

Scott Jameson for U.S. Senate CEC Texas Voter Guide

1. Federal funding to support states and localities education programs for students with disabilities should be made a mandatory long-term budget commitment, one that matches the coverage requirements of IDEA. Annual reviews should be to make sure that the funding is properly adjusted for inflation and is growing in proportion to the number of students in the program, not to go back over the basic funding issues again and again. Parts D, B and C must all be fully funded to the levels required under IDEA, and with minimal administrative and procedural overhead. Of course, there must be safeguards in any publicly funded program, but these safeguards must be based on best practice and Smart Government, not on maintaining beauracracies. The people of Texas must be made aware of the President's proposed budget cuts to these very important programs. I believe in honest and transparent government, and as the next U.S. Senator from Texas, I would make sure that the public is aware of the importance of these programs, and that the funding for them are headed in the wrong direction under the current administration and Congress. JAVITS program funding should be increased, not decreased or eliminated. The federal government budget is a catastrophe that requires new leadership to turn around - not by cutting funding to these critical programs for those most in need of our compassion and support to be able to have positive childhood experiences and bright futures.
2. In addition to proper compensation, it is important than special educators and their students have excellent, properly designed teaching facilities. It is not only good for morale, but it will help make sure that these students have the best experience and brightest future possible. I propose a quick and productive federal review of the current status of the buildings and classrooms in use for these students, compare this against what experts believe would be optimal, and then publish the results and recommendations. If the U.S. Congress as a whole is not willing to undertake this study, I would be willing for my office in the U.S. Senate to independently undertake working with educators, States, and localities to produce this report. Based on this and other studies, I would then introduce and support separate funding legislation to start moving towards best practice.
3. Many people believe that vouchers would lead to the collapse of public education not just for students with disabilities, but also for gifted students, and then for all other students. However, I believe that education tax dollars should follow the student. If a student's educational experience would be better at a facility and with teachers more suitable for their interests, aptitudes, and needs, then they should go to school at that facility. I believe the pressure to have all students in a community attend standardized public school facilities with standardized curriculums is based on the assumption that even without competition or market-driven innovations, that these schools can somehow provide the optimal learning experience for all students. We must right-size, not maximize the size of public school facilities, and make sure that capital improvement projects are based on proper, traditional construction, not temporary buildings.
4. I would introduce legislation to make funding of transportation and associated administrative costs for those eligible under Medicaid permanent. However, I believe that Medicaid and

Medicare are both legacy programs, that are highly unstable, and according to the GAO, scheduled for bankruptcy in six years due to fraud, mismanagement, and under-funding. GAO says that raising taxes or other tweaks will not save these programs, real policy decisions must be made, and made immediately. Therefore, tying the funding of education programs for children with disabilities to either of these unstable programs is unacceptable. The legislation I would introduce would be a separate, comprehensive and long-term funding solution to these transportation expenses, and also provide for long-term mandatory funding for all parts of IDEA.