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The History of a Legislative Proposal

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Congressional enactment of a new program inevitably requires the cooperation and support of many individuals and organizations, but often a single person or event precipitates the collective activity. For the Leadership in Educational Administration Development (LEAD) Act, that precipitant occurred in late 1983, as Congressman Thomas E. Petri of Wisconsin mused on Federal responses to the education reform movement.

That movement had been gaining momentum nationwide ever since publication of *A Nation At Risk* by the Department of Education in April. Dozens of education bills surfaced in Congress during mid-1983, including the American Defense Education Act (ADEA)—a comprehensive package authorizing massive federal spending to improve education, with much of that spending focused on classroom teachers. By October, the education subcommittee of the House Education and Labor Committee was holding hearings on ADEA and other reform legislation. Petri and other committee members were being encouraged by the National Education Association (NEA) to hop aboard the politically popular education-reform bandwagon by supporting ADEA.

Although Petri generally favored ADEA, he thought that there might be other effective ways to improve education. In particular, he recalled a 1980 education subcommittee hearing in which Dr. Ronald Edmonds of the New York City public schools told of research showing that the single most important key to a good school was, in Edmond's words, "the style of leadership of the principal." This conclusion coincided with Petri's own beliefs regarding the role of leadership for success in business and the military, and

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with a recent study by the Blaney Institute of Wisconsin. Yet none of the pending legislation (including ADEA) focused on helping school principals to become better leaders. Given the relatively small number of principals (as compared to the number of teachers or students), Petri figured that a program to enhance principal leadership skills could significantly improve education at relatively modest cost. This became his goal.

Although Petri still served on the Education and Labor Committee, he had dropped off that body's education subcommittee to become the ranking Republican member of its Subcommittee on Human Resources. Petri's subcommittee did have jurisdiction over a few education programs, such as Head Start, and he directed me, as counsel for that subcommittee, to investigate how the federal government could help improve the leadership skills of principals and other school administrators. He suggested that I pay particular attention to ways that training programs could tap the *practical* experience of successful education, business, and military leaders, and then share it with school administrators in the field. He did not want simply another academic education-school course. He then gave me two other key directions. First, I was to call for ideas from Bruce Hunter, the chief lobbyist for the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the person Petri described as "the best source for advice in the field." Second, I was to work with the ranking Republican on the education subcommittee, Rep. William Goodling of Pennsylvania, which was important both because any new principal-training bill would be referred first to the education subcommittee and because Goodling (as a former school teacher, principal, and administrator) was an expert on the subject. These two directives proved to be crucial for the future of LEAD, as did Petri's position on the Human Resources Subcommittee.

Designing the Proposal

My call to Bruce Hunter brought immediate results. A mounting body of recent research was reinforcing the earlier work by Ron Edmonds, Hunter reported. In particular, he cited two 1982 journal articles in *American Education*, Judith Little's "The Effective Principal" and Michael Cohen's "Effective Schools: Accumulating Research Findings." Based on this research, AASA had already decided to actively seek federal legislation aimed at helping to equip school administrators with better leadership skills. Such legislation had not been drafted, however, and no sponsor had been identified. Since Petri was the first member of Congress to express interest, Hunter offered to work together on the project. Soon he was in my office for the first of many meetings during which we hammered out the details of the LEAD proposal. Most of those meetings occurred during the Congressional recess from November of 1983 to January of 1984.

We were not working in isolation. Hunter brought in experts from around the country and Petri kept abreast of developments by attending some meetings. Petri's legislative director, Joe Flader, offered regular advice of a practical nature. Drafts were sent for comment to Dr. Herbert Grover, Wisconsin's able Superintendent of Public Instruction. Further, we were fortunate to have the technical skill of Steve Cope, an experienced bill drafter from the office of Legislative Council, in crafting details of the legislation.

Most important of all, however, two other congressional staffers became regular participants in the drafting meetings. When I discussed the project with Rep. Goodling, he took an immediate interest and assigned his best education aide, Dr. Richard DiEugenio to help out. Rich had

worked closely with both Goodling and education committee chairman Carl Perkins for years, and knew the ins-and-outs of Congressional education policy as well as anyone. Also, shortly after I called Hunter, he received a second unsolicited call from Capitol Hill. Senator John Chafee of Rhode Island had become interested in improving principal training after reading a recent report by the task force on education for economic growth of the Education Commission of the States. That report concluded, "In study after study, it has been shown that one key determinant of excellence in public schooling is the leadership of the individual school principal. . . . Specifically, we urge that every state examine and improve its program for training school principals and aspiring principals."² Chafee wanted legislation to help in this effort, and soon his education aide David Griswold joined the team drafting the LEAD proposal.

