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**FW: RELEASE: Tester Introduces Bill to Hold Government Accountable to Montana Students**

1 message

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To: Eric Feaver &lt;efeaver@mea-mft.org&gt;, "Steve Meloy (smeloy@mtsba.org)" &lt;smeloy@mtsba.org&gt;, "Kirk J. Miller Ed.D. (samkm@sammt.org)" &lt;samkm@sammt.org&gt;, "Dennis J Parman (dparman@mrea-mt.org)" &lt;dparman@mrea-mt.org&gt;, "Dan Rask (draskal24@gmail.com)" &lt;draskal24@gmail.com&gt;

Cc: "Works, Smith (Tester)" &lt;Smith\_Works@tester.senate.gov&gt;

Hello everyone,

Thank you all for providing a quote for this release. We appreciate the help and support!

Take care,

Hannah

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 13, 2018

Marneé Banks | [202.604.5521](tel:202.604.5521)Dave Kuntz | [202.224.8544](tel:202.224.8544)**Tester Introduces Bill to Hold Government Accountable to Montana Students***Senator's #PublicSchoolsWeek Legislation will Force Feds to Pay Fair Share of IDEA Funding*

(U.S. Senate) – As part of his ongoing effort to strengthen public education and increase local control, U.S. Senator Jon Tester today introduced the *IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) Full Funding Act* during #PublicSchoolsWeek.

This legislation will force the federal government to relieve some of the financial burden on states and local school districts that are providing students with a quality education.

**“Every student has a unique set of needs, experiences, and capabilities that should never prevent them from getting a quality public education,”** said Tester, a former public school teacher and school board member. **“Unfunded federal mandates handcuff our local school districts, draining their already meager resources and eroding local control. This bill will empower local educators and ensure every Montana student has access to a quality education.”**

When Congress originally passed the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* more than 40 years ago, the federal government promised states and school districts it would cover 40% of the cost. That hasn't happened. In fact, federal funding for IDEA currently hovers around 16 percent and has never exceeded 20 percent of the excess cost. Tester's bill will require the federal government to pay its fair share of IDEA funding.

Local educators are applauding Tester's bill, saying it will improve accommodations for students across Montana, while putting control of critical resources back in the hands of local teachers, principals, and administrators.

**“This proposal, if adopted, would be one of the most welcome things the Congress could ever do for public education in Montana and nationwide,” said Eric Feaver, President of MEA-MFT.** **“It would finally fulfill, even if still 10 years down the road, a promise made that the federal government has yet to fulfill. We support it without hesitation.”**

**“The Montana School Boards Association is fully supportive of this bill and committed to any effort to fully fund IDEA by 2027,” said Steve Meloy, Director of Government Relations for the Montana School Boards Association.** **“As are other states, Montana faces biennial funding challenges to our schools causing school districts with limited state general fund support to try to cover the costs of providing services to students with disabilities from their general fund budgets. If we truly believe that the future of our state and country lies with our children then we must maximize investments in special education rather than back away from our commitments. Our thanks to Senator Tester for his part in leading this effort.”**

**“School Administrators of Montana stands fully in support of this legislation based on the fact that federal funding increases to meet the 1975 IDEA federal funding promise, would support the education of all Montana students,” said Kirk Miller, Executive Director of School Administrators of Montana.** **“Thank you to Senator Tester and the Bill sponsors for working to see this become law.”**

“It is no surprise to us that Senator Tester understands the importance of adequate funding for serving students with special needs in rural Montana,” **said Dennis Parman, Executive Director of the Montana Rural Education Association.** “Costs for serving the needs of these students appropriately have gone up dramatically over time and local taxpayers have shouldered the burden of those increased costs. Additional federal support will be very welcome news for students, educators, and taxpayers.”

“The Montana Small Schools Alliance supports the IDEA Full Funding Act as long overdue. The MSSA also supports the efforts of Senator Tester of Montana and Senator Van Hollen of Maryland for leading this current effort,” **said Dan Rask, Executive Director the Montana Small Schools Alliance.**

Tester’s bill is co-sponsored by Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-M.D.). Both members of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Tester and Van Hollen also [recently wrote a letter](#) urging committee leadership to fully fund IDEA in the upcoming budget that is slated to pass later this month.

Tester also [introduced the NURSE Act](#) yesterday as part of his larger celebration of [#PublicSchoolsWeek](#).

The full text of the legislation can be found [HERE](#). More on Tester’s support for public education can be found [HERE](#).

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