

# NEWS RELEASE

From Congressman Joe Moakley, 9th District, Massachusetts



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## DEMOCRATS SLATE FIRST CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT VOTE

Democrats in Congress are scheduled to caucus next month for an historic vote which could pave the way for a Constitutional Amendment to end forced busing.

The Democratic Caucus meeting will mark the first time for a recorded vote on forced busing. Only a month ago Caucus rules were changed to open meetings so all votes could be recorded in public. Previously the results were secret.

Congressman Joe Moakley (D-Mass.) said that he has been working with other Members affected by the busing issue to open up the Caucus vote as a first step towards gaining passage of a Constitutional Amendment against busing. "Our strategy," Moakley explained, "is based on our belief that if members know that the public will be informed of their vote on busing, our chances of success will be greatly increased."

Moakley noted that a majority vote of the 289 member Democratic Caucus is necessary to recommend passage of a Constitutional Amendment to end forced busing. He said that although 145 Democrats had cast anti-busing votes in the past year, there was no guarantee that they would support the ultimate step of a Constitutional Amendment.

"According to my calculations, of the 435 House Members, some 278 have cast some sort of anti-busing vote this year," Moakley said. "While 289 are needed if every member shows up to vote," he continued, "278 could do it."

Moakley noted that in addition to the 278, there were five other potential anti-busing votes.

"I think we can count on newly-elected Congressman Fary from Chicago's anti-busing South Side, Congressman Fulton's soon-to-be-elected replacement from anti-busing Nashville, and three Freshmen who, although they have not yet voted in the Congress on the busing issue, come from Districts that would welcome their support of a Constitutional Amendment."

Moakley was referring to Derrick of South Carolina, Fenwick of New Jersey and Baldus of Wisconsin.

Moakley, who last year was one of 118 to sign a Constitutional Amendment discharge petition, explained that while the discharge procedure required 218 signatures, the Caucus procedure required only 50 signatures at first and then 145 votes or less - whatever is a majority - in Caucus. "That's why" Moakley added, "other concerned Members of Congress and myself chose to go the Caucus route this year as a first step towards passing a Constitutional Amendment."

The Congressman described the procedure once the Amendment came before the full House. He stated that a two-thirds vote by those present and voting would then be necessary. A similar two-thirds vote of acceptance also would be needed in the Senate. Ratification of the Amendment would require a vote by the legislatures of 38 states.

"Should we pass this amendment," he said, "we will no longer have to contend with our children being bused out of their own neighborhoods to go to school."

"I will do my best," he added, "to see that a Constitutional Amendment to prohibit busing becomes a reality."