



Illinois TESOL-BE

May 23, 2005 Senator Bobby Rush
700 East 79th Street
Chicago, IL 60619

Dear Congressman Bobby Rush:

Re: TESOL-BE's opposition to proposed Budget cuts in Adult Education

The Administration's 2006 Budget cuts Adult Education by \$369 million, a 66% reduction. The proposal endorses the concept of leaving no child behind at the same time it leaves millions of parents and other adults behind. No American should be left behind when it comes to access to education.

Illinois TESOL/BE is opposed to this drastic cut in adult education funding.

The President's budget says it focuses resources on students who need them the most. However, the budget proposal ignores the needs of English language learners and other adult learners that cannot access the K-12 system and have families who depend on them for support. Among these learners are tens of thousands of young adults who have just recently found themselves unable to meet new high standards for graduation, as well as factory workers and other laborers whose jobs have been abolished and need to improve his/her academic skills in order to find a new job.

The President's Budget Analysis indicates that adult education programs have "little or no evidence of effectiveness". In fact in 1998 Congress set performance indicators for adult education programs, each year the US Department of Education has negotiated performance levels on these indicators with the states and each year a vast majority of the states have met or exceeded these levels.

Administration officials have justified reducing federal funds for adult education services because "education is a state issue" not a federal issue. Federal funding for adult education was originally created because states were not meeting the needs of high school dropouts, welfare participants, immigrants and other individuals with low levels of literacy without a high school diploma or its equivalent. Currently states and local governments contribute \$3 for every \$1 the federal government provides. Furthermore a significant number of adult education students served with state grant funds not associated with ESL-Civics funding are English language learners.

Immigration is a federal, not a state issue. The federal government does have a responsibility for helping with these costs.

Current federal, state, and local efforts can only meet the needs of 2.7 million individuals a year. Under the President's budget figure the number of students served in a year would drop to 2.25 million. The effect of the cut would be much greater in those states where the state contribution to adult education is very low.

There is no other system built to meet the many varying needs of adult education students and the public policy priorities that are served when their needs are met, for example; a more highly trained and competitive workforce; intergenerational literacy and increased success of education reform efforts; increased voting and other forms of civic participation, decreased recidivism and more successful preventive health.

To keep our economy strong, we must meet the needs of today's workforce at the same time we are preparing tomorrow's workers in the K-12 system. To stay strong, we cannot leave these adults behind. Public schools provide only two percent of our nations' workforce annually. Most of the workforce is already there as are their needs for adult education.

To keep our nation strong, we must not only have a strong defense, but a strong economy base on our investment in education each and every individual to the highest level possible.

Therefore, Illinois TESOL/BE opposes the proposed federal cuts in adult education.

Very truly yours,

Madonna Carr - President, ILLINOIS TESOL-BE(04-05)

Yasmin Ranney - President, ILLINOIS TESOL-BE(05-06)