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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6300

March 8, 2005

The Honorable Margaret Spellings
Secretary of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Spellings,

The Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee of the Senate has a long-standing interest in the support for persons with disabilities under the Public Vocational Rehabilitation Program as defined by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and we are especially interested in implementation of the law and the capacity of the Department's Rehabilitation Service Administration (RSA) to assure high quality service delivery by State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies and federal grantees. The RSA Regional offices have always had an important role in providing monitoring and technical assistance to the states and grantees in assuring effective implementation of the law.

We understand that the Department is in the process of eliminating the regional offices and downsizing the RSA by approximately 60 staff positions, and are concerned that the RSA will not be able to carry out its monitoring and technical assistance efforts without these offices and the local staff who make them possible. RSA has already been downsized by 20 positions over the past four years and by 43% since 1988, and we urge you to reconsider the current drastic proposal.

We look forward to your response, and we hope you will assure us that these important services to people with disabilities will not be diminished under the Public Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

With respect and appreciation,

Sincerely,





Jack Reed

Patty Murray

Jim Jeffords

Jeff Bingaman

Chris Dodd

Tom Harkin
