

JAN 3 2002

YOUR ISSUES YOUR AGENDA • WINTER 2001



## Securing Kentucky's Future - Educating Our Youth

### 'No Child Left Behind' Signed into Law

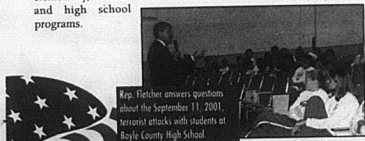
Under the leadership of President Bush, and as a member of the Education Committee, Rep. Fletcher worked hard to help ensure that the "No Child Left Behind" legislation passed and was signed into law. The education reform package places education decisions in the hands of parents, teachers and local communities. America has witnessed economic growth and prosperity, yet our public education system leaves many children unprepared for the future.

This legislation aims to correct the education achievement gap, which inflicts students of all economic and racial backgrounds. President George W. Bush pledged to make education reform his top priority and now for the first time in several decades, the next generation of students will have the tools needed to better position themselves for the future. The centerpiece of the "No Child Left Behind" education reform bill is the commitment to close the achievement gap and establish equality for the most disadvantaged students through flexibility, accountability and high standards.

### Flexibility for Parents, Teachers and Local Communities

Parents will have enhanced educational options for a child stuck in a chronically-failing school. Parents with children in a failing school will now be allowed to transfer their child to a better performing public or charter school immediately after a school is designated as failing. Federal funds (approximately \$500 - \$1000) can be used to provide students in failing schools supplemental educational services, including tutoring, after school programs and summer school programs. Parents, teachers and interested community leaders will have greater options for their children through the expansion of the charter school initiative.

Under "No Child Left Behind," states and local communities will have an unprecedented amount of flexibility in order to use resources where they are needed most. Every school district in America, including the 176 in Kentucky, will immediately receive the freedom to transfer fifty percent of their federal funds to an assortment of programs. All fifty states will be allowed to transfer up to fifty percent of their federal non-Title I state activity funds to an assortment of elementary, middle and high school programs.



Rep. Fletcher answers questions about the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks with students at Boyle County High School.

### Accountability for Improving Student Achievement

States will be held accountable for improving student achievement through annual reading and math assessments for students in grades three through eight. Congress has authorized \$400 million to help states design and administer these tests. States will be required to provide data by race, gender and other criteria to demonstrate that overall student achievement is improving, as well as that achievement gaps between disadvantaged students and other groups are improving. "No Child Left Behind" would empower parents, voters and taxpayers with information, including annual report cards, on school performance and statewide results. It would also provide parents with information about the quality of their child's schools, the qualifications of their teachers and their child's progress in which school their child should attend.



Rep. Fletcher discusses literacy with students at the Booker T. Washington Montessori Middle School in Lexington.

key subjects. This will allow parents to make informed choices about

### High Standards are Expected

Congress has also made other changes to ensure better results in public education. The President's Reading First Initiative triples federal reading funding for effective, proven methods of reading instruction backed by scientific research. This will provide the tools to ensure that every child can read by the time that they reach the third grade.

"No Child Left Behind" provides needed resources to promote teacher quality and create smaller classrooms. Not only would funds be earmarked for improving teacher quality, but it will give local schools new freedom to use up to fifty percent of their non-Title I federal funds they receive. These funds could be used to hire new teachers, increase teacher pay and improve teacher training among other uses. It also includes Teacher Opportunity Payments to allow teachers to pursue professional development activities.

Last year, Rep. Fletcher fought to expand Educational Savings Accounts (ESAs) from \$500 to \$2,000. This will allow parents to invest up to \$2,000 annually and permits tax-free withdrawals for college tuition and K-12 educational expenses.

JAN 3 2002

YOUR ISSUES YOUR AGENDA • WINTER 2001



## Securing Kentucky's Health

### Fletcher Played Key Role in House Passage of the Patients' Bill of Rights

Several studies have verified the devastating effects the absence of health insurance has on individuals. The most vulnerable are impacted the greatest. According to the New York Times (Oct. 16, 2001), "workers signing up for health plans for next year are facing the largest increases in 10 years... (and) costs are actually doubling" at many small companies.

This huge wave of health insurance premium increases threatens to swell the ranks of the 38 million uninsured in America, and according to a National Academy of Sciences study, the number of uninsured is likely to continue growing over time unless health insurance is made more affordable. Rep. Ernie Fletcher is working to turn Congress' attention to the problem of the uninsured in order to address the root cause of sky-rocketing health insurance costs for small business workers.

One solution to this troubling issue passed the House of Representatives on August 2, 2001, when Rep. Fletcher successfully included language creating



Rep. Fletcher takes questions from the White House press corps following a meeting with President George W. Bush to discuss patients' bill of rights.

Association Health Plans (AHPs) in the Patients' Bill of Rights.

Association Health Plans are critical to addressing the problem of rapidly rising health insurance premiums and the uninsured because self-employed people and small businesses do not have the advantage of spreading their health insurance costs over large numbers of

people, as do corporate and labor union health plans. Additionally, corporate and union health plans are able to operate under one set of rules, rather than 50 different sets of rules which may vary from state to state. They also are exempt from insurance mandates which have driven up costs and greatly dampened competition in the small group health insurance market.

It is time to level the playing field by giving small businesses and the self-employed the same opportunities in health insurance coverage that large corporations and labor unions enjoy. The Small Business Health Fairness Act (H.R. 1774), introduced by Rep. Fletcher and Rep. Cal Dooley (D-CA) in May 2001, would rectify the current inequities between large corporations and small businesses by providing bona fide trade and professional associations with the opportunity to operate health plans for their members under one uniform set of rules.

AHPs would also benefit small businesses in Kentucky by giving them greater economies of scale over which to spread health costs, providing more bargaining power with insurance companies, reducing administrative costs and providing greater health benefit design flexibility. The bill will inject more competition into health insurance markets to further reduce premiums for small business workers. In fact, premium savings through AHPs are expected to be up to 30%.

The Washington Times (Sept. 10, 2001) strongly endorsed the Small Business Health Fairness Act and noted that this legislation will "make it easier for small businesses to provide health insurance for their workers." A study by the CONSAD Research Corporation estimated that up to 8.5 million uninsured small business workers would gain coverage under this legislation.

As the effects of our weakened economy become more apparent, Rep. Fletcher believes Congress must quickly turn its attention to the problem of the uninsured and small business health reform. Indeed, a recent study released by the National Business Group on Health predicts that the uninsured population will likely grow by 6 million people in the next few years if Congress fails to take action. Fletcher believes that Congress should heed this and other warning signs and work to expand affordable health coverage by enacting the Small Business Health Fairness Act.

## It's Not Too Late to Fight the Flu - Find the Time.

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), The flu is more than sniffles. It's coughing, it's fever, it's aching. And it can lead to pneumonia. In fact, complications from the flu kill more than 20,000 Americans each year and cause more than 100,000 to be hospitalized. The best protection you can get is a flu shot.

It is not too late to fight the flu. Please visit your family physician or health center. For additional information, please call your health care provider or call the CDC Immunization Hot Line.

English: 1-800-232-2322 Spanish: 1-800-232-0233  
www.cdc.gov/nip/flu