

Minnesota's 4th District E-Report!

Congresswoman Betty McCollum

"Serving Minnesota's Families"



SEPTEMBER 19, 2003

Hot News!

McCollum Salutes Minnesota Public Schools

Rep. Betty McCollum visited a 4th grade class at Birch Lake Elementary School in White Bear Lake this week to highlight the school's record of achievement. In July, State Education Commissioner Cheri Pierson Yecke erroneously placed Birch Lake School and the White Bear Lake School District on her list of failing schools. The school was later de-listed, but there is a concern that students and families may still be confused by the Department of Education mistake.

"Our children's ability to be successful in their schools should not hinge on an arbitrary rating system that fails to account for the many ways that schools improve education – especially when there are serious flaws in the evaluation. Rather than penalizing schools, we need to look for ways to build on a school's achievement," continued McCollum.

"America has been made great by excellent public schools like Birch Lake, and we cannot afford to step back from our success. Nothing is more important to our families, our communities or our democracy than solid public education," said McCollum. "Unfortunately, the Education Department's in Washington and back home in Minnesota are focusing too much on what is wrong," said McCollum.

Minnesota students rate among the highest in national achievement rankings. In 2002, 4th graders in Minnesota ranked fifth in the nation in reading proficiency. In 1998-99, Minnesota had the second highest graduation rate in the nation. In 2000, Minnesota was ranked 3rd among states in the number of high school graduates. Minnesota students ACT college entrance exam scores are the second highest in the nation.

Nationally, one in four schools have failed to meet the rigid mandates of the President's No Child Left Behind standards. Further, the testing law is a mandate that lacks funding for local schools to meet the standards. The bill passed by the House is under-funded by \$6 billion.



Rep. Betty McCollum presented the flag to a 4th grade class at Birch Lake Elementary in White Bear Lake to congratulate the school on its academic success. Birch Lake has a detailed plan that assesses the progress of the school in addressing a rapidly changing population - including tutoring and an emphasis on reading. The school is currently showing the highest number of students with proficiency in reading and math for grades 3 and 5 in six years. McCollum is pictured with students as they fold the flag.

White Bear Lake Fire Department Receives Grant

Rep. Betty McCollum visited the White Bear Lake Fire Department this week and met with Fire Chief Tim Vadnais and Assistant Chief Ballis to discuss the departments homeland security. McCollum continues to work with East Metro first responders to identify their needs.

McCollum recently announced the White Bear Lake Fire Department had been awarded a \$73,125 grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Assistance to Firefighters Grant program. The one-year grant will allow the department to replace aging emergency breathing equipment and will equip 100% of firefighters. The department serves 45,000 people over a 26 square mile area in White Bear Lake and surrounding communities.

For more information on requesting help with grants, contact Rep. Betty McCollum's St. Paul office at (651) 224-9191, or access her website at: www.house.gov/mccollum/grant.html.

Contact Congresswoman Betty McCollum . . . www.house.gov/mccollum/contact.html

Washington Office: 1029 Longworth HOB, Washington, DC 20515 ♦ phone / (202) 225-6631 ♦ fax / (202) 225-1968

St. Paul Office: 165 Western Ave. N., #17, St. Paul, MN 55102 ♦ phone / (651) 224-9191 ♦ fax / (651) 224-3056