

Full Educational Opportunity Act

Senator Burr Amendment #XXX

Background: While signing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, President Johnson said that landmark legislation would provide for the “full educational opportunity” of all low-income children in the United States by making it the policy of the United States to provide “financial assistance to school districts serving areas with concentrations of children from low-income families”. Over successive reauthorizations of the law, however, it has become clear the tool for achieving this goal – Title I-A’s allocation formula – was constructed in a flawed manner, limiting its ability to target funding to those students most in need.

Rather than fix these flaws, Congress continues to compound the problem by creating more complicated formulae and promises of new funding that never materialize.

This amendment intends to end this practice and fix Title I-A’s formula once and for all.

The Problem: Title I-A, and the low-income children it is intended to serve, suffers from the following flaws:

1. Title I-A is comprised of four complicated formulae, each of which contains flaws in how well low-income students are targeted;
2. Current law focuses on education expenditures and effort, as measured by tax base, as a proxy for cost, but really reflects the wealth of states and districts and their ability to spend on their students;
3. The formulae tend to favor very large districts in absolute numbers, but have no concentrated poverty test to ensure they are not benefiting at the expense of smaller districts that have equally high pockets of poverty;
4. With the exception of the Education Finance Incentive Grant (EFIG), Title I-A contains few provisions intended to target the poorest, neediest students in low-income states and districts.

Summary: The *Full Educational Opportunity Act* does the following:

1. Streamlines all Title I-A funding into one formula, a reformed Educational Finance Incentive Grant (EFIG) formula, entitled “Equity Grants”;
2. Removes current law’s distortionary policies that benefit higher wealth and capacity states and districts while limiting Title I-A’s reach to concentrated areas of poverty throughout the country; and
3. Provides poor children in smaller districts with the same opportunity as those in larger districts.