



THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION
WASHINGTON, DC 20202

*Submitted to the
Record by
Mr. McKeon*

April 29, 2008

Honorable George Miller
Chairman
Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6100

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing to advise you that the Administration strongly opposes H.R. 3021, the "21st Century High-Performing Public School Facilities Act," which I understand your Committee will soon consider.

The bill would authorize the appropriation of \$6.4 billion for the current fiscal year, and "such sums as may be necessary" for each of the next four fiscal years, for the Department of Education to make grants and loans to school districts across the country for the construction, modernization, and repair of public school buildings. This is not an appropriate role for the Federal Government to play.

As you know, the primary responsibility for elementary and secondary education in this country rests with State and local governments, and that is particularly true in the case of the construction and repair of schools. Currently, the Federal Government provides school construction assistance in very limited circumstances, such as to school districts serving large numbers of United States military families and to Indian reservation schools and schools within the Bureau of Indian Education system.

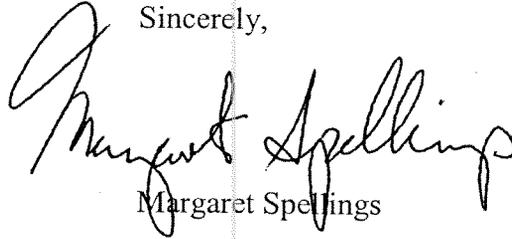
The Federal Government's role should not be expanded to fund school construction at thousands of school districts across the Nation, as it would be under H.R. 3021. Decisions about which schools to open or close, build or renovate, and the financial responsibility for carrying out those decisions, must remain at the State and local level.

The Federal responsibility in K-12 education is properly focused on raising the academic achievement of all students and improving accountability. Launching a costly new school construction program drains resources from the immediate task of closing achievement gaps.

I also note that the bill suffers from various defects, including a complex funding scheme and inconsistency with the Federal Credit Reform Act, but fixing these problems would not alter our strong opposition to such an expansion of the Federal role in school construction.

The Office of Management and Budget advises that there is no objection to the submission of this letter from the standpoint of the President's program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Margaret Spellings". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Margaret" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Spellings".

Margaret Spellings

cc: Honorable Howard P. "Buck" McKeon