

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-4906

6TH DISTRICT OFFICES:  
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March 29, 2007

Secretary Margaret Spellings  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Spellings:

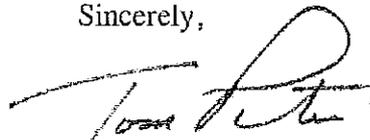
I write to share my concerns regarding the management of the recent Early Reading First (ERF) 2007 competition and its consequences for the Wisconsin Sixth Congressional District. Although the competition deadline has since passed, I hope that you will agree that the fair oversight of competitive grants is of utmost importance in the future.

As you will see in the enclosed letter, when the Department of Education originally announced ERF grant eligibility on January 22, 2007, six school districts in my Congressional District, including Appleton, Beaver Dam, Fond du Lac, Neenah, Manitowoc, and Oshkosh, were mistakenly not included on the list of eligible districts. Following the original application deadline of February 21, the Department issued a modification on March 7 announcing an error on the list of eligible districts and subsequently reopened the competition until March 23, a mere two weeks later.

While the abbreviated timeframe put these affected districts at a competitive disadvantage, this disadvantage was further exacerbated by the fact that all other districts were also granted an extension until March 23 to revise and improve their original applications. Ultimately, the six school districts that I represent chose not to apply given the short deadline and the confusion surrounding the competition. Although my staff contacted the Department upon learning of this development on March 21, 22, and 23, officials notified them that they were unwilling to consider any changes to the March 23 deadline for affected districts.

I was troubled when I learned of these recent developments, and I thought that you should be aware of the management of this ERF competition. I would appreciate a report on the implementation of this competition and whether you believe the affected school districts were given a fair opportunity to compete given the abbreviated timeframe. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Thomas E. Petri  
Member of Congress



# Cooperative Educational Service Agency 6

Joan Wade, Administrator  
P.O. Box 2568 • Oshkosh, WI 54903-2568 • Located at 2300 State Rd. #1  
(920) 233-CESA • Fax (920) 424-3473  
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Serving the School Districts of March 13, 2007

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- Hartford  
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Kimberly  
Little Chute  
Lomira  
Manawa  
Markesan  
Mayville  
Menasha  
Neenah  
New London  
North Fond du Lac  
Oakfield  
Omro  
Oshkosh  
Ripon  
Rosendale-  
Brandon  
Shiocton  
Slinger  
Waupun  
West Bend  
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Fremont  
Winneconne

Congressman Thomas E. Petri  
490 W. Rolling Meadows Drive  
Suite B  
Fond du Lac, WI 54937

Congressman Petri:

On Jan. 22<sup>nd</sup> of this year, the DOE published a notice inviting applications for the Early Reading First (ERF) 2007 competition, with a deadline of February 21st for pre-applications, which is a 28-day application preparation period. Eligibility for this program was determined from a list provided on the DOE website. Subsequently, on March 7<sup>th</sup>, the DOE issued a modification re-opening the pre-application phase for all eligible Local Education Agencies (LEA's), because the original eligibility list erroneously contained the names of some ineligible LEA's and omitted a number of eligible LEA's.

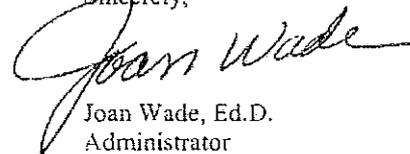
The new due date for pre-application submission is March 23rd, which is a short 17 days for those eligible applicants who were previously deemed ineligible. This short application window seems quite inequitable when compared to the time allotted to the applicants named on the original eligibility list. In addition, this extension period is re-opened to all eligible applicants, not just the newly eligible applicants, which gives additional preparation time to the original eligible applicants, for a re-vamped application, or for re-submission of a late entry

Given the current emphasis on early intervention and preparation for all students, and especially those learners needing improved access and resources, I am concerned that districts in CESA 6 may have missed a prime opportunity to expand and enhance the learning and achievement potential for their students. Affected districts include Appleton, Beaver Dam, Fond du Lac, Herman, Menasha, Neenah, and Oshkosh.

ERF grant proposals constitute a major undertaking for a district, in terms of time, personnel, and money needed to plan and implement a project spanning up to 5 years and involving millions of dollars in district and federal funds. The normal application period for submitting grant proposals is short enough as it is, often making it necessary for potential applicants to begin planning well in advance of the application period without knowing if a grant program will be funded in the coming budget period, or if the district will even be an eligible applicant. It is even more discouraging and, more importantly, a denial of equal access to educational opportunity when a school district is expected to compete on an unequal basis with other applicants, as a result of errors over which it had no control.

I am asking you to consider this request to investigate these circumstances and to provide an equitable opportunity for all eligible Early Reading First applicants to take full advantage of the potential benefits of this educational grant program.

Sincerely,

  
Joan Wade, Ed.D.  
Administrator

*Hi Everyone!  
I hope you can  
look into this grant  
program as this  
really is probabably  
for us!  
Thanks for  
your help!*

MAR 14 2007

MAR 20 2007