

More U.S. Aid for Refugee Pupils

Washington

The Ford administration bowed to the protests of state and local school officials yesterday and agreed to a substantial increase in federal aid for the education of 40,000 Indochina refugee children.

One-shot checks totaling about \$15 million will be mailed to school districts and state education offices beginning this month or next, an official said.

Originally, the administration had planned to allot only \$6 million to \$10 million to education from the \$405 million refugee aid bill voted by Congress last May.

Despite yesterday's increase, Senator Alan Cranston (Dem-Calif.), Senator J. Glenn Beall Jr. (Rep-Md.) and California Superintendent of Public Instruction Wilson C. Riles called the funds inadequate.

At a Senate hearing conducted by Cranston, they pressed passage of a broadly sponsored bill providing eight times more money over a two-year period.

Riles argued that bringing the refugees to the United States was a federal decision, and with most school districts "facing a grave financial crisis," it was wrong to place an added heavy burden on local property taxpayers.

California has nearly 10,000 Vietnamese and Cambodian refugee children enrolled in public schools this year, Riles said. He predicted that the total will reach 20,000.

The administration's new position on aid was announced at the Senate hearing by Don Wortman, director of the refugee program at the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

He said HEW had come to realize that many school districts face terrific problems in dealing with refugee children who speak little or no English and are experiencing traumatic cultural adjustments.

Thus, he said, HEW will provide \$300 a child for special services such as English language

instruction, bilingual programs, "culturally sensitive" aides or tutors, teaching materials and teacher training.

Additionally, for school districts with large refugee enrollments, HEW will make available \$600 for each refugee child in excess of 100 or in excess of one per cent of the total student population, whichever is less.

Until yesterday, HEW had disclosed no plan to make reimbursement for special services and had planned to pay only \$200 to \$300 a child over the 100-child threshold.

A bill introduced by Cranston and Senator John V. Tunney (Dem-Calif.) goes beyond HEW financing by providing money not only for special services but also for basic educational costs.

Cranston said it was "shocking" the administration took so long to acknowledge the education problems of refugees but he was pleased that HEW had agreed to finance at least the special costs.

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