Dear

Thank you for the communication expressing your view with regard to the proposed distribution of funds under S. 8, as passed by the Senate on February 4, 1960.

I would agree that the manner of allotting Federal funds to the States for educational purposes proposed in S. 8 is wholly unrealistic, inasmuch as the allocation for public school purposes would be made on the basis of children not attending public school (or, for that matter, not attending any school). The Administration proposal for Federal assistance for school construction in financially-needy school districts -- which I offered in the course of the Senate debate as a substitute for S. 8 -- would have based the allotment on public school attendance. During the course of the Senate debate on S. 8 an amendment was offered to make Federal loans available for the construction of private elementary and secondary schools. This was defeated by a substantial margin.

A very similar proposal to provide Federal loans for the construction of private schools was made in the House Committee on Education and Labor during its consideration of S. 8 and similar bills, but it was defeated in the Committee. The House of Representatives has not yet had an opportunity to act on a bill which would provide Federal assistance to education.

The Senate will not have a further opportunity to amend S. 8, since it passed that body on February 4, and, in view of the legislative history, there appears to be little likelihood that the Congress will approve Federal assistance for private elementary and secondary schools at this time. Because S. 8 would involve permanent Federal assumption of the State and local responsibility to finance the general costs of public education in every State, which would be the certain effect of providing Federal funds for the payment of teachers' salaries, I voted against the bill.
In my judgment, our private educational institutions are making a fine contribution to American education and deserve to have every appropriate encouragement. However, just as I do not believe it is in the best interest of education or of our governmental system for the Federal Government to assume the basic responsibility of financing public education, I do not believe that financial support of private elementary and secondary education is an appropriate Federal activity. Where Federal funds, in the national interest, are made available to improve the health of children -- as in the National School Lunch Acts -- I believe the benefits should be available to all children in both public and private schools. Similarly, I approve the program of Federal loans to private schools, under Title III of the National Defense Education Act, for the purchase of special equipment for teaching languages, science, and mathematics -- because it is important to the Nation that these subjects be strengthened in both public and private schools. And, of course, when Federal education and training benefits are made available to veterans to assist in their process of readjustment to civilian life, they should be available to all veterans whether the education or training is pursued in public or private institutions. The Federal Government can and does undertake these types of programs without raising any constitutional questions under the First Amendment and without endangering the basic character of private education.

I appreciate having your views on this matter, and hope this discussion has been helpful to you in considering the issues involved.

Sincerely,

Everett McKinley Dirksen
Dear:

In my judgment, our private educational institutions are making a fine contribution to American education and deserve to have every appropriate encouragement. However, just as I do not believe it is in the best interest of education or of our governmental system for the Federal Government to assume the basic responsibility of financing public education, I do not believe that financial support of private elementary and secondary education is an appropriate Federal activity. Where Federal funds, in the national interest, are made available to improve the health of children -- as in the National School Lunch Acts -- I believe the benefits should be available to all children in both public and private schools. Similarly, I approve the program of Federal loans to private schools, under Title III of the National Defense Education Act, for the purchase of special equipment for teaching languages, science, and mathematics -- because it is important to the Nation that these subjects be strengthened in both public and private schools. And, of course, when Federal education and training benefits are made available to veterans to assist in their process of readjustment to civilian life, they should be available to all veterans whether the education or training is pursued in public or private institutions. The Federal Government can and does undertake these types of programs without raising any constitutional questions under the First Amendment and without endangering the basic character of private education.

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