

***Conservative  
Action  
Team***

**PRESS RELEASE**

U.S. House of Representatives \* Washington, DC 20515

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**HOUSE REPUBLICANS ON GORE'S SPECIAL  
EDUCATION PLAN:**

**"YOU WERE MISSING IN ACTION LAST WEEK!"**

WASHINGTON, DC -- House Republicans, led by Conservative Action Team members Rep. Pete Hoekstra (R-MI), Rep. Bob Schaffer (R-CO), and Rep. Tom Tancredo (R-CO), commented on Vice-President Al Gore's announcement today he intended to enact the largest increase ever for the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). "Thank you, Mr. Gore, for reversing your administration's eight-year record of under-funding IDEA and joining us in our efforts to ensure America's special needs students receive the commitment and support Congress promised," said Hoekstra.

Originally passed by Congress in 1975 and reauthorized in 1997, IDEA requires every state to implement and maintain specific programs to meet the education needs of students diagnosed with disabilities. Such programs are extremely costly to maintain at more than twice the cost of a regular education.

In exchange for providing the additional programs, states were originally promised a 40 percent cost-subsidy from the federal government. Over the years, however, the federal government has only provided between 6 and 12 percent annually, resulting in severe budget shortfalls for school districts nationwide. By devoting more funding to the federal government's share of IDEA, local schools will be able to meet more of their individual needs instead of struggling beneath the burden of this massive, unfunded federal mandate, according to Hoekstra.

Under the Republican-led Congress, funding for IDEA has reached historically high levels. Since 1995, Republicans have increased the total IDEA funding over 136%. Between FY 1997 and FY 2000, Republicans have provided an average increase of 16.4% above the president's request.

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Just last week, during consideration of the Labor, Health and Education Appropriations Act, which provided an increase of \$500 million to IDEA, House Republicans offered 9 amendments to increase IDEA an additional \$3.4 billion. Had these amendments passed, the House would have provided the largest single increase in IDEA in history. However, these amendments failed, with nearly every Democrat voting against these amendments.

"Mr. Gore didn't lift a finger when it mattered most. He promises that if he becomes president he will enact the largest increase ever in IDEA funding, but just last week when the House was pushing for a 62% increase, he was missing in action. He failed to help us in our efforts to provide these desperately needed funds for disabled students when it really counted," said Mr. Schaffer.

Representative Tom Tancredo added, "Although the Vice President is a new-comer to the issue, his willingness to be schooled by the Republican majority is encouraging, especially since we have increased funding for IDEA by over 100 percent since taking control of Congress."

Congressmen Hoekstra and Schaffer are Co-Chairmen of the Education Reform Caucus. Along with Congressman Tancredo, all three offered amendments to increase IDEA funding.

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