

Randolph Field Independent School District
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Good morning Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Shelby, and Members of the Committee. My name is Billy Walker and I am the superintendent of Randolph Field Independent School District and Executive Director of the Texas Association of Federally Impacted Schools (TAFIS).

I would like to take a moment of personal privilege to thank Senator Harkin for his support of Project SOAR. We had the privilege at Randolph Field ISD to pilot SOAR at Home and SOAR at School in 2007 - 2008.

Randolph Field is a public school district located wholly on Randolph Air Force Base in the San Antonio, Texas area. Our student body is made up of children of active duty members from all branches of our military. We have about 1,200 students, 600 at the elementary campus and 600 at the secondary campus. The demographic makeup of our student body reflects very closely the make up of the military in general, 9% of our students are economically disadvantaged, and since our students come from military families our real annual mobility rate is approximately 30%.

My team will tell you that my expectation for everyone in our district is to ensure that each student learns more, and at higher levels, every day. Our district is a prime example of high expectations and hard work paying off in excellent results in most any assessment one might make of us.

Approximately half of our funding comes from Texas through the normal state funding mechanism and the remaining half comes from the U.S. Department of Education through Title I, IDEA, and Impact Aid (FY 2012 total: \$6,102,297, FY 2013 total: \$5,554,019). While Impact Aid is the lifeblood for our district, Title I and IDEA are important programs to school districts nationwide. (The net for our district to provide all services as mandated for special needs students is a negative \$210,507 for FY 2012.) As one of the seven coterminous districts in the nation, the boundaries of the base comprise the boundaries of our district, meaning our school district doesn't have a local tax base. Impact Aid replaces the lost local revenue due to the federal presence. For example, our district uses Impact Aid funding in lieu of the tax dollars that would normally be raised locally to ensure a comprehensive academic, co-curricular, and extra-curricular program, provide salary and benefits for our employees, handle facility needs, operate our transportation, custodial and school nutrition departments, and fill in the gaps left to the district due to less than full IDEA funding at the federal level.

The threat of sequestration takes the complex and difficult situation of school funding, both in America and in my state of Texas, to unprecedented levels. We started the work of reducing our budget some three years ago as fiscal experts at both levels of government projected significant reductions in the near future. At the state level, Texas reduced K-12 funding by some \$5 billion over the current biennium. This resulted in a reduction in state funding of approximately 10% over two years [2011 - 2012 (5%) and 2012 - 2013 (5%)]. Earlier this spring, the Texas Education Agency notified school districts that the state would be withholding 10% of funding because of sequestration. We are certainly not alone: The most recent report in the American Association of School Administrator's Economic Impact Series found that 71.2% of school districts reported a reduction in state/local revenues between the 2010 - 2011 and 2011 - 2012 school years, and 57% anticipate a decrease for the 2012 - 2013 school year.

As we were looking to the future, my leadership team, board, staff and I diligently reviewed all personnel, programs, and expenditures to make reductions to balance the budget for the 2012 - 2013 school year. Based on my experiences with delayed Impact Aid funding and the uncertainty of the appropriations process, I ultimately insisted that the sequester reduction be built into the budget. We've done our best to prepare for the cuts, and I could not in good conscience mortgage the fiscal future of our district with obligations that we would most likely not be able to sustain. To reach a balanced budget we made the following reductions:

At the campus level –

Eliminated: elementary reading specialist and librarian; middle school reading specialist and secretary; secondary English teacher, science teacher, math teacher, and the 1:1 lap top initiative; the baseball, cross country, and swimming programs.

At the district level –

Faculty, staff, and administration did not receive a traditional pay raise for the 2011 - 2012 or 2012 - 2013 school years. Eliminated: one custodian and the custodial supervisor; one staff member from the curriculum department; facility planner/coordinator position; one technology department staff member. Additionally, we are considering not taking the band, cheerleaders, and dance team to away football games, and eliminating field-based excursions for all students during the 2012 - 2013 academic year.

In the 2011 - 2012 fiscal year our school district experienced a 5% reduction in IDEA funding and a 17% reduction in Title 1 Part A revenue. Sequestration will exacerbate the ongoing issues surrounding the critical issue of funding required to fulfill the educational obligations of children with special needs. While these programs don't comprise the majority of federal funding for Randolph, superintendents nationwide are deeply concerned about the impact that cuts to these and other federal education programs will have on schools, programs, and students. Our level of Impact Aid revenue was reduced, by approximately 5% for the 2011 - 2012 year and we anticipate an additional reduction of 7% to 8% for the 2012 - 2013 academic year.

To make matters worse, Impact Aid is the only current-year funded education program, which means on January 2, 2013 Impact Aid will sustain an immediate cut of over \$100 million dollars. If by the October 1st start of the fiscal year Congress hasn't authorized full-year spending, initial payments to Impact Aid districts could be as low as 50%. This is significantly lower than many districts require to operate effectively, meaning school districts must either have a fund balance capable of sustaining the district until their Impact Aid payment arrives, or they must borrow the funds needed to ensure the continued operation of the district. No matter what happens the children will be at school as scheduled.

Today, I'm concerned about the law's long-term implications. If sequestration is truly a 10-year project, the devastating budget cuts may force us to close our doors.

Unfunded mandates have always complicated our work. Now, with the advent of further significant reductions in revenue, the dream of a high quality education for all becomes a dream unfulfilled; programs that provide opportunities for children to discover their passion in life languish on the shelf; and children - including those who know only war and whose parents have honorably served our country for over a decade - are the ultimate lifelong losers in a game that should give them all they need to be successful, productive citizens. The concept of doing more with less is admirable, but there comes a time when there is not enough left to adequately and equitably educate the children of America.

Policymakers must do everything in their power to ensure that each child in this great nation has the opportunity to learn more, and at higher levels, every day.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my school district's story. I look forward to answering any questions.