

EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE

Congressman George Miller, Chairman

Strengthening America's Middle Class

Friday, March 23, 2007
Press Office, 202-226-0853

**Chairman Kildee Statement At Committee Hearing On Impact of
No Child Left Behind On English Language Learners**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. Dale Kildee (D-MI), chairman of the House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education, for a subcommittee hearing on “Impact of No Child Left Behind On English Language Learners.”*

I'm pleased to welcome my fellow subcommittee members, the public, and our witnesses, to this hearing on the impact of No Child Left Behind on English language learners.

English language learners face unique challenges – like all children, they have to learn history, math, reading, science, and other subjects, but they also have to learn a new language at the same time.

Those challenges are not easy, and we owe it to these children to ensure that their schools have the resources and support to provide them with the education they need and deserve.

In that regard, it is particularly important that we reverse the trend under this administration and recent Congresses of reducing funding for English language acquisition.

English language learners are a large and growing segment of our students. Today, there are about 5 million ELL students nationwide, representing about 10 percent of all public school students. About three-quarters of these students are Spanish-speaking, and it might surprise some to know that most ELL students, and 76 percent of elementary school ELL students, were born in the United States.

Unfortunately, these students' academic performance is well below that of their peers. And, ELL students have excessively high dropout rates.

By 2025, ELL students may represent as much as 25 percent of all students, so it is no overstatement to say that for No Child Left Behind to succeed – in fact, for our country to continue to prosper – we must address this issue.

I believe that our witnesses today will provide us with valuable information concerning how No Child Left Behind is working for ELL students and what we need to do to make it work better.

We will hear about critical issues concerning the validity and reliability of assessments given to ELL students.

One foundation of a successful No Child Left Behind is data, and if the data concerning ELL students' performance is not reliable, it will not help schools, school districts, and states implement reforms to help those students.

We will hear about how the Department of Education has been slow to provide states with the assistance they need to implement No Child Left Behind's provisions for ELL students, and the status of recent efforts to correct that.

And, we will hear about promising practices for training teachers of ELL students and for improving their academic achievement, and also from an outstanding bilingual public school here in Washington, DC.

I hope that today's hearing will help us understand which issues require better implementation of No Child Left Behind and which might be addressed by changes to the law itself, particularly with regard to the testing of ELL students.

I look forward to working together with my Ranking Member, Mr. Castle, our full committee Chairman and Ranking Member, Mr. Miller and Mr. McKeon, and with all the members of the committee, on a bipartisan reauthorization of No Child Left Behind this year, and I believe that today's hearing is an important step in that process.

I now yield to Ranking Member Castle for his opening statement.

<http://edlabor.house.gov/>