

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 29, 2003

The Honorable Rod Paige
Secretary
U.S Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave. SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Paige:

As strong supporters of the "persistently dangerous schools" choice option in the No Child Left Behind Act, we were dismayed to learn that states have adopted such lax criteria that 44 states and the District of Columbia have no schools that fit their "persistently dangerous" definition.

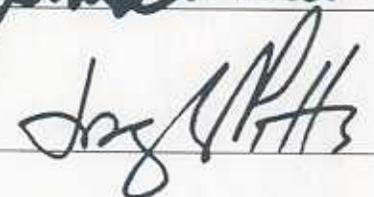
The fact that few schools have been identified as persistently dangerous does not fairly represent school safety. Statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics showed that in 2001, 6 percent of students reported they had carried a weapon on school property and the same percentage feared being attacked at school. In 2000, students were victims of about 700,000 nonfatal violent crimes. Yet only 0.0006 percent of our nation's schools have been found to be unsafe (about 50 out of 90,000), with none of these schools located in most of the major urban and metropolitan areas.

While we appreciate the flexibility given to states to define for themselves what constitutes a persistently dangerous school, it is evident that states do not have a clear understanding of the intent of NCLB in implementing this provision. We strongly encourage you to give states more specific guidance regarding how to implement this provision and provide other recommendations to States.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,









Bartolo

Tom Tancredo

Pete Haddan

Scott Franks

Dan Wald

Mr. Rhodigg

Mark Sander

John Smith

Steve King

Sue Muzick

Philip M. Crane

Gil Gittner

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Frank D. Lubin

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Ron Paul

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