

**Full Committee on Education and Labor  
United States House of Representatives**

**Hearing On  
“The Benefits of Physical and Health Education  
for Our Nation’s Children”**

**July 24, 2008**

**TESTIMONY OF RICHARD SIMMONS**

1. History
  - My own personal “exercise’ life story, a summary of how a child who loathed exercise transformed in to a fitness legend.
2. A “Shift” in Mail
  - 5 years ago, I began to notice a real change in the mail I was receiving. More and more letters were coming from parents concerned with their child’s weight, state of health and most unusual, their *stress levels*. There were even letters from children themselves. The letters primarily voiced concerns over the lack of, or dramatic cuts in PE classes as a result of the implementation of the *No Child Left Behind Law*. The parents were now seeing their children gaining weight, becoming diabetic, showing signs of high blood pressure, anxiety and depression.....*children!*
3. Questionnaire
  - I decided to investigate what was happening for myself. My team and I created a survey to literally “Ask America” all about the state of Physical Education in *their neighborhoods*. I hit the airways and asked America to tell me their story.
    - ***60,000 people answered the call, and they had a lot to say***
      - ◆ ***94% of survey respondents believed that PE should be a required subject at ALL levels of Education.***
      - ◆ ***Almost 40% of survey respondents reported their children as having PE Class ONE time per week OR LESS.***
      - ◆ ***90% of survey respondents reported feeling that PE would be more EFFECTIVE and ENJOYABLE if it included all children, regardless of athletic ability, in a non-competitive atmosphere.***
4. Trip to Washington
  - In February of 2007, Congressman Zach Wamp and Congressman Ron Kind invited me to Washington D.C. We discussed how I could use my public voice to help bring these issues to the public’s and Leaders’ attention. I set to work on advocating for a PE Bill that ultimately became the Fit Kids Act.
5. Letter Writing Campaign
  - After my trip to Washington, I again asked my friends in the media for help. I did as many media appearances as I could, asking *everyone* to write to their Congressmen, Senators, and even the Presidential Candidates, in support of Fit Kids and primarily PE.
    - The response was *overwhelming*. People telling people, telling people all about our ”crusade”. Everywhere I went, in airports, in shopping malls, on the street, people were stopping and *thanking me for doing something for our kids, for the future.*

6. Vision

- I certainly don't have all the answers to the tough questions, but I'm not empty-handed either. I come today with a vision.
- I am well aware that many of our teachers are working under stressful conditions. I am also aware that time and funding are serious issues that must be addressed to solve this PE crisis.
- However, I know that *fit kids* are healthier and appear to learn better.
  - Therefore, I would like to propose utilizing the talents of *the community*, specifically certified fitness instructors, *to work under the direct supervision of certified PE Teachers, so as to alleviate some of this stress.*

Congressmen, and Congresswomen, thank you for inviting me here today and listening. It breaks my heart that we presently have a generation of children, in real danger of *not* living as long as their parents. You have the power to prevent this from happening. I believe that it *doesn't* have to.

Sincerely,  
Richard Simmons  
July 2008