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Joel Packer,
Executive Director
Committee for Education Funding

March 11, 2010

Dear Senator,

On behalf of the Committee for Education Funding (CEF), a coalition of more than 80 national education associations and institutions from preschool to postgraduate education, we urge you to vote against the Sessions-McCaskill amendment (SA 3453) that would impose statutory discretionary spending caps through FY 13. It would set separate caps for defense and domestic spending, with the limit on domestic discretionary spending essentially freezing such spending for four years (FY 10-FY 13).

We believe that adoption of this amendment is ill-advised and that the determination of discretionary spending should be established each year through the budget and appropriations process. In addition, establishment of these caps may well have a significant negative impact on education. The President's budget proposes to shift funding for Pell grants from discretionary to mandatory spending. Pending student aid legislation and current law also fund part of Pell grants as mandatory spending. If Congress fails to include Pell funding as mandatory and all funding for Pell was included in the discretionary part of the budget, the caps set by this amendment would result in serious cuts to education or other domestic programs.

States, school districts, colleges and libraries already face a severe and unprecedented fiscal crisis. While funds provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) have helped prevent massive layoffs and education cuts, such funds will expire in the next school year. The loss of ARRA education funds will likely result in substantial cuts in education programs at all levels.

In addition, due to unprecedented and growing state and local budget gaps, schools, colleges and libraries are facing deep additional cuts in state and local aid, causing even further reductions.

Locking in discretionary spending caps prior to a full analysis of their impact and without flexibility to deal with changing economic and budgetary issues in the next few years will likely prove harmful to programs for children, students, and education. We thus urge you to vote no on this amendment.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Fansmith
President

Joel Packer
Executive Director