

Federal Aid to School Plant Construction

IN THE APRIL ISSUE of "The Listening Post" several types of federal legislation were presented. Considerable interest and concern has been manifested in federal aid to school plant construction since that article was prepared. Many bills have been presented, most of them totally inadequate in terms of the way they will be administered. S-834, H.R.2423, and H.R.2617 should be read carefully by school people. The proposals in the bills for giving direct financial aid to local school districts violates the accepted principle of jurisdiction vested in the state departments of education. Under these bills the administrator of the Federal Works Agency would administer the program which has important implications for the curriculum. School buildings are an important learning resource and greatly influence children's experiences.

Such an arrangement could result in the bypassing of the U.S. Office of Education at the national level, and the departments of education at the state level. Any one of the three bills could result in indiscriminate and unplanned construction with no relationship to, and, in fact, with great interference to the district reorganization plans developed by many states.

Senate Bill 287, known as the Neely Bill, should invite more favorable consideration. It is timely in that it recognizes the responsibility of the federal government to assist states in meeting a most critical school housing shortage. The best available estimates indicate that the urgent needs for public elementary and secondary school construction total approximately \$6 billion exclusive of land. It will, therefore, require about \$1 billion a year for six years to complete this *urgent* school facilities program. It seems reasonable to assume that the federal government should provide about one-half of the funds necessary to meet the urgent needs on an over-all national basis.

S.287 proposes to authorize \$490 million of federal funds for allotment to states per year for each of the five fiscal years beginning July 1, 1950. It authorizes only \$98 million, however, for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1949. This slow start has certain advantages because of other federal programs, but the effect will be to retard school construction, even with non-federal funds, during the first year of operation. It would be better from the standpoint of the construction program if \$490 million were authorized for the first year as well as for each of the next five years.

This bill provides for the administration of the act at the state and local levels through over-all state plans to be prepared by the state educational agencies. These state plans are to be submitted to the commissioner of education, who shall approve them if they conform to the provisions of the act. This will assure non-interference of federal agencies in state educational policies, recognize the state educational agencies in the administration of the act, and reduce to a minimum direct federal-local relationships. These provisions are sound, and should be observed in all federal programs relating to education.

The bill is also sound from the standpoint of administration in that it places responsibility in the Office of Education and provides administrative funds to the U.S. Office, which is the regularly constituted federal educational agency. This bill does not require federal supervision of construction. It delegates responsibility for construction operations to state and local agencies, where it properly belongs.

We should all be interested in a comparison of what the various types of plant construction bill means to the various states. It will be noted that some states benefit more under one type of proposal than the other. It must be kept in mind

that the Neely Bill calls for \$98 million the first year and \$490 million for each of the next five succeeding fiscal years. The other bill calls for \$150 million which will remain available until expended. The increased assistance for the first year will cause haste on the part of school people in some states to support the "grab-bag" bills over against the Neely Bill.

A revised version of the Neely Bill was introduced in the House of Representatives on March 28th by Representative

Irving of Missouri (H.R. 3849). The principal changes are that the first year appropriation is \$150,000,000, that \$5,000,000 is allowed for state surveys of building needs, that no definite amounts are mentioned for subsequent years, and that more emphasis is placed on buildings where various federal activities have caused unusual needs.

A comparison of allocations by states under the two proposals follows.—*ASCD Legislative Committee.*

Comparison of proposed distribution of construction funds under S.834; and under the first year's operation of the Irving Bill, H.R. 3849.

States	S.834— H.R.2423— and FWA Survey	H.R.3849 for first year
Alabama	\$5,730,290	\$4,335,802
Arizona	3,523,850	810,976
Arkansas	2,630,700	2,917,903
California	46,222,085	7,298,882
Colorado	263,000	1,197,749
Connecticut	—	1,458,046
Delaware	—	242,287
Florida	63,000	2,427,191
Georgia	2,720,819	4,552,734
Idaho	562,540	628,859
Illinois	60,000	6,631,890
Indiana	689,500	3,771,642
Iowa	25,500	2,694,029
Kansas	488,000	1,891,606
Kentucky	941,000	3,966,738
Louisiana	—	3,459,627
Maine	576,400	969,851
Maryland	7,577,110	1,860,616
Massachusetts	—	3,809,171
Michigan	237,500	5,897,082
Minnesota	691,000	2,996,786
Mississippi	109,893	3,513,558
Missouri	1,001,300	3,889,666
Montana	—	529,750
Nebraska	713,535	1,313,056
Nevada	290,000	100,618
New Hampshire	—	528,442
New Jersey	76,000	3,400,060
New Mexico	477,260	842,167
New York	—	9,838,866
North Carolina	—	5,459,898
North Dakota	122,000	680,978

Ohio	1,207,262	6,775,973
Oklahoma	1,722,550	2,966,198
Oregon	329,178	1,390,330
Pennsylvania	7,516,000	9,775,176
Rhode Island	—	597,064
South Carolina	69,200	3,180,514
South Dakota	41,400	705,025
Tennessee	20,280	4,139,397
Texas	9,962,792	8,407,987
Utah	—	826,168
Vermont	—	400,255
Virginia	13,904,250	3,610,250
Washington	10,308,396	2,082,779
West Virginia	400,000	2,684,068
Wisconsin	75,000	3,278,616
Wyoming	—	280,110
District of Columbia	14,050,000	513,552
Territories and Dependencies	512,500	4,500,000
Total	\$135,911,090	\$150,000,000

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