FEDERAL ROLE IN K-12 EDUCATION

- The core values that are the foundation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) must be preserved.

- When ESEA was first passed in 1965, more than a decade had elapsed since the U.S. Supreme Court’s historic ruling in Brown v. Board of Education yet massive educational disparities remained.

- Congress passed ESEA because it recognized that the rule of law was still a barrier to quality education for many children, banishing them to separate and unequal schools and a lifetime of lost opportunities.

- To ensure that all students had access to equal educational resources and opportunities, ESEA created programs to level the playing field for the most vulnerable: students from low-income families (Title I), English-language learners (Title III), and Native American students (Title VII).

- Despite chronic underfunding, these programs have made a significant difference in addressing gaps in educational access and opportunities.

- But too many students’ success in school continues to depend in large part on the zip code where they live.

- Public education is the foundation of democracy, the cornerstone of our republic.

- Backsliding to the days before ESEA, when millions of children were denied basic educational opportunities would put our nation’s future at risk.

- To ensure that our nation is competitive in the global economy of the 21st century, the public schools that educate nine out of ten Americans must remain gateways to opportunity.

- As Congress undertakes reauthorization of ESEA, it must ensure that the federal government continues to uphold its responsibility to guarantee equal educational opportunity for all.

NEA’s complete Message to Congress on ESEA reauthorization addresses the federal government’s role in public education, the purpose of public education, and asks: How will we fulfill that purpose? The answer has three parts: (1) Champion student success: Prepare all students to thrive in college, careers, and life; (2) Elevate the profession: Support great teachers and education support professionals; and (3) Fight for social justice: Ensure equitable educational opportunities and safe schools for every student.

For additional information, go to www.educationvotes.nea.org and click on the “resources” tab.

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