



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

NEWS RELEASE

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BAUCUS LEGISLATION SEEKS TO BOOST INDIAN EDUCATION

Bill to upgrade key aspects of U.S. education include focus on Native issues

Washington, DC – Major education legislation introduced today by U.S. Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.), Ranking Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee, includes provisions aimed at improving Indian education across the country. The Baucus Education Competitiveness Act of 2006 aims to improve key aspects of U.S. education to increase our country's global economic competitiveness – our ability to ensure financial security and prosperity for all Americans with good-paying jobs here at home. The bill offers a free college education for all students agreeing to major and work in math, science or engineering, seeks to provide pre-kindergarten classes for all American children, and increases tax incentives for supporting education. In addition, a Native-focused section of the legislation fully funds the nation's tribal colleges and other programs addressing Indian education needs. Support for Indian education has fallen off sharply at the Federal level, and a renewed commitment is long overdue.

“This bill corrects some unacceptable inequities in Indian education funding, and supports programs that uniquely suit Native education needs,” said Baucus. **“Indian education concerns have been brushed off or ignored for far too long. America’s education system will never be fully first-class until every student has a real chance to succeed, and this bill seeks to give that chance to all our Native students.”**

Specifically, the Baucus Education Competitiveness Act of 2006 addresses the following issues:

- **APPROPRIATIONS FOR INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION** – Increases Federal funding to \$7,000 per full time student. Today, tribally controlled colleges receive \$4,447 annually per full-time student, well below the level authorized by law.
- **JOHNSON O’MALLEY GRANT** – Provides increased funding for the Johnson-O’Malley program, which has met the educational needs of Native American students for more than 60 years. Targeted to unique school populations, the program funds needs from band and athletic uniforms to eyeglasses and standardized test fees. Johnson-O’Malley grants permit students and parents to concentrate on classes and studies with less financial pressure.
- **LANGUAGE IMMERSION PROGRAMS** – Learning native languages is critical to embracing the cultures and histories that enrich all of our lives. Studies have also shown that learning another language boosts overall academic achievement. Recognizing these facts, the Indian Education Title increases funding for language immersion programs to \$79 million by 2011.