Current Status of Federal Aid to Education Legislation

Federal aid to education bills\(^1\) have been introduced again in the Seventy-ninth Congress: H. R. 1296 in the House of Representatives on January 9, 1945, by Congressman Robert Ramspeck (Ga.) and S. 181 in the Senate on January 10, 1945, by Senators Elbert D. Thomas (Utah) and Lister Hill (Ala.). H. R. 1296 and S. 181 are identical in structure, provisions, and language, and are true companion measures. They differ in only minor and unimportant details from H. R. 2849 and S. 637, the bills on the same subject pending before the previous Congress.

The major portion of the hearings on S. 181 has already been concluded before the Senate Committee on Education and Labor of which Senator James E. Murray (Mont.) is the chairman. It is intended that hearings on H. R. 1296 will soon be held by the House Committee on Education, the chairman of which is Representative Graham A. Barden (N. C.).

S. 181 and H. R. 1296 retain the essential equalization features of several earlier federal aid to education bills. A fund of $100 million annually would be provided for more nearly equalizing educational opportunities among and within the states. This fund would be apportioned to the states in accordance with a formula based on income and the number of persons 5 to 17 years old, the poorer states receiving proportionately the largest grants. An emergency fund of $300 million for each year until the end of the present war is also provided for payment of salaries of teachers for any or all of these purposes: keeping schools open not less than 180 days, employing additional teachers to relieve overcrowded classes, raising substandard salaries, adjusting salaries to meet the increased cost of living. This fund would be apportioned to the states in proportion to the number of children attending school.

The funds, after being accepted by the respective state legislatures, will be allocated to the local school systems according to the plans set up through state law. The equalization funds may be used for any public school purposes decided upon by appropriate state school authorities in accord with state law. The emergency funds can be used only for teachers’ salaries.

According to the provisions of S. 181 and H. R. 1296, control of schools is reserved strictly to the states and local school systems and is forbidden to all federal officials or agencies.

S. 181 and H. R. 1296 further provide that in states that maintain separate schools for minority races, funds are to be apportioned for the minority schools on the basis of the size of the minority population within the state. The bills also specify that there must be no reduction in the proportion of funds from state and local sources spent for schools for minority groups.

In addition to the National Education Association, some forty-six state education associations and some thirty well-known national organizations including the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, the American Vocational Association, and the General Federation of Women’s Clubs have endorsed current federal aid to education legislation. It will be most helpful in effecting the accomplishment of this legislation if interested individuals and local groups will make known to their Congressmen their reasons for favoring the prompt enactment of S. 181 and H. R. 1296.

Further information in regard to this legislation may be obtained from the Legislative and Federal Relations Division of the National Education Association.—Howard A. Dawson

\(^1\)Background data on this subject may also be found in "The Listening Post: What Should Be Done About Federal Aid to Education?" Educational Leadership, December 1944, pp. 129.