April 4, 2008

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, and Education
Senate Appropriations Committee
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor
Health and Human Services, and Education
Senate Appropriations Committee
156 Dirksen Senate Office Building

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Specter:

We ask that you demonstrate a renewed commitment to fund the Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act for fiscal year 2009. If the United States is to remain competitive globally, we must challenge our best and brightest students to reach their full potential. Therefore, it is vitally important to reinvigorate and expand the only federal program currently dedicated to increasing our knowledge about, and ability to meet, the unique learning needs of gifted and talented students. Despite the importance of education and advanced learning to global competitiveness, the Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education program has never received the funding support necessary to reach its full potential to focus nationwide attention to this critical population of students. In fact, it has even faced cuts in recent years.

While a significant increase in funding for the Javits Act will ultimately be necessary to fully achieve the goal of expanding the availability of gifted and talented services to students in every state, for fiscal year 2009, we are only asking that you provide $11.25 million for the program. This would restore Javits to its pre-2003 level, before a series of across-the-board cuts eroded the program’s reach.

The availability and quality of gifted and talented services for students varies widely between states and school districts. This establishes a real need for federal support, especially in the areas of research and dissemination of best practices. Although relatively small, the Javits Act positively impacts the education of gifted and talented students in every state in both these ways through the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented and through competitive research and capacity-building grants. Most importantly, the Act focuses on disadvantaged gifted students who often go unnoticed and unserved in gifted programs. Many of the gifted education curriculum and instructional strategies have shown promising results. We should do more, not less, to pursue these strategies.

Congress must renew its commitment to the goal of expanding access to educational services for gifted children nationwide so that all gifted and talented students are able to realize their full potential. Again, we ask that you provide $11.25 million for the Javits Act for fiscal year 2009.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.
Sincerely,

Chuck Grassley
Dick Durbin
Jim Beeson
Frank R. Lautenberg
Rene Feingold
Jay Rockefeller
H.R. Min
Zoe Lofgren

Chris Dodd
Chuck Schumer
Robert Menendez
Dick Lugar
Bob Casey
Ken Salazar
Joe Lieber
Maria Cantwell