



State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

October 4, 2005

Senator Herbert Kohl
330 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-4903

Senator Russ Feingold
506 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-4904

Senators Kohl and Feingold:

I am concerned that the Federal Communication Commission's E-rate program is again in danger in Congress. Since its inception in 1998, Wisconsin schools and libraries have received an average of \$27.6 million annually in Internet and telecommunication discounts through the E-rate program. With the budgets of schools and localities stretched to the breaking point, the E-rate has proven extremely valuable in helping our schools and libraries build and support their telecommunications infrastructure and provide Internet access to students and patrons in our public libraries.

On Tuesday, October 5, the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation committee will hold a hearing on the E-rate that will focus on issues of waste and fraud in the program. While I too am very concerned about waste and abuse, most of this egregious activity is the result of applicants innocently caught up in the complex nature of the program and its convoluted application process. The vast majority of our schools and libraries that apply for the E-rate do so in an honest fashion.

Our schools and public libraries have come to depend on the E-rate and I ask for your support as the program is again coming under Congressional scrutiny.

Sincerely,

Libby Burmaster,
State Superintendent of Public Instruction