

# Symms lists guidelines to better nation's schools

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Sen. Steve Symms backs President Reagan in not giving schools more funding but says instead an upgrading is needed.

"Local and state school bodies must be allowed to adopt programs that are best for them, he said. "That is why I think the money should be better spent if left at home or sent directly to the classroom in the form of block grants."

In his weekly report from Washington, Symms observes "President Reagan is taking more and more heat from the Democratic presidential contenders for opposing their call for massive and unconditional expenditures on our education system."

He then said "if someone could guarantee that all this money the candidates want to spend would really improve our school systems and help deserving teachers, I would be the first to vote 'yea'."

He said all observers agree "that the quality of education — once the pride of the nation — is becoming a national embarrassment."

He remarked that high school graduates today score almost 40 points below their 1963 counterparts on standard mathematics tests, and 50 points lower on verbal tests.

He added America is falling behind other industrial nations and costing this nation jobs.

He endorsed merit pay "for hard-

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working and capable teachers."

"I am not of a mind to cut back on our commitment to education but I have to say that President Reagan is right when he says that more money is not the answer," says Symms. "What we need is a new approach — a return to tried and true educational methods."

He contended the record of the federal government is one for more bureaucracy and more useless programs.

"The net results," he said, "is the people on the banks of the Potomac are telling the people on the banks of the Snake River how to run their schools."

He said the "programs of education should be set at the level closest to the student, not in Washington where money gets lost with administrators, program allocators and a lot of other people who dream up ways to spend money."

Other positive steps that can be taken, he said, include return to the basics of English, mathematics and the sciences in teachers college; offering bonuses and special incentives for those who teach the substantive courses; merit pay for teachers free of politics and favoritism; performances to ensure that students have mastered basic skills by requiring consistent and regular testing for every grade level; and following standards that underscore the need for schools and classrooms to again be ruled by discipline and academic order.