



**NEWS RELEASE**  
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## **Fully Fund Afterschool Programs, Parents, Students, Educators, Concerned Americans Tell Congress**

*Afterschool Programs in Kansas, Pennsylvania, South Carolina,  
Nortel Networks & Time Warner, Inc. Honored at “Breakfast of Champions”*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Nearly 400 parents, children, educators and advocates from around the country traveled to Capitol Hill on Thursday to meet with more than 150 congressional leaders about afterschool funding. Advocates urged lawmakers to reject President Bush’s proposal to flat-fund the federal 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers afterschool initiative in Fiscal Year 2005, and provide the full \$2 billion authorized by the “No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.”

Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, the “Afterschool for All Challenge” kicked off with a *Breakfast of Champions*. Among those scheduled to speak at the event were Senators Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Sam Brownback (R-KS), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY), Elizabeth Dole (R-NC), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Patty Murray (D-WA), Rick Santorum (R-PA) and Debbie A. Stabenow (D-MI), and Representatives Dale Kildee (D-MI), Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Nita Lowey (D-NY) and Ralph Regula (R-OH).

“There are not nearly enough afterschool programs in this country to meet the need,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Judy Y. Samelson. “That is why hundreds of parents, students, educators, program directors and others have come to Congress to ask for full funding for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) initiative. We are asking Congress to fulfill the promise in the ‘No Child Left Behind Act of 2001’ by authorizing \$2 billion for afterschool programs next year. If we don’t increase afterschool funding, millions of children will miss out on programs that keep them safe and inspire them to learn, and countless working families won’t get the support that they need.”

At the *Breakfast of Champions*, Members of Congress joined the Afterschool Alliance in presenting Afterschool Champion Awards to three exemplary afterschool programs:

- Geary County Schools 21<sup>st</sup> Century Afterschool Program in Junction City, Kansas;
- Farrell and Sharon School District 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers C.O.O.L. (Children’s Opportunities for Outside Learning) Program in Farrell, Pennsylvania; and
- Richland County School District One After School Programs in Columbia, South Carolina.

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The Afterschool Alliance also presented Champion Awards to Time Warner, Inc. and Nortel Networks for their outstanding support for afterschool programs.

After the *Breakfast of Champions*, students, parents and educators delivered more than 40,000 paper light bulbs with messages about afterschool that were sent by children and parents from all across the country. The messages urge lawmakers to increase funding for the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC, the federal government's chief funding stream for afterschool. The light bulbs were created last October at *Lights On Afterschool!* events. *Lights On Afterschool!*, the Afterschool Alliance's annual rally for afterschool, is set for October 14 this year.

President Bush's budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2005 calls for flat-funding the federal afterschool grant program at \$1 billion for the fourth year in a row. In the "No Child Left Behind Act," Congress authorized \$2 billion for the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC for Fiscal Year 2005. The current appropriation would provide afterschool care for 1