The final product reflected the input of all these participants. The original bill, as introduced in early February of 1984, had two main parts. First, separate Regional Technical Assistance Centers would be set up in each of the country's ten federal regions. Each center would assist current and prospective school administrators from the region to assess and improve their leadership skills. The prescribed means of doing this included arranging internships from administrators in businesses and effective schools, making successful business executives and educators available to administrators, collecting and disseminating information on school leadership, and setting up model school administrators projects. Second, similar centers would be established in selected urban areas as Metropolitan Training Centers. Under the LEAD proposal, the federal government would provide up to half of the seed money for starting these centers under a competitively bid grant, and the winners would have to demonstrate a prospect for surviving beyond the six-year period of federal support. Hunter assured us that established projects proven to provide practical leadership skills to school administrators could easily secure continuing funding from foundations and businesses. The abbreviation "LEAD" was adopted by the drafters based on my suggestion, but the final version of the full title fitting that abbreviation was coined by Petri's witty administrative assistant, Gene Kussart.

Introducing the Bill

Petri and Goodling introduced the House version of LEAD as H.R.4775 on February 7, 1984. In remarks made when submitting the bill, Petri expressed his vision that the proposed "centers would become laboratories for training and research in effective school leadership. Seminars, internships, consultation, and a model administrator program would reach out to serve principals throughout the region—much like agricultural experiment stations reach out to serve the farmers." He concluded his remarks with the words, "Everyone is talking about excellence in education. This legislation is one step toward achieving that excellence in a cost-effective manner."³

A day later, Chafee introduced identical legislation in the Senate as S.2275. "We need leaders—those who unify and motivate both faculty and students—in every school building in the country," Chafee declared in offering the proposal. "Good administrative leadership is a key to good schools. The bill I am introducing today can help to improve the climate for learning in American schools without greatly expanding the federal role or unduly interfering with local prerogatives."⁴ The proposal was launched.

The initiators of LEAD promptly went to work garnering support for the legislation. Chafee was perhaps the most successful. He managed to secure three influential Senate

cosponsors for the bill, Appropriations Committee Chairman Mark Hatfield of Oregon and senior Democratic members of the education appropriations subcommittee Lawton Chiles of Florida and Ernest Hollings of South Carolina. Their support, especially that of Chiles and his effective education aide Carnie Hayes, proved invaluable in securing funding for LEAD after it was enacted. These four senators reintroduced the Senate version of LEAD as S.2512 on March 30th.⁵

Meanwhile, Petri and Goodling sent a letter to every member of the House urging them to cosponsor LEAD. The letter stated that "research shows that excellence in education as an expected norm, rather than as extraordinary example, can become a reality only if our schools are energized and guided by effective leaders. That is why we are enthused by this low-cost proposal providing for ten regional and several metropolitan centers that could serve as laboratories for improving, training, and sustaining effective school leadership."⁶ This letter, backed by the persistent lobbying efforts of AASA, secured the cosponsorship of a bipartisan group of six congressmen, including Democratic education committee member Dale Kildee of Michigan. My assistant on the committee staff, Paul McCann, assumed the task of investigating exactly what principal-training programs already existed around the country, and then informing them of the LEAD proposal. Particular attention was paid to programs in states with senators in leadership positions on the education committee, such as Utah where an excellent program was found.

During this period, other education groups also endorsed LEAD and began working with AASA to win its passage. The most help came from the National Association of Secondary School Principals, which saw LEAD as a means for furthering its program of leadership assessment. The powerful NEA took a moderately supportive position on LEAD, which avoided a potential roadblock to passage. But it was mostly through the efforts of local school administrators mobilized by AASA that legislators became familiar and comfortable with LEAD during the Spring and Summer of 1984.

Enacting the Law

Despite these efforts, prospects for passage of LEAD did not look good by Autumn. True, few new programs are enacted on the first try—but it was still disappointing. It was an election year, and the 98th Congress was racing toward final adjournment. We would have to start over with a new bill in a new Congress during 1985. The problem had been that most new legislative programs do not actually pass as free-standing bills, but as amendments to broader legislation dealing with the subject—and differences in philosophy between the Democratic-dominated House and Republican-controlled Senate had stalled most major education bills, including ADEA. Only one likely vehicle remained, legislation needed to continue the popular Head Start program. Such legislation had already passed the House, but was bottled up in the Senate over fears of what might be added to it. Petri had not been able to consider attaching LEAD to the Head Start bill in his subcommittee because of House subcommittee jurisdictional rules, but no such rules limited the Senate or any subsequent House action on the Senate version of the bill—and Petri would be the Republican manager of the legislation if it returned to the House.

The Senate deadlock over the Head Start bill finally broke in a grand election-year compromise late in the night of October 4th. The chairman of the Senate's education committee, Orrin Hatch of Utah, joined with a bipartisan co-

alition of ten senators in offering substitute legislation replacing the narrow, committee-passed version of S.2565 (which would continue three popular programs, including Head Start) with a broad version initiating or continuing ten programs. Politicians have a name for such a bill: it's called an election-year "Christmas Tree" with presents for everyone. Republican senate education-committee member Dan Quayle got a Center for Excellence in Education for Bloomington, Indiana. Democratic Senate leader Robert Byrd added his Federal Merit Scholarship program. Republican Senate education-committee member Robert Stafford added reauthorization of the Follow Through program that serves his state of Vermont. House Democratic education-committee members got a new scholarship program named for their recently deceased chairman, Carl Perkins.⁷

Chafee and Chiles were standing in line with LEAD. Chafee aide David Griswold was out-of-town on election-year business and the House had quit for the day hours earlier, but I was available on short notice from my Capitol Hill apartment. Hatch had been softened up for accepting LEAD by the effective program in his own state—but that program, and others in the home states of the senators negotiating the compromise, would likely benefit only if a LEAD center was funded for each state. The original scheme of regional and metropolitan centers was quickly dropped for state centers—and the deal was struck. Petri opposed the principle of Christmas-tree lawmaking, but agreed to the deal on the basis that, if others were getting their pet projects, then a good program like LEAD should be added as well. All that remained was for House and Senate education staffers to work out the language of the compromise bill within the confines of the general agreement.

The final version of LEAD closely tracked the original proposal. The mission of each center remained the same, but now each would serve a single state and the funding would be split more ways. The \$1.5 million price tag for each regional center was reduced to a minimum of \$150,000 for each state center. Stafford's experienced education aide, Polly Gault, added new language requiring that LEAD centers place "particular emphasis upon increasing access for minorities and women to administrative positions."⁸ LEAD passed the Senate as part of the compromise package on an unrecorded voice vote sometime in the night of October 4th.

This comprehensive legislation, known as the Human Services Reauthorization Act, reached the House for final passage on October 9th, a scant three days before adjournment. Petri acted as Republican floor manager for the bill.

"Perhaps the best new program added to this bill is a revised LEAD Act," he told his colleagues during floor debate. "The measure provides Federal seed money to start—or expand—a nationwide network of LEAD academics where school administrators can receive continuing education in the latest leadership and management techniques drawn from business executives, expert educators, and the military. I know of no more cost-effective way to improve the quality of public education than this modest investment in principal education."⁹ Rep. Goodling then added, "The LEAD program is necessary because we always spend so much time doing a lot of things for teachers but we never do anything about the leaders, and the leaders are the principals."¹⁰

The Human Services Reauthorization Act, including the revised LEAD program, sailed through the House by a margin of 376 to 6. Unquestionably, the vote reflected support for Head Start more than any verdict on LEAD. Yet LEAD had gained enough well-placed supporters (and not attracted any significant opponents) to be appended to a "must-pass" piece of legislation in the waning hours of the session when countless other proposals were left off. Following House passage, the measure went to President Reagan—who signed it into law on October 30, 1984, exactly one week before his own reelection. LEAD had become law only a year after the idea for it was first conceived by Petri, Chafee, and AASA. Clearly, the time was ripe for that idea.

Notes

1. *Congressional Record*, vol. 130, p. E349 (Feb. 7, 1984).
2. *Congressional Record*, vol. 130, p. S1183 (Feb. 8, 1984).
3. *Congressional Record*, vol. 130, p. E349 (Feb. 7, 1984).
4. *Congressional Record*, vol. 130, pp. S1182-83 (Feb. 8, 1984).
5. *Congressional Record*, vol. 130, pp. S3528-29 (March 30, 1984).
6. Thomas E. Petri and William F. Goodling to Dear Colleague, Feb. 23, 1984.
7. *Congressional Record*, vol. 130, pp. S13550-58 (Oct. 4, 1984).
8. *Ibid.*, p. S13557.
9. *Congressional Record*, vol. 130, p. H11645 (Oct. 9, 1984).
10. *Congressional Record*, vol. 130, p. H11649 (Oct. 9, 1984).