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COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

SENIOR WHIP



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

September 12, 2008

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The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny H. Hoyer
House Democratic Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-107, United States Capitol
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Hoyer:

As you continue to work on a second economic recovery bill to help spur the economy and provide relief to families who are suffering in this downturn, I urge you to include support for school construction. As you know, investments in infrastructure can have an immediate impact on jobs at a time when unemployment has risen to its highest level in five years, and create needed economic activity in our communities.

As the only former state schools chief serving in Congress, I know firsthand that our school infrastructure is in dire need of assistance, and that quality education cannot take place in crumbling schools. Across the nation, public school enrollment has increased over 13 percent in the past decade, while North Carolina has seen a nearly 30 percent increase. These jumps have strained our district's ability to keep up with repairs and the need for classroom space. According to the American Society of Civil Engineers' *2003 Progress Report on America's Infrastructure*, 75 percent of our nation's school buildings remain inadequate to meet the needs of America's students. Targeted investments in school infrastructure would allow schools to improve student health, help retain teachers, and improve the quality of teaching and learning, while at the same time generating tens of thousands of new jobs.

According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, funds appropriated for school construction would be at work within 30 to 60 days of an announcement, meaning that the stimulus effect of such funding would be felt quickly. Such funding would have an immediate

The Honorable Steny H. Hoyer

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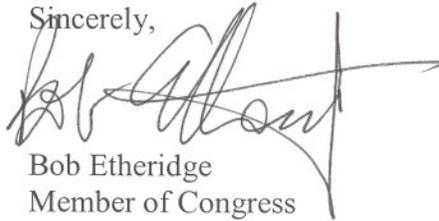
impact on precisely those communities struggling in this economic downturn and already stressed by overcrowding in schools.

One way to ensure that this funding goes as far as possible is through a federal tax credit that supports local school construction bonds, as proposed in H.R. 2470, the America's Better Classrooms Act. This bill, which I introduced with Ways and Means Chairman Charlie Rangel, will multiply the impact of any appropriated funds to spur economic activity. I strongly believe that this is the best way to provide support for school infrastructure and create jobs in our communities, and I urge you to include language similar to H.R. 2470 in the recovery legislation.

It is critical that funding for school construction and modernization forms a significant part of any economic recovery legislation that is considered by the U.S. House of Representatives. If a tax credit is not within the scope of the legislation, an alternate approach is to include funding for H.R. 3021, the 21st Century Green High-Performing Public Schools Act, which I have also cosponsored.

I know that you share my commitment to our nation's teachers and students and the promise that education holds for future generations. Now is the time to fulfill that commitment with investments in school infrastructure, for the jobs it would create, for the economic activity it would spur, and for the benefit it would provide to future generations. I look forward to working with you to support an economic package that puts our nation on the path to recovery and provides relief for all Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob Etheridge", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bob Etheridge
Member of Congress

BE:dw