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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I have approved S. 2657, the Education Amendments of 1976. I have done so with some reluctance because parts of the legislation are unwise and others contain authorization levels which we cannot realistically expect to meet. I have signed the legislation, however, because of the positive elements it contains and because most of its worst elements are readily susceptible to corrective legislation in the next session of Congress.

S. 2657 makes a number of positive changes to our education laws. I applaud the steps taken toward program consolidation in the Vocational Education Amendments. This is fully consistent with my broader effort to achieve consolidation of educational programs. I hope the incentives provided in this bill to increase State participation in the Guaranteed Student Loan program will fulfill their potential, and that the experimental program which consolidates at the State level, the student application process of the Federal Basic Educational Opportunity Grant program with that of similar State grant programs will demonstrate the merit of returning such responsibilities to the State and local level.

Numerous Administration initiatives designed to curb fraud and abuse in student assistance programs, particularly the Guaranteed Student Loan program, were adopted. Other needed Administration recommendations to reduce sex-stereotyping in vocational education programs were also adopted.

However, I particularly regret the inclusion of the so-called trigger mechanism which operates to divert funds from student assistance to clearly undesirable forms of institutional assistance, which the Congress itself has not recently funded in a substantial way.

In raising the maximum Basic Educational Opportunity Grant from \$1400 to \$1800, effective in the 1978-79 school year, the Congress may well have continued its penchant for promising more than we can responsibly provide. I am committed to the basic grant program, but I could not at this time reasonably expect that in two years we could fully fund this program at the new level.

There are other features in the bill which, I believe, are objectionable and which should be changed.

Although it is generally the practice of Congress to consider and pass major educational legislation only when the previous authorizing legislation terminates, I would ask that such not be the case with this legislation. S. 2657 has serious deficiencies. I intend to forward to the first session of the 95th Congress for their consideration and action major revisions to this bill, especially in the area of higher education, and I ask the support of those who participated in the development of S. 2657 to assist in its improvement.

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