

Congressman Lee Terry, representing the 2nd Congressional District in Nebraska, recently re-introduced bipartisan legislation to improve a program that helps school districts adjacent to federal lands, such as Bellevue Public Schools, pay for construction projects.

Terry's bill addresses the school construction funding portion of the Impact Aid program, which compensates schools affected by federal presence, such as military installations or Native American reservations. Since federal property is exempt from local property taxes, these schools lose a main source of revenue while educating large numbers of federal students.

Terry's bill is based on a plan supported by both Native American land groups and military school districts and would make the school construction program more equitable by ensuring that both types of schools receive a larger portion of construction dollars than under the current system. Less money would be sent to emergency construction grants and emergency funds would be mainly reserved for use by Native American schools.

This legislation would also help schools affected by Global Rebasing at the Department of Defense. Over the next four years, DOD estimates that 38,000 military children will be returning to schools due to the closing of overseas military bases.

Under Terry's bill, schools experiencing a 10 percent increase in the number of military students would be allowed to apply for emergency Impact Aid construction grants.

