

Congressman Steny Hoyer threw a banquet Monday to honor Southern Maryland's teachers and administrators that were selected as the most distinguished educators from their county.

Each of the five Southern Maryland Counties of St. Mary's, Calvert, Charles, Anne Arundel and Prince Georges were represented with their respective "Teacher of Year" winners present. Also recognized were two educators from each county that were chosen by the Washington Post as Outstanding Teachers and Distinguished Educational Leaders.

"Our society, I believe, unfortunately undervalues our educators," Hoyer said. "Anyone who is good in education is underpaid by a half to 3 or 4 times their value to society."

"In St. Mary's County we can't hire teachers that live in the county ... you can't afford an apartment in St. Mary's County on a teacher's salary."

Hoyer stressed his point by quoting a saying of Thomas Jefferson that reads: "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be."

Hoyer treated the group to lunch at Olive Garden in Waldorf and held a roundtable on education issues. Predictably, the issue of most concern is the flawed and under-funded No Child Left Behind Act.

"No Child Left Behind is a controversial issue across the country, but the concept is a good one," Hoyer said, adding that the proposal was on the table during the Clinton administration, but Republicans balked because schooling is supposed to be a locally driven issue.

Hoyer said President Bush's is proposing to cut overall education funding by 3.8 percent, and eliminate 42 education programs, including many critical to Maryland.

In addition, No Child Left Behind funding is \$15.4 billion short of the amount promised by Bush.

"His budget fails to keep the bipartisan promise of No Child Left Behind, the landmark education law that aimed to increase performance and accountability in all public schools," he said. "Education is not only for our children, it to see that our society moves forward."

One teacher on Monday said the program is flawed because a special education high school student needs to pass the same test as an honor's student. And another teacher said that if a teacher brings a student who is three grade levels behind in reading up two grade levels in one year, it is still looked at as a failure on the teacher's part.

The teachers who were selected as Teacher of the year were:

Julia Wolfe, St. Mary's County, Park Hall Elementary School;

Barbara Redgate, Calvert County, Patuxent High School;

Marie Henry, Charles County, Lackey High School;

Susan Casler, Anne Arundel County, Crofton Middle School;

And Denise Dunn, Prince Georges County, Deerfield Run Elementary School.

The following were awarded "Agnes Meyer Outstanding Teacher" awards by the Post:

Susan Houseman, St. Mary's County, Spring Ridge Middle School;

Charles Gauthier; Calvert County, Plum Point Middle School;

Georgianna Vicik Layton, Charles County, Matthew Henson Middle School

Jeffrey Tonini, Anne Arundel County, Broadneck High School;

And Shari Beth Sternberg, Prince Georges County, Hyattsville Elementary School.

The following school principals were awarded for Distinguished Educational Leadership by the Post:

Jill Snyder-Mills, St. Mary's County, Esperanza Middle School;

Anthony V. Navarro, Calvert County, Mount Harmony Elementary School;

Donald E. Cooke, Charles County, LaPlata High School

Sharon Morell, Anne Arundel County, Severna Park Middle School;

And Helena Nobles-Jones, Prince Georges County, Charles Herbert Flowers High School.

"I really do believe that what you do everyday is the most important think that is done for us," Hoyer said.