



UPDATES: Schools to see funds soon

By PRISCILLA CHAVEZ Scripps Howard News Service

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WASHINGTON - The Texas education chief is expecting stimulus funds to start flowing to school districts within the next 30 to 45 days.

"There will be points along the way where we will be getting more infusions of cash, but for the most part it will start within the next month or so," Texas Education Commissioner Robert Scott said.

Scott was in Washington last week with other school officials from across the country to meet with U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan and Vice President Joe Biden. They discussed funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, popularly known as the economic stimulus plan.

The Wichita Falls Independent School District stands to receive an estimated \$5.75 million for special education and teaching disadvantaged students, according to a Congressional Research Service report released by Strategic Partnerships Inc., a Texas consulting company.

The total for the state is a projected \$6.86 billion, according to Legislative Budget Board estimates released by the Texas Association of School Administrators.

Other stimulus funding will boost technology and education for the homeless and provide state stabilization funding in Texas.

Scott said federal officials talked about how passing the recovery bill is merely the first step. The next step is ensuring the funds are invested wisely.

The federal stimulus package calls for about \$77 billion in direct assistance to schools nationwide and \$25 billion that could be used for school construction with governors' approval, officials said.

"We will be looking at campuses that were impacted by Hurricane Ike and Hurricane Gustav, and there may be some other natural disasters that we need to address," Scott said.

At a meeting Wednesday at the White House with school administrators, Biden said he and Obama see education as one of the top priorities in the country.

Biden called Obama's White House an "education administration."

Washington is funneling hundreds of millions of dollars to school districts all over the nation, Biden said. But the money must be used "effectively" and "transparently."

"If we don't do this right, then the ride is over," Biden said. "If we do this well, we will not lack the

resources."

Scott said school officials would also need to work with the Legislature to establish state lawmakers and governor's priorities and work through the process.

Officials will monitor the stimulus funding closely, he said.

"We need to make sure that we pay absolute attention to detail in every aspect," Scott said.

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Stimulus education money

Estimated Texas totals for stimulus funding:

- * \$1.2 billion - education for the disadvantaged
- * \$1 billion - special education
- * \$58.1 million - education technology grants
- * \$3.5 million - education for homeless children
- * \$3.9 billion - state stabilization funds for education
- * \$700 million - amount of state stabilization funds that could be used for construction



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