Green Schools Don't Make the Grade

Congress Prepares to Spend Billions for Green Schools But Data Doesn't Add Up

Dallas (Vocus) August 6, 2008 - As schools across the country prepare for a new academic year, Congress is considering spending $20 billion to support "green" school programs that have not been proven to work, according to a new report by the National Center for Policy Analysis.

Some states, including the state of Washington, have already implemented laws intended to help public schools meet "green" environmental standards. Now the U.S. House of Representatives has passed legislation that would pour even more money into programs that would include water and energy efficiency, the use of green or recycled materials, appliances and fixtures, and a focus on indoor air quality.

"The data just isn't there," said NCPA Senior Fellow H. Sterling Burnett. "And even where data exists, the program's lofty goals and promises aren't being met."

The NCPA analysis focuses on green school legislation that was passed in the state of Washington in 2005. Supporters claimed schools would save 30-to-50 percent a year in energy costs and reduce absenteeism 10 percent by improving student health. Advocates also claimed that the natural lighting and other features of the schools would increase student test scores.

However, the NCPA report concludes that those claims have not been met:
- In no case were any of the "green" schools the most energy efficient in the district.
- In no case were energy costs for a "green" school 30 percent less than at comparable schools, as supporters had projected. In fact, at three "green" schools, energy costs were at least 25 percent higher than the most-efficient "non-green" school in the same district.
- In Spokane, where there are three new green schools, the average absentee rate is slightly higher than the rate for the district as a whole.
- "Promises for 'green' standard schools were too good to be true," said Todd Myers, NCPA E-Team adjunct scholar and author of the study. "Supporters over-promised and under-delivered."

There is very little data regarding "green" school programs. Myers said Congress should be skeptical of projected claims of green schools before they put their final stamp on a plan to spend billions of dollars to meet these new standards. Based on the available evidence, it appears highly doubtful that federal funds being spent to construct "green" schools will meet any of stated goals.

For more information or to access the NCPA's study on green schools, log on to www.ncpa.org.

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