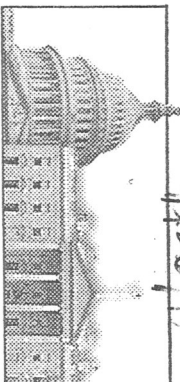


# *GOP's Power of the Purse Put to the Test*

## Education Goals Program Targeted for Early Demise



By Rene Sanchez  
Washington Post Staff Writer

It was once hailed as the next great hope to improve the nation's schools, a landmark measure embraced by nearly every governor, approved with bipartisan votes in Congress and praised by countless leaders in education and business.

Goals 2000, the federal government's first attempt to support national academic goals and guidelines for schools and give states money to meet them, seemed for a time like the rare idea with few ardent political enemies. Not anymore. Now, as the Republican revolution on Capitol Hill rolls on, it is fighting for its life.

The House has voted to eliminate all funding for Goals 2000, which began

just last year, as part of its charge to limit the federal government's role in American society. The Clinton administration had planned to spend \$750 million on Goals 2000 next year. The Senate is now debating the issue and signs are that it will preserve only half of that money, at best. Even if it does, some advocates of Goals 2000 say that by now the plan has been so diluted by political compromise its impact on schools may be marginal.

"The whole idea," said Diane Ravitch, who was an assistant secretary of education in the Bush administration and has written extensively about school reform, "is being decapitated."

The battle over Goals 2000 is an important part of the rolling debate be-

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## Special Interests Find Cover In Budget Reconciliation

By Dan Morgan  
Washington Post Staff Writer

Sen. J. Bennett Johnston (D-La.) has had problems this year getting Congress to exempt oil companies that undertake risky, deep water drilling in the Gulf of Mexico from making royalty payments to the government.

The Senate approved his "deep water royalty relief" as a rider to a broader energy bill in May, but House foes of "corporate welfare" joined with environmentalists and voted against it. So the wily Louisianan persuaded Sen. Frank H. Murkowski (R-Alaska), chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, to include it in the gigantic, omnibus bill being assembled in the Senate to implement the Republicans' seven-year plan to balance

the budget. The committee approved the provision last Wednesday.

A day earlier, Rep. Joel Hefly (R-Colo.) used the same technique to advance his bill setting up a commission to recommend ending federal management of some national parks. A few hours after the House rejected it, 231 to 180, Hefly got it incorporated into a similar spending package being drafted by the House Resources Committee, of which he is a member.

It's all part of "budget reconciliation," the process whereby Congress brings together its committees' recommendations for budget cuts and revenue-raising provisions in one huge bill.

Templed by the cover that such a single, multibillion-dollar measure provides,

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## GOALS, From A1

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tween Congress and the White House over more than \$3.5 billion in education cuts proposed by GOP leaders. It has become a symbol in the larger ideological clash over state and federal rights that is dominating Congress, and to some it also illustrates the growing public distrust many federal initiatives are facing.

Goals 2000 is a prime target not because of what it costs but for what it aims to do: Give states money for projects designed to meet broad national education goals—like making U.S. students first in the world in math and science—and voluntary national guidelines that spell out how students should be taught in core subjects.

The Goals 2000 law does not dictate what kind of books or tests schools should use. Rather, it gives schools money to do things such as improve their curricula, train teachers and get more technology into their classrooms.

Many business leaders exasperated with the state of public schools have backed Goals 2000 in the hope that it would bring more focused, national attention on an issue that throughout American history has been an almost entirely local concern. A retreat from Goals 2000, they argue, would leave school reform as muddled as ever.

Earlier this month, leaders of The Business Roundtable, a group whose members are the chief executive officers for several hundred of the nation's largest corporations, met with President Clinton to plot strategies to keep Goals 2000 alive.

"If we lose this, it would set back state education reform efforts by years," said Joseph T. Gorman, president of TRW Inc., the giant aerospace and automotive parts company. "The value of Goals 2000 is that it's designed to spur systematic, break-the-mold reform and hold schools accountable to clear standards."

But critics of the initiative, most prominently the Christian Coalition

and several Republican presidential candidates, say Goals 2000 will lead the federal government too deeply into public schools, burden them with new regulations and bully them about how to teach everything from sex education to "politically correct" history. In Congress, some new skeptics also say it's an unnecessary federal handout that in some cases will only duplicate the education work states are doing.

They contend that what began as a well-intentioned national campaign to promote better education standards instead has turned into a large federal program with a meddling bureaucracy using cash to get states to bend to its will. In some places, suspicion about Goals 2000 has become so intense that opponents of it are warning parents that it could lead to "government mind control."

"This should be none of the federal government's business," said George Tryfiates, the executive director of the Family Foundation, a conservative Christian group in Virginia that has campaigned vigorously against Goals 2000. "There could be too many strings attached. We need less federal intrusion, not more."

That view, which is driving the Republican campaign against Goals 2000, is a far cry from the bipartisan enthusiasm for national standards when the idea was shaped during a historic education summit with the nation's governors in Charlottesville in 1989. It was held amid growing concern that the momentum for school reform that was sparked by the landmark education report "A Nation at Risk" six years earlier was fading.

Convened by President George Bush and led by then-Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton, the summit produced a strong consensus for creating new national benchmarks for schools.

That has long been the habit of most industrial nations, but not in the United States because of its philosophy of leaving most education decisions to state and local school officials. As a result, academic expectations of students vary widely.

The Goals 2000 law Congress

passed last year was designed to help change that. Under the law, a state can get federal money by submitting to the Education Department a plan for how it will strive to meet the national goals or use the guidelines. So far, the department has not rejected any of the plans it has received.

Most states, some after considerable debate, are giving Goals 2000 a chance—Only three states—Virginia, New Hampshire and Montana—have refused to participate. Many others have begun to receive multimillion-dollar grants they are dispersing to local schools for teacher training, new curricula and many other new academic projects.

This summer, Maryland received \$5.3 million in Goals 2000 money. It is being spread across the state for projects such as improving minority student achievement in Charles County, expanding teacher training in Prince George's County and increasing parent participation in Baltimore schools.

"This is a very flexible program," said Christopher Cross, the president of Maryland's board of education. "We've had no experience with any federal restrictions or oversight."

In an attempt to keep Goals 2000 alive, Education Secretary Richard W. Riley has agreed to support changing parts of the law that have most angered some critics. He has said there is no need for the federal panel that was going to certify each state's plan. Critics had denounced it as a "national school board." Riley also told a Senate subcommittee recently that perhaps states could get Goals 2000 money without submitting elaborate reform plans to the Education Department first.

But Riley also has accused some Goals 2000 critics of recklessly stirring fears that the initiative is a covert federal attempt to seize control of local schools and dictate to parents and teachers exactly how students should be taught.

"The attacks on Goals 2000 are one part myth, one part misinforma-

tion and one part the politics of pandering," he said.

Riley's attempts at compromise did not stop the House from voting to eliminate Goals 2000. It also has not slowed the campaign the Christian Coalition and other groups are waging against it.

Some of them have spread doubts by citing the fiasco earlier this year over a draft of voluntary national standards for teaching history. Those standards were denounced first by political conservatives, then by almost the entire Senate, as a biased and exceptionally negative portrait of American history that schools should not be encouraged to teach.

"The whole notion of this is bad," said Michelle Easton, a member of the Virginia state board of education. "We do not need this kind of federal involvement to improve schools. Most states are already working very hard on that on their own."

Other educators argue that Goals 2000 has become too loosely defined and bureaucratic. Some also suggest that the Education Department's desire not to interfere with states is so intense that it has been willing to give Goals 2000 grants for virtually any project that vaguely resembles school reform.

Ravitch said that even if Goals 2000 is saved in the Senate or by presidential veto, the campaign to have national standards, which began with so much promise at the Charlottesville summit, is in serious trouble.

Some parts of the Goals 2000 law have raised legitimate questions about its purpose, she said, but also have helped foster a "bizarre, almost paranoid" misunderstanding of what it was meant to be.

"The idea was to develop academic coherence, and that isn't really happening," Ravitch said. "What's left now is a program that in some cases is sending money out to states simply to help them do many of the things they are already doing."

lawmakers are adding special-interest concessions and policy changes that might have little chance of becoming law if considered on their own.

On their way to nominating more than \$4 billion in savings or new revenues last week, for example, the House and Senate natural resources committees approved provisions benefiting ski resort operators, oil and mining companies, cattle ranchers and sheep raisers.

If the provisions survive, they will become part of a foot-thick omnibus bill that includes cuts in Medicaid, Medicare and welfare reform, that could land on President Clinton's desk by mid-November.

Because Clinton does not have a line-item veto, he either will have to accept the measure or veto it entirely, risking gridlock and a possible fiscal crisis.

Administration officials repeatedly have blasted the practice of using spending bills to change policy or provide favors to special interests. Last week, the White House announced that President Clinton would veto the entire budget reconciliation bill unless Congress removes a provision that raises \$1.3 billion by selling drilling rights in the environmentally-sensitive Arctic wilderness.

"Anything they can put a dollar figure on is used to get a policy change they haven't been able to get otherwise," said John Lawrence, minority staff director for the House Resources Committee. In many cases, he said, "It's a small amount of money dragging a huge policy change."

But objections from Clinton and the environmental community seem unlikely to stop the practice.

Clinton will face a similar dilemma when he considers the 13 annual appropriations bills allocating some \$540 billion to fund the federal government through next September.

Through its "power of the purse," the Republican-controlled Congress is using the bills not only to do favors for home-state interests and businesses,



**SEN. J. BENNETT JOHNSTON**  
... backed "deep water royalty relief"

but also to make sweeping policy reforms.

Appropriations measures enacted by one or both houses contain far-reaching changes affecting environmental regulations, abortion and affirmative action policy, and workers rights. For example, a bill funding the Department of Housing and Urban Development beginning Oct. 1, overhauls federal housing policy. Another measure financing the Justice Department eliminates President Clinton's program to put 100,000 police on the streets and replaces it with a Republican anti-crime measure that would give states the discretion on how to use the money.

In the name of saving \$133 million, the 1996 agricultural appropriations bill passed last week by the Senate limited to 100,000 acres the amount of wetlands that the Agriculture Department can buy from farmers for a national wetlands reserve. The administration had proposed 300,000 acres.

Legislative reforms and special favors always find their way into year-end spending bills. But with Republicans in charge of the House for the first time in 40 years, and a pro-business tide running strong, the sweep of



**SEN. FRANK H. MURKOWSKI**  
... included Johnston's rider in bill

what is happening this year is extraordinary.

That became apparent last week as the House Resources Committee and the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee came up with its contribution to the GOP's balanced budget plan: more than \$4 billion.

Critics complained of a "frontier atmosphere" as the two Alaska Republicans chairing the committees, Rep. Don Young and Sen. Murkowski, jammed through legislation overturning long-standing precedents in order to reach the budgetary goal.

Both committees proposed a sweeping overhaul of the 1872 mining law, but critics charged that so many concessions were made to mining interests that revenues to the Treasury will be negligible. The Senate committee's package would net only \$12 million in seven years.

Young's package would allow Alaskan oil to be exported abroad for the first time in 22 years, even as it ends a ban on the sale of oil drilling rights in the state's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge on grounds of promoting U.S. energy independence.

The oil export proposal, which has administration support, was left out of

Murkowski's budget reconciliation package in deference to Oregon and Washington senators, who want compensation for home-state investments in shipyards handling the domestic oil trade.

Environmentalists acknowledged last week that the reconciliation process puts them at a disadvantage.

"Through a backdoor process with little accountability a few members of Congress are fundamentally changing our environmental laws," said Sharon Buccino, a senior attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Critics of the royalty relief for deep water drilling charge that it was put in the Murkowski package last week as an end run around the House. Murkowski, who like Johnston comes from an energy-rich state, also has close ties to the oil and gas industries.

In July, a motion by Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.) instructing House negotiators to reject the Johnston rider passed 261 to 161, with the support of 100 Republicans. At the time it was attached to the Alaska oil export bill, then moving through Congress as a separate, stand-alone measure.

Young's committee did not include the Johnston rider in the budget proposal it drafted last week. But he would still have leeway to agree to it when he sat down with Senate negotiators to work out a final budget plan. The administration has testified in support of some royalty relief for the deep water drillers, who bid for off-shore leases and pay royalties on any oil they extract.

The Congressional Budget Office estimated that the rider would net the federal treasury \$100 million by 2000, because the royalty exemption would stimulate competition for the deep water leases and increase the amount of the bids. But CBO said the rider would be a money loser after 2000, when oil companies begin pumping from leases exempt from paying the royalty.

On another item, the House Resources Committee approved a provision that would require the U.S. Forest Service to offer for sale at least 40 of the 140 U.S. ski resorts that lease For-

est Service land—a list that includes such well-known resorts as Vail, Colo.

The privatization provision would still require the operators to make the land available for a full range of recreational activities, but a House committee aide said that they would be free to develop the land, subject to local zoning restrictions.

The provision, which had the backing of Young and Rep. James V. Hansen (R-Utah), has stirred a storm of controversy in Colorado ski communities. Rep. Scott McInnis (R-Colo.), whose district includes resorts in the western part of the state, reportedly has obtained a pledge from Young that the provision will be dropped.

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