

Education Alert

Legislation of Vital Concern to Miami-Dade County's Students

Date: Tuesday, September 17, 2002
To: The Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
From: Merrett Stierheim, Superintendent of Schools
Re: **SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AMENDMENT**

Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen, you have been active and supportive in the area of school construction in the past, as well as a sponsor of the Johnson-Rangel school construction bill, America's Better Classrooms Act. *On Thursday, Miami-Dade County Public Schools strongly urges you to support the Johnson-Rangel school construction bill in lieu of HR 5193.*

FLOOR ACTION: The House will be voting on HR 5193 on Thursday, September 12, which would extend tuition tax credits to K-12 expenses for public and private school costs. We ask you to oppose the expensive tax credits of HR 5193 and to support the more effective Johnson-Rangel bill.

We believe that the Johnson-Rangel approach is less costly than HR 5193 and will better serve Florida's schoolchildren by increasing school construction and permitting lower class sizes.

- Johnson-Rangel provides significant bonding authority for the entire State of Florida, as well as direct assistance to Miami-Dade County.
- Florida already has its own voucher program for private/public school tuition, and tuition tax credits would provide no value added for Florida voters.
- The estimated cost of the tuition proposal is \$10 billion over ten years, with the largest benefits going towards private schools. Johnson-Rangel is actually cheaper than tuition tax credits with an estimated cost of \$6.7 billion over ten years, and of real and significant value to improving student achievement and public education.

If the Johnson-Rangel bill is not allowed as a substitute amendment, Representatives Johnson and Rangel will offer a motion to recommit H.R. 5193 with instructions to substitute their school construction bill. Miami-Dade County Public Schools opposes HR 5193 unless the school construction bill is substituted for tax credits.

RECOMMENDATION: Because Johnson-Rangel would provide critical assistance for the county and the state, Miami-Dade County Public Schools respectfully requests your advocacy by (1) supporting a motion to recommit; and (2) vote NO on H.R. 5193 if it does not contain the Johnson-Rangel substitute. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

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