

## Celebrating National Teacher Week

Written by Mike Honda  
Friday, 07 May 2010 16:08

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Unfortunately for our students and children, educators are experiencing the burden of our nation's financial challenges in the form of layoffs. An estimated 150,000 to 300,000 educators across the country are expected to lose their jobs in the next three months, affecting millions of children in public schools. Of this figure, 36,000 jobs are estimated to be lost in my state of California, with many of them in the city of Cupertino. Already, hundreds of thousands of educators this year have reported receiving pink slips, and the New York Times predicts the upcoming school year to be "one of the most austere in the last century." With these kinds of numbers looming over our educational system, it is difficult to ignore the long term effects on our economy and competitiveness in the global market.

My experience has made education one of my top priorities as a legislator. I have witnessed the student teacher ratios per classroom grow as a result of budget cuts, which hampers the communication between teacher and student. This will surely suffer if more educators lose their jobs. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act has saved or funded more than 300,000 teaching jobs by allocating funds directly to states, which has certainly helped, but more needs to be done.

To preserve the hundreds of thousands of educator jobs in our public schools, I urge the Senate to act on the Education Jobs Fund. The House has already passed the measure included within the Jobs for Main Street Act, and it is now up to the Senate to pass the Keep Our Educators Working Act (S.3206), introduced by Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa, which includes the necessary \$23 billion in funding. This bill would extend the success of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and would save an additional 250,000 jobs, according to the Education Commission of the States. In my state of California, it would save 38,900 jobs and alleviate the state from further budget cuts.

Education is the great equalizer, the means to enable any child to realize the American dream. Children in America today, however, receive vastly unequal educational experiences and opportunities due to substantial differences in the education students receive depending on where they live. This barrier prevents too many children from realizing their potential, leading to ever more economic inequality in our society.

I sponsored The Educational Opportunity and Equity Commission Act to identify solutions for eliminating the inequitable distribution of resources among our schools. This legislation will institute an Educational Opportunity and Equity Commission to gather insights and public opinions about how the government can improve education. This group will be charged with

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holding hearings and community meetings across the country to explore this issue in depth, seeking input, and developing strategies to guarantee equity in our education system.

The Fiscal Year 2010 Consolidated Appropriations Act included report language I authored to create the commission, and the U.S. Department of Education is currently in the process of establishing the commission. The Commission will gather insights and public opinions about how the government can improve education, establish equity, and meet the needs of each student. This group will be charged with holding hearings and community meetings across the country to explore this issue in depth, seeking input, and developing strategies for Congress to guarantee equity in our education system.

This week, let us do our part to recognize educators across this country for their distinguished service in guiding the next generation of pioneers. Each child in this country deserves an inspiring education, one that will leave a lasting impression through life's endeavors.