

## House Passes Republican Proposal Ensuring Head Start Helps Disadvantaged Kids -- November 7, 2007

WASHINGTON, D.C. - House Education and Labor Committee Senior Republican Howard P. "Buck" McKeon (R-CA) welcomed the appointment of House negotiators to a House-Senate conference on the Improving Head Start Act (H.R. 1429). In appointing conferees, the House voted overwhelmingly in favor of a Republican motion to ensure resources go to help prepare disadvantaged children for school rather than providing excessive compensation for Head Start executives.

"We have seen several cases of serious financial abuse by those who are given the responsibility of managing federal Head Start funds meant to serve poor and at-risk children," said Rep. Mike Castle (R-DE), senior Republican on the Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Subcommittee and an original cosponsor of H.R. 1429. "Head Start makes a difference in the lives of almost one million children across the country, and we have a responsibility to make certain that they get the most out of every tax dollar. My motion would help ensure resources are focused on children, where they belong."

The Improving Head Start Act aims to strengthen the Head Start early childhood education program's teacher and classroom quality, boost coordination between Head Start and state and local early childhood programs, and increase Head Start's financial accountability. H.R. 1429 was approved by the House with strong bipartisan support in May.

The House voted unanimously in support of a proposal offered by Castle to urge negotiators to maintain House-passed safeguards against abuse of funds designed to help disadvantaged children. The House proposal establishes a salary cap for Head Start program officials, prohibiting compensation in excess of the amount paid to an Assistant Secretary at a federal agency, currently \$168,000 per year. Republicans argued successfully that funds inflating Head Start executives' compensation would be better spent serving additional disadvantaged children, hiring new teachers or paying existing teachers more, or improving programs and services.

"The Improving Head Start Act takes steps to clamp down on the types of financial abuses that have marred the image of this successful program. Included in the bill is a reform Republicans have championed since these financial abuses were revealed - establishment of a cap on the amount highly paid Head Start executives can earn," said McKeon. "Simply put, we do not believe local Head Start executives should be paid more than the federal official confirmed by the United States Senate to oversee the entire program."

Education and Labor Committee Republicans appointed as conferees on the Improving Head

Start Act are:

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Howard P.  
"Buck" McKeon (CA)

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Michael  
Castle (DE)

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Ric Keller  
(FL)

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Joe Wilson  
(SC)

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Luis Fortuño  
(PR)

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Charles  
Boustany (LA)

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Rob Bishop  
(UT)

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Dean Heller  
(NV)

"Head Start helps prepare disadvantaged children to succeed in school and in life. Just as we have sought to close the academic achievement gap through the No Child Left Behind Act, we can work to close the readiness gap through the Head Start program," said McKeon. "This bill provides much-needed reforms to make a good program even better."

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