March 4, 2005

Representative
Attn: Education Staff Member
House Office Building
Washington, D.C.  20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) - the preeminent leadership organization representing middle level and high school principals, assistant principals, and aspiring principals - I am writing to request your support for H.R. 366, the Vocational and Technical Education for the Future Act.

The Perkins programs serve more than 10 million Americans across the country, in comprehensive high schools, vocational-technical (vo-tech) high schools, area vo-tech centers, and in postsecondary institutions providing technical programs, such as community colleges, technical institutes, skills centers, and other public and private two and four-year colleges.

NASSP is pleased to see many of the changes made in provisions of the House bill. Secondary school principals agree with:

- Increasing academic rigor through the development of a model sequence of courses for vocational and technical content areas. In addition, increasing academic rigor through state plans that include rigorous and challenging academic and vocational content that leads to a postsecondary 1-year certificate, associates or bachelors degree or a proficiency credential in conjunction with a secondary school diploma.
- New accountability measures that will require recipients to:
  - Negotiate performance measures with the states and report progress in achieving these performance levels on an annual basis.
  - Negotiate adjusted levels of performance for the 1st and 2nd years, and then for the 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th years all at once.
  - Make continual and substantial improvement in the academic and vocational and technical achievement of vocational students.
  - Create an improvement plan based on the results of assessment, if they do not meet performance measures.
- Requiring recipients to report progress on a yearly basis.
- The creation of a new incentive program that will award performance grants to eligible agencies when a state exceeds its performance measures.
- The inclusion of comprehensive professional development funds that may be used for vocational and technical, academic, guidance and administrative personnel.
While many of the changes made in the legislation will positively affect the Perkins program and secondary schools, some of the changes may have drastic effects on how the program is carried out on an individual school basis. NASSP is concerned that if Title II, the Tech Prep program, is eliminated, it may increase the flexibility a state has to use the funds, but not an individual school principal’s flexibility to use funds as the needs of their school dictates.

Most importantly, the $1.3 billion authorization included in the legislation level funds the program for 2006. Perkins is the single largest federal investment in the nation’s high schools- level funding the program does not represent a federal commitment to high school students. NASSP requests that the House reconsider increasing the funding to $1.5 billion for 2006.

NASSP appreciates Congressman Castle’s leadership in improving education for our nation’s high schools students. We ask that you support H.R. 366 when it is brought to the floor for a vote.

Sincerely,

Gerald N. Tirozzi
Executive Director