

The Presidential Nomination of Margaret Spellings to be Secretary of Education

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Witness:

Margaret Spellings

Presidential Nominee of Secretary of Education

Testimony

Mr. Chairman, Senator Kennedy, and members of the committee, I am gratified for the opportunity to appear this morning before you as President Bush's nominee to be Secretary of Education. There is no more important obligation each of us has to the American people than to educate our citizens. In our diverse country we share the belief that education is the great equalizer. It is the key to success for individual Americans and the key to the success of our nation. Not just economic success but civic and democratic success. In our country we believe that a great education must be available to each and every American. It is in that spirit that I am honored and humbled to be nominated to this post and I am most grateful to President Bush for asking me to serve our country and our children in this important way.

I am further gratified to be the first order of business before this re-organized Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and I congratulate you, Senator Enzi, on your Chairmanship. I have had the opportunity to work with members and staff of this committee under the able leadership of Senators Gregg and Kennedy with whom I worked on No Child Left Behind and I am grateful to them as well.

I appreciate very much the kind remarks of Senator Cornyn. I am sorry Senator Hutchison could not be here as well. I have known both of them for many years and am proud to be represented by them in this body.

I wish to thank Secretary Rod Paige who has given his life in service to children. There is no more passionate advocate for leaving no child behind than Secretary Paige. He has laid the foundation for improving education and if confirmed I will work to honor his lifelong commitment to children by continuing the good work he started.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge my family; my husband, Robert, my daughters, Mary and Grace, and sons, Robert and Britain. My husband, Robert, and my daughters are here today. As you all know well, public service is a commitment for families and I love my family dearly for their sacrifices on my behalf.

I have been involved in our public schools for more than two decades and in many different ways. I am a parent of school-aged children – one in public school and one in a private parochial school. I have worked in public education as a policy wonk and as a legislative advocate. I have worked in both the legislative and executive branches of government as well as at the local, state and federal levels. From parent to policy maker, I have seen public education from many angles and often been in the other person's shoes.

As a proprietor of shoe stores, Mr. Chairman I know you will appreciate that.

In short, in two decades in public education I have learned two main lessons. First, I have learned that every player in education has an important and rightful place. Those involved in education are people of good will who mean to serve children – there is plenty to do and we must respect the role we each play. In other words, not everybody should do everything. That was not always the case.