

Eliminating the State Grants Portion of the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Program Is NOT a Sound Proposal

The Administration's FY 2010 Budget Request

In his FY 2010 Budget Request, President Obama recommends eliminating the State Grants portion of the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC) program. His request also proposes adding \$100 million to the National Programs portion of SDFSC for competitive grants to local educational agencies (LEAs).

If implemented, this proposal would:

1. Decimate the school based prevention infrastructures currently in place;
2. Leave the vast majority of our nation's schools and students with no drug and violence prevention programming at all;
3. Provide large, time limited, competitive grants to a very small number of recipients that will not be sustainable over time;
4. Prevent rural and underserved areas from successfully competing for funds from the new national program as they are unlikely to have the resources to hire the grant writers required to compete for this type of discretionary funding;
5. Cause most LEAs throughout the country to lose all of their foundational funding to support school-based drug and violence;
6. Cause most LEAs to lose funding and manpower leveraged by the program including the capacity of schools to compete for national grants; and
7. Create an unfunded mandate for data collection and result in the loss of the substate data infrastructure that the SDFSC program has provided.

Justification to Eliminate SDFSC Program Based on Dated Information and False Assumptions

The Administration's proposal to zero out the State Grants portion of the SDFSC program is based on dated information, and false assumptions.

- Administration Justification: The 2001 RAND Drug Policy Research Center study concluded the structure of the SDFSC program is flawed.ⁱ
 - ***Fact:*** *This study was conducted prior to the enactment of H.R.1, No Child Left Behind, which statutorily corrected many of the problems associated with the program. No further studies have been conducted regarding the effectiveness of the program since the enactment of H.R. 1. It is unfair to use a study conducted before legislative fixes were in place to justify eliminating this program.*
 - ***Fact:*** *H.R. 1 (Sections 4116 and 4122) specifically required data collection efforts that were totally ignored by the Department of Education under the Bush Administration and could have served as the basis to show the program worked. The Obama Administration put forth no effort to try to make the program work by complying with the requirements of H.R. 1 before it slated the program for elimination.*

- Administration Justification: The proposal to zero out the SDFSC program and provide \$100 million for a competitive program will ensure that the schools with the greatest need receive funding.ⁱⁱ
 - ***Fact: Making the program competitive will provide large grants to a very small number of recipients that will not be able to sustain them over time.***
 - ***Fact: Only schools that can afford to pay sophisticated and skilled grant writers will be able to successfully compete for the available funds.***
 - ***Fact: LEAs in rural locations and those with underserved populations will likely not have the resources available to hire a grant writer, and therefore will not be able to compete for funds, even though these are the very schools that often have the greatest in need.***
- Administration Justification: The thin distribution of funding prevents LEAs from designing and implementing meaningful interventions.ⁱⁱⁱ
 - ***Fact: Although most LEAs do receive less than \$10,000, most of them leverage the limited funds from the program to recruit partners who commit additional public and private resources and manpower to implement school based programs that work for their communities.***
 - ***Fact: Many LEAs receiving a small amount of money develop consortia to pool their resources to provide optimally effective programs and services.***
- Administration Justification: Rather than fund the SDFSC program, the SDFSC Advisory Committee recommended that the Federal Government should instead provide competitive grants.^{iv}
 - ***Fact: To the contrary, the SDFSC Advisory Committee report specifically states "at the outset, the committee notes that none of the witnesses testifying before the committee or any of the committee's members suggested that the States Grants Program is no longer necessary. Rather, the committee believes that the program is crucial because safe and drug-free schools are the foundation for improved learning."***

Conclusion

The justification to zero out the State Grants portion of the SDFSC program is based on dated studies, false assumptions, and mischaracterizations, as evidenced above.

The State Grants portion of the SDFSC program is the cornerstone of youth drug prevention and intervention efforts throughout the country. It provides effective programs, services and activities, such as K-12 science-based prevention curricula, student assistance programs, drug testing and peer resistance training. This program is also the portal into schools for all other drug and violence prevention activities.

We cannot afford to see the nation's only source of funding for school based prevention that directly targets ALL of America's youth in grades K-12 with drug and alcohol prevention and intervention services eliminated so that a program that will only serve a limited number of students can be funded instead. The proposal to zero out the State Grants portion of the SDFSC program is NOT sound, and should not be enacted.

ⁱ Executive Office of the President, Office of Management and Budget. (2009). *Terminations, reductions and savings: Budget of U.S. government Fiscal Year 2010*. Washington, DC. Available: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/fy2010/assets/trs.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v U.S. Department of Education, Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Advisory Committee. (2007) *Enhancing achievement and proficiency through safe and drug-free schools*. Washington, DC. Available: <http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/sdfscac/enhancing-achievement.doc>