

## **MYTH-FREE FACTS ABOUT THE STATE GRANTS PORTION OF THE SAFE AND DRUG FREE SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES PROGRAM**

### **Background**

The President's FY2010 Budget has called for the termination of the State Grants portion of the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC). The President's budget provides two citations to justify its decision to terminate funding for the State Grants Portion of SDFSC: (1) a 2001 RAND Corporation study, and (2) the 2007 report of the SDFSC Advisory Committee appointed by former Education Secretary Margaret Spellings.

### **Summary**

- The State Grants portion of the SDFSC **HAS NOT** been rated ineffective. It has received the same OMB assessment as 47% of all programs at the US Department of Education (USDE).
- The 2001 RAND study is out of date. It appeared **BEFORE** the passage of HR1 (No Child Left Behind), which addressed weaknesses in the program. The principal author of the study admitted neither he nor his co-author “knew much about what was going on in the school room with respect to prevention activities.”
- The US Secretary of Education’s SDFSC Advisory Committee **DID NOT** recommend the elimination of the States Grant portion. The committee said the State Grants portion is “crucial” to learning and continues to be necessary.
- Providing all SDFSC funding on a national grant application basis would:
  - Take away local determination
  - Favor school districts with the most clever grant writers
  - Lead to fewer localities receiving funding
- Funding based on need would be difficult to achieve. The CDC suggests a combination of strategies that mirrors the current makeup of SDFSC.

**MYTH-FREE FACTS ABOUT THE STATE GRANTS PORTION OF  
THE SAFE AND DRUG FREE SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES PROGRAM**

The President's FY2010 Budget would terminate the State Grants portion of Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC). The President's budget provides two citations to justify its decision to terminate funding for the State Grants Portion of SDFSC: (1) a 2001 RAND Corporation study, and (2) the 2007 report of the SDFSC Advisory Committee appointed by former Education Secretary Margaret Spellings.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/TRS/>

**Q. Has the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities State Grants Program been declared ineffective by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB)?**

**A. No.**

Contrary to reports, the SDFSC State Grants Program has not been classified as “ineffective.” Its OMB Program Assessment is “Results Not Demonstrated.” According to OMB, 47% of all programs at US Department of Education (USDE) share the same rating.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/expectmore/summary/10000200.2006.html>

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/expectmore/agency/018.html>

Supporters of the State Grants portion of SDFSC maintain that the program *is* effective but USDE has failed to take the congressionally mandated steps to prove its effectiveness. To compare results from all states and territories, and 16,000 school districts, uniform reporting is necessary. But USDE did not release its Uniform Data Set until the fourth quarter of 2007 – six years after Congress required it.

Members of the National Network for Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities, the state officials who implement the program, were being trained in the Uniform Data Set as late as early 2008.

**Q. Did the SDFSC Advisory Council, appointed by the Secretary of Education, recommend eliminating the State Grants Program?**

**A. No.**

The FY2010 Budget states: "In 2007, the SDFSC Advisory Committee affirmed the RAND findings, noting that the amount of money allocated to the program is too small and may be spread too thinly. The Advisory Committee also echoes many of the recommendations of the RAND study, such as recommending that the Federal Government instead provide competitive grants to concentrate a greater amount of funding to school districts with a demonstrated need."

Contrary to recommending the elimination of the State Grants portion, the Advisory Committee report 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 State 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."**

The report continues:

**"A key strength of the State Grants Program is that it has fostered the creation of an infrastructure for collaboration among different levels of government, all of which have a role to play in ensuring school safety. It ensures the involvement of both state and local education agencies in the effort to keep schools safe and drug and alcohol free. By allowing grants to go directly to local school districts, it also allows communities to address specific needs in a way that would be lost if all decision making regarding grant moneys were to take place at a higher level."**

The Advisory Committee report does make a number of excellent recommendations on how the State Grants Program could be improved, but it is a gross misinterpretation to say the report justifies the termination of the State Grants Program.

<http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/sdfscac/comment.html>.

**Q. Did the RAND Corporation recommend terminating the State Grants Program?**

**A. Not exactly.**

The RAND study made three separate recommendations. Only one of the three approaches would have made SFDSC an entirely federal effort.

[http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph\\_reports/MR1328.1/](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1328.1/)

Furthermore, the RAND study appeared before the passage of HR1 (No Child Left Behind), which addressed weaknesses in the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities program. The RAND study has not been updated since 2001.

**Q. Didn't RAND say the State Grants Program is "profoundly flawed"?**

**A. Yes, but it was hardly a scientific finding ...**

Without offering any substantiation, the RAND study declared in its concluding comment: "The current SDFSC program structure is almost universally considered to be profoundly flawed; we are unaware of anyone who will explicitly defend it."

Shortly after the RAND study appeared, the US House of Representatives voted 384-45, and the US Senate voted 91-8, for establishing the State Grants Program as it now stands.

President George W. Bush signed the legislation into law on January 8, 2002 – though the 1,600 employees of the RAND Corporation could find no one who defended it.

**Q. How was the RAND study conducted?**

A. Peter Reuter, one of the principal authors of the study, described the process in an August 2006 appearance before the SDFSC Advisory Committee: “I should say, this was a project that I did jointly with Michael Timpane who was also at RAND those days. He had expertise in educational policy, I presume he had some expertise about drug policy, and that seemed like a good combination, but neither of us knew much about what was going on in the school room with respect to prevention activities, so we held some focus groups.”

<http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/sdfscac/meeting.html>

**Q. Given that the principal authors acknowledge that they did not know much about prevention activities in the classroom, how many focus groups did they conduct?**

A. According to RAND, they conducted two focus groups involving two school districts and 23 participants as a representative group of the 16,000-plus school districts in America.

[http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph\\_reports/MR1328.1/](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1328.1/)

**Q. Isn't it a good idea to distribute SDFSC funds to school districts with the greatest need?**

A. The problem is: How would USDE determine which school districts have the greatest need? In the final analysis, funding would go to the school districts with the most clever grant writers.

An April 3, 2009, issue of the CDC's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* demonstrates how confusing it would be to determine need based on the severity of a problem, much less the schools district's capacity to address the problem:

*“Sociodemographic Differences in Binge Drinking Among Adults --- 14 States, 2004*

... the prevalence of binge drinking was more common among men (24.3%), persons aged 18-24 years (27.4%) and 25-34 years (24.4%), whites (17.5%), and persons with household incomes >\$50,000 (17.4%). However, after adjusting for sex and age, the highest average number of binge drinking episodes during the preceding 30 days was

reported by binge drinkers whose household income was <\$25,000. (4.9), and the highest average number of drinks per binge episode was reported by non-Hispanic blacks (8.4) and Hispanics (8.1). “

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5812a1.htm>

The CDC concluded: “These findings underscore the need to implement effective population-based prevention strategies (e.g., increasing alcohol excise taxes) and develop effective interventions targeted at groups at higher risk.”

This is precisely the framework that exists with grants to almost all school districts through the State Grants portion of SDFSC and discretionary grants based on need through the National Programs of SDFSC.