

Delaware delegates deliver good news- Cape Gazette

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Delaware schools will be getting a healthy share of federal funding this year, thanks to the efforts of its congressional delegation.

Sen. Joe Biden both had a major role in the creation of the \$26.5 billion Elementary and Secondary Education Reauthorization Act, which passed a final Senate vote, Dec. 18. The bill was approved by an 87-10 vote and goes to the president to be signed into law.

The bill provides an \$8 billion increase over last year and approximately \$4 billion more than President George W. Bush requested.

Biden played a major role, too, when he cosponsored a provision in the bill to help schools recruit and retain high quality teachers. Biden's provision calls for competitive grants to state education agencies, high-need school districts, private organizations and universities for developing programs that would attract highly qualified teachers. Such programs would provide scholarships, stipends, bonuses or other financial incentives up to \$5,000 to attract people to the teaching profession. The final bill allots \$150 million to carry out that provision.

"Nearly one quarter of Delaware's public school teachers will be eligible for retirement within the next four to five years," noted Biden. "We have to get ahead of the curve and start aggressively recruiting talented, topnotch professionals to teach in our schools and we have to work harder to keep them there by offering scholarships, bonuses and the resources they need to get the job done."

Rep. Mike Castle, who chairs the House Education Reform Subcommittee, noted that Delaware will receive \$78 million in federal education funding for grades K-12, to help implement the reforms required in the No Child Left Behind Act, which will also be signed into law early next year.

The first piece of legislation Sen. Tom Carper introduced as a senator was an important part of the final No Child Left Behind bill, providing \$350 million for the expansion of public school choice and encouraging the growth of charter schools. Delaware would net \$15 million in new federal education funding from that part of the annual Elementary and Secondary Education Reauthorization Act.

"We are involved in a struggle to raise student achievement so when a student graduates from high school or college they can read, write, think, use computers and their diploma actually means something," Carper said.

Castle, who oversees K-12 education matters in his House subcommittee, requested the Congressional Research Service to estimate the funding Delaware will receive to help implement reforms in the No Child Left Behind bill. He reports the state will receive \$28.4 million in Title I funding, an increase of \$6.24 million. Cape Henlopen School District will receive \$735,800, an increase of \$139,000 over last year.

Delaware will receive \$13.6 million for Title II funding to help attract new teachers and train existing teachers. The state will also receive \$20.34 million in grants under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. More money will be allotted to bilingual education, reading and math assessments, keeping kids safe, learning after school,

ensuring schools are safe, technology, and the ability to compete for more grant funding under the Early Reading First program and programs that provide training from teachers.