

# WORD FROM WASHINGTON



## Getting Back To Work On Education Reform

(NAPSA)—In the months since Congress began debate on comprehensive education reform legislation, one school year has ended, another has begun and, still, no bill has been adopted. That void has left many people frustrated, particularly the leaders of The Business Roundtable (BRT).

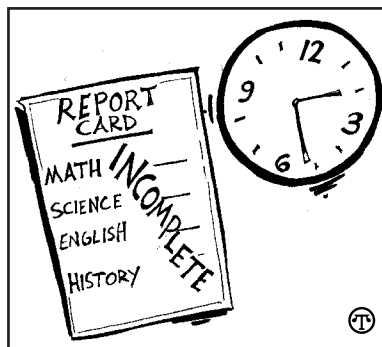
The BRT, an association of chief executive officers of leading corporations, is a long-time advocate of education reform based on high standards and accountability for results. It has also been one of Washington's most active supporters of legislation reflecting those principles.

"As business leaders, we're focused on the bottom line. It's time for all of us—business leaders, educators, parents and policymakers—to focus relentlessly on education's bottom line—student achievement," says Edward B. Rust, Jr., Chairman and CEO of the State Farm Insurance Companies and Chairman of the BRT's Education Task Force. "We are committed to education excellence and we'll continue to press Congress to enact meaningful legislation."

In January, with great fanfare, Congress began its work on education legislation, and by spring, bipartisan majorities in both the House and Senate had passed sweeping measures—but little has happened since then.

In July, the House and Senate bills were sent to a conference committee to reconcile their differences, which, according to Rust, will be a make-or-break step for the legislation.

"How Congressional conferees resolve their differences will determine whether the legislation provides meaningful reform, or whether it simply reinforces the



**Time is running out for Congress to enact meaningful education reform.**

status quo," he says.

For the legislation to be effective, the BRT and other business groups believe it must include:

- Annual statewide testing in reading and math in grades 3-8.
- State participation in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).
- Investments in quality teaching, particularly in math and science.
- Measurable performance goals that hold schools accountable for raising achievement for all groups of students.
- Targeted efforts to help low-performing students and schools.

"As a new group of students start school eager to learn, we must insist that Congress pass a strong bill and send it quickly to the President to sign," says BRT President John J. Castellani. "Student achievement continues to lag, and wide gaps in performance are putting thousands of children at a lifelong disadvantage. This is not just a problem, it's a looming tragedy."

For more information on the BRT and education reform, visit [www.brt.org](http://www.brt.org).