

SENATOR PAUL E. TSONGAS

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

JULY 15, 1982

Mr. President, today I am introducing a bill that would pinpoint and remedy some basic woes plaguing our public schools. The National Teacher Retraining Demonstration Act of 1982 would establish a pilot program for training seasoned teachers in new techniques, materials and educational psychology.

If enacted, this bill would help in upgrading teaching proficiency and advancing computer literacy. It would also assist the nation's teachers in responding to one of their nagging concerns, "burnout" or the slackening of professional enthusiasm and morale.

Most of the nation's teachers are devoted and committed professionals. Theirs is a demanding and critical occupation. They are entrusted with the future of our children, and thus of our nation. Yet there is no comprehensive program to guarantee that our teachers' skills advance in step with technological knowledge and to combat teacher burnout.

The National Teacher Retraining Demonstration Act of 1982 would authorize the Secretary of Education to establish demonstration retraining centers in key areas of the country. These centers would serve as trial balloons to test the wisdom of establishing retraining programs nationwide.

The legislation provides for a minimum of four centers. Two would specialize in elementary education and two would emphasize a secondary curriculum, including vocation education. The centers would be established, operated and maintained by private contractors through a bid process conducted by the Department of Education. The centers would be financed by a combination of federal, state and private funds.

The centers would offer a relaxed learning atmosphere for teachers, while affording them the opportunity to sharpen their teaching skills.

The emphasis would be on computer literacy and on other subjects ~~that are~~ ^{toward} looking the ~~issue~~ of the future.

Although many teachers are committed to their profession, some of them lack the wherewithal to respond to changes in their fields and in teaching technology. If we believe that learning is a life long process, then our teachers ought to have the opportunity to learn new skills in their professions.

Statistics point to a steady decline in the reasoning power of students, particularly those at the high school level. To solve this problem, our teachers must have the means to adapt to changing the social and educational conditions. The bill I am introducing today is a step in this direction.

Education is the foundation of our future. Our young people are our greatest natural resource. Our nation's security and welfare are directly related to their education. Teacher retraining centers ~~could~~ ^{for} promise to fortify our schools of the 21st Century. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

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