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**CAPE member organizations:**

Agudath Israel of America  
American Montessori Society  
Association Montessori International-USA  
Association of Christian Teachers and Schools  
Association of Christian Schools International  
Association of Waldorf Schools of N.A.  
Christian Schools International  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Friends Council on Education  
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod  
National Association of Episcopal Schools  
National Association of Independent Schools  
National Catholic Educational Association  
National Christian School Association  
Oral Roberts University Educational Fellowship  
Seventh-day Adventist Board of Education  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Schools  
32 Affiliated State Organizations

January 16, 2009

Members of the United States Congress:

The Council for American Private Education (CAPE), representing 18 major national organizations (listed left) and 32 state affiliates, urges Congress to include religious and independent elementary and secondary schools in the school component of the forthcoming economic recovery package.

Last month, President-elect Obama said the recovery plan will include "the most sweeping effort to modernize and upgrade school buildings that this country has ever seen." He pledged funds to "repair broken schools, make them energy-efficient, and put new computers in our classrooms."

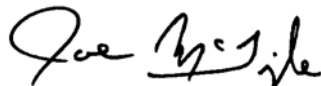
There are several compelling reasons for including religious and independent schools in the recovery package. First, efforts to improve educational technology and the school environment should extend to all of America's children, regardless of the type of school they attend. For good reasons, this principle will be applied without question to the post-secondary component of the package; for the same reasons, it should be applied to the PK-12 component. Second, the economic stimulus effect of a particular expenditure is not dependent on the public or private control of the participating institution. Expenditures on private universities, for example, will have identical stimulative effects as expenditures on public universities. Third, there is a particular national interest in preserving private elementary and secondary schools in that their closing (as has been the case, unfortunately, with many urban religious schools) presents an added financial burden on already hard-pressed public schools. (Private K-12 schools currently save taxpayers an estimated \$48 billion annually, enroll over five million students, and employ 425,000 full-time equivalent teachers.) Fourth, there are important precedents for including the private school community in programs relating to school buildings, educational technology, and teacher training, including the following:

- *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965)*: In its current version, Title V-A authorizes federal assistance for the acquisition of library resources, instructional materials, and educational equipment; Title II-D provides assistance for acquiring and using educational technology; and Title II-A provides assistance for teacher training and professional development.
- *National Energy Conservation Policy Act (1978)*: Established energy conservation grants to schools to make them more energy efficient.
- *Asbestos School Hazard Abatement Act (1984)*: Directed the EPA to provide financial assistance to schools for asbestos abatement projects.
- *Telecommunications Act (1996)*: Provides discount "E-rates" on advanced telecommunications services for schools, including high-speed Internet service, routers, hubs, and network file servers.
- *Hurricane Education Recovery Act (2005)*: Provided start-up aid to schools damaged by the Gulf Coast hurricanes.

Congress did the right thing by extending the benefits of these statutes to students and teachers in both public and private schools. We hope it will do the right thing when fashioning the school component of the stimulus package.

In unveiling parts of his broad economic recovery plan, President-elect Obama said that "to help our children compete in a 21st century economy, we need to send them to 21st century schools." We urge Congress to take that call to heart and to apply it equitably to all children and all schools.

Sincerely,



Joe McTighe  
Executive Director