

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was passed by Congress over three decades ago and included a promise that the federal government would pay forty percent of the cost to provide students access to special education. While this mandate has been carried out in school districts across America, federal funding has failed to live up to that pledge and the ever-increasing cost of special education continues to be passed on to state and local governments.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) included a short-term boost in funding for special education, though even with this increase the federal government remains well short of the commitment set forth in IDEA. Rather than tie up limited federal funds on dozens of new or failing education programs, Congress must build on the increased special education funding contained in ARRA to fulfill our share of this education mandate.

State and local governments across the country are facing tight budgets and difficult spending decisions compounded by the unfunded mandate of IDEA. The time is now for Congress to fully fund its share of special education.

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