

Three years ago, on January 8, Democrats and Republicans joined together to pass the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act to give every American child the opportunity for a quality education. This bill was a bipartisan domestic policy success which incorporated Clinton-era educational reforms, including increased accountability for educators and students and higher academic standards, as well as more federal resources to achieve these goals.

In Maryland, I have been pleased and impressed with the work of all Maryland educators, under the leadership of Maryland Superintendent Nancy Grasmick, toward raising the educational achievement of all Maryland students.

Although our teachers and educators are dedicated to fulfilling NCLB's reforms, they confront mounting obstacles each year as President Bush and the Republican Congress continually shortchange the budget for NCLB. Without the additional promised resources, schools are having difficulty achieving the increased standards Congress and the President set for them.

Just last week, the Department of Education released a report that concludes that schools lag behind much of society in technology use and calls on states and school districts to embrace technology such as broadband Internet access, data systems and online courses. In order to make these improvements, however, schools need the essential resources for educational progress.

Despite reports like this and others describing what schools need to be successful, the Republican Congress refused to consider a Democratic bill to fully fund NCLB in 2005 and gave America's schools \$10 billion less than had been promised. As a result, thousands of schools across the country, including here in Maryland, are not able to afford critical services necessary to success, such as after-school programs, individual tutoring, and teacher training.

In Maryland, the bill fell several hundred million dollars short of what was promised for NCLB programs when President Bush signed the NCLB Act three years ago. This shortfall will prevent students in our state from getting the help with reading and math they were promised. And, over 18,600 will not be able to participate in programs that keep them safe and productive after school.

America will not remain the world's superpower if our children are not prepared to compete in

the global marketplace. Lawmakers from both parties came together to write this legislation, and we must come together once again to ensure that we are fulfilling its promises.

In 2003, Maryland became one of the first states in the nation to receive full approval for its plan to reach the goals set forth by No Child Left Behind Act -- that all children be "proficient" in reading and math by 2014 and that the state closes achievement gaps.

The good news is that on the whole, Maryland students are meeting the standards in both reading and math in the four grades tested in the Maryland State Assessment. However, some groups of students, such as special education and low-income students still have much progress to make. The willingness of students, teachers, and parents to work even harder to close the achievement gap is one key component of such progress; the commitment of elected officials to ensure that schools have the requisite resources to devote to students struggling to make the grade is another.

We still have much to do to truly ensure that no child in the State of Maryland is left behind. A clear commitment to making impressive and beneficial reform, which Maryland has already demonstrated, and the resources to achieve such reform will help. We must keep in mind the importance of investing in education, and making this investment a national priority so that the reality of No Child Left Behind can be fully realized.