virginia)

The Administration supports Senate passage of the FY 2004 District of Columbia Appropriations Bill, as reported by the Appropriations Committee.

While this bill exceeds the President's request by \$145 million, the Administration looks forward to working with the Congress to ensure that the FY 2004 appropriations bills ultimately fit within the top line funding level agreed to by both the Administration and the Congress. The President supports a discretionary spending total of \$785.6 billion, along with advance appropriations for FY 2005 – consistent with his Budget and the FY 2004 Congressional Budget Resolution. Only within such a fiscal environment can we encourage increased economic growth and a return to a balanced budget. The Administration looks forward to working with the Congress to ensure that its priorities are met within that overall total.

Additional Administration views regarding the Committee's version of the bill are:

School Choice Incentive Fund

The Administration is pleased the Committee bill includes \$13 million for the President's School Choice Incentive Fund initiative. This innovative reform will increase the capacity of the District to provide parents – particularly low-income parents – with more options for obtaining a quality education for their children who are trapped in low-performing schools. The Administration appreciates the Committee's support for strengthening the District's school system and strongly urges the Senate to retain this initiative.

Federal Funding for DC

The Administration applauds the Committee for fully funding the President's request of \$17 million for District resident tuition support, as well as \$15 million for emergency planning and security costs in the District.

Attorney's Fees under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

The Administration is pleased that the Committee has retained the provision that caps the award of plaintiffs' attorneys' fees in cases brought against the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) under IDEA. The Administration strongly supports the education of children with disabilities according to the principles embodied in IDEA, and it is in the best interest of the District's children if DCPS uses its limited resources to improve its special education programs rather than pay excessive attorneys' fees.

Local Budget Autonomy

The Administration continues to support local budget autonomy, which would free the District's local funds from any delay in the appropriations process past the beginning of the fiscal year. We appreciate Congress' consideration of this proposal and recognize Congress would continue to ensure responsible use of Federal and local funds through the enactment of the District's annual appropriations bill.

Other Issues

The Administration is disappointed that the Senate version of the bill modifies current law with respect to allowing local funds to be used for needle exchange.

The Administration is concerned with the number of unrequested earmarks contained in the Committee bill, including \$20 million provided to the District of Columbia Chief Financial Officer for a variety of unspecified projects.

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