

HSTA leadership conference

Senator Daniel K. Akaka Papers

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CONGRESSMAN DANIEL K. AKAKA
HSTA LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
THURSDAY, AUGUST 19, 1987
HONOLULU, HAWAII

THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME TO PARTICIPATE IN YOUR LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE TODAY. ALTHOUGH I HAVE BEEN A MEMBER OF CONGRESS FOR ELEVEN YEARS NOW, AND THUS NO LONGER AN EDUCATOR BY PROFESSION, GATHERINGS LIKE THIS STILL MAKE ME FEEL LIKE I AM "COMING HOME."

I GUESS THIS IS BECAUSE I FEEL THAT NO MATTER WHAT HAT I AM WEARING, I AM STILL AN EDUCATOR AT HEART.

AND, QUITE FRANKLY, WHEN I THINK ABOUT IT, I SUPPOSE I COULD EVEN SAY THAT IN MY CASE, YOU CAN TAKE THE BOY OUT OF THE CLASSROOM, BUT YOU CAN'T TAKE THE CLASSROOM OUT OF THE BOY.

INDEED, I FIND THAT IN ORDER FOR ME TO BE THE VERY BEST REPRESENTATIVE THAT I CAN BE, I MUST CALL UPON THE TEACHER IN ME TO EDUCATE MY COLLEAGUES, THAT IS MY 434 COLLEAGUES, ABOUT THE STATE OF HAWAII AND OUR NEEDS.

THIS IS NO EASY TASK, WHEN YOU CONSIDER THAT THE MAJORITY OF THEM THINK THAT LIFE IN PARADISE IS PROBLEM-FREE. I HAVE FOUND, HOWEVER, OVER THE DECADE THAT I HAVE BEEN IN WASHINGTON, D.C., THAT IN ORDER TO BE A GOOD TEACHER, I MUST FIRST BE A GOOD STUDENT.

OFTENTIMES CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT COMMUNICATE IN SEEMINGLY

CRYPTIC, RATHER THAN STRAIGHTFORWARD CODES. AND, AS A RESULT, ONLY THE ASTUTE STUDENT CAN POSSIBLY DECIPHER THE MESSAGES. TAKE, FOR EXAMPLE, AN EXECUTIVE COMMENT ON A PARTICULAR BILL. FOR THE SAKE OF CONVERSATION, LET US SAY THAT THE BILL DEALS WITH TEACHER SALARIES. WE IN THE CONGRESS WANT TO RAISE THEM BY 50%. WELL, UNDER ORDINARY LEGISLATIVE PROCEDURES, THE LEADERSHIP WILL ASK THE EXECUTIVE TO PRESENT ITS COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSAL BEFORE MOVING THE BILL TO CONSIDERATION ON THE FLOOR.

NOW, LET'S SAY THAT WE RECEIVE A COMMENT FROM THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH TELLING US THAT THE ADMINISTRATION "DOES NOT SUPPORT" THE PROPOSAL. WELL, WE CAN ASSUME FROM THIS WORDING THAT THE BILL MAY STAND A DECENT CHANCE OF BEING SIGNED INTO LAW, DESPITE EXECUTIVE OBJECTIONS. IF, HOWEVER, WE RECEIVE A COMMENT SAYING THAT THE ADMINISTRATION "STRONGLY OPPOSES" THE MEASURE, WELL, THEN WE CAN REST ASSURED THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL LIKELY VETO THE BILL IF IT GETS TO HIS DESK.

SO YOU SEE, CAPITOL HILL BUSINESS DEPENDS HEAVILY ON SEMANTICS. AND, AS SUCH, ONE MUST BE AS MUCH A STUDENT AS A TEACHER IN ORDER TO SUCCEED. I LIKE TO THINK THAT MY ELEVEN AND ONE-HALF YEARS OF HILL EXPERIENCE COUPLED WITH MY MANY YEARS IN THE EDUCATION FIELD HAVE PREPARED ME WELL FOR THE TASK.

NOW, YOU MAY BE ASKING YOURSELVES, "WHY IS HE TELLING US THIS?" WELL, THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION IS THAT I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT NO MATTER HOW LONG I MAY SERVE IN CONGRESS, AND NO MATTER HOW REMOVED I

MAY APPEAR FROM THE FIELD, THE TEACHER IN ME WILL ALWAYS DEMAND THAT THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF OUR CHILDREN BE MET.

FRANKLY, THIS IS A BATTLE THAT I, AND OTHERS LIKE ME, HAVE BEEN FIGHTING FOR A LONG TIME. FOR, EDUCATING OUR YOUTH JUST DOES NOT SEEM TO BE AT THE TOP OF THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION'S AGENDA. RATHER, THE ADMINISTRATION HAS REQUESTED TIME AND TIME AGAIN HUGE REDUCTIONS IN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS. AND, THIS YEAR HAS BEEN NO DIFFERENT.

IN FACT, IT WAS JUST A FEW DAYS BEFORE THIS AUGUST RECESS, AUGUST 5, TO BE EXACT, THAT THE HOUSE PASSED ITS VERSION OF THE FY88 EDUCATION FUNDING BILL. THE PRESIDENT, HAD HE HAD HIS WAY, WOULD HAVE SEEN A NET REDUCTION OF \$5.5 BILLION BELOW THE 1987 APPROPRIATION FOR EDUCATION PROGRAMS. INSTEAD, HE WAS SENT AN INCREASE OF \$1.2 BILLION OVER THE AMOUNT AVAILABLE FOR 1987.

JUST LISTEN TO SOME EXAMPLES OF THE REDUCTIONS INCLUDED IN THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET REQUEST:

PELL GRANTS.....-\$1.2 BILLION
WORK-STUDY, GRANTS, AND LOANS.....-\$1.3 BILLION
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION.....-\$882 MILLION
EDUCATION OF THE HANDICAPPED.....-\$254 MILLION
REHABILITATION OF THE DISABLED.....-\$84 MILLION
AID TO LIBRARIES.....-\$132.5 MILLION
DRUG ABUSE EDUCATION.....-\$100 MILLION
(IS THAT SAYING "NO" TO DRUGS?)
TRIO PROGRAMS FOR DISADVANTAGED.....-\$94 MILLION

DEVELOPING INSTITUTIONS.....-95 MILLION

WELL, I AM HAPPY TO TELL YOU THAT THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS, AS WELL AS THE HOUSE, COULD NOT ACCEPT THE REDUCTIONS CONTAINED IN THE BUDGET REQUEST. INDEED, TESTIMONY PRESENTED BY THE DEPARTMENT WITNESSES DURING THE BUDGET HEARINGS GAVE NO JUSTIFICATION FOR THE REDUCTIONS.

BECAUSE WE FELT THAT INCREASES, RATHER THAN DECREASES, WERE NECESSARY AND JUSTIFIED, WE WENT AHEAD AND APPROVED THEM. I AM SURE THAT THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH WILL NOW CALL US BIG-SPENDERS, OR BUDGET-BUSTERS FOR THIS. WELL, THEY ARE IN FOR A BIG SURPRISE BECAUSE EVEN IN SPIITE OF THE INCREASES THAT WE HAVE MADE IN EDUCATION PROGRAMS, THE BILL STILL IS WELL WITHIN THE CEILINGS SET BY THE 1988 BUDGET RESOLUTION.

FORTUNATELY, FOR THE FUTURE OF AMERICA, WE REJECTED THE ADMINISTRATION'S THINKING. AND, LIKEWISE, UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION IN A TIME WHEN OUR FOCUS IS ON MAKING AMERICA COMPETITIVE, THE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION MUST PREVAIL.

AND, AS LONG AS I AM IN A POSITION TO SAY SOMETHING ABOUT IT, YOU CAN BE SURE THAT I WILL DO SO.

THANK YOU, AGAIN, FOR YOUR MOST GRACIOUS INVITATION TO BE WITH YOU TODAY. I COMMEND YOU FOR YOUR WORK IN HELPING THE STUDENTS OF HAWAII, AND I WISH YOU GOOD LUCK IN PRESERVING THOSE EXCELLENT EFFORTS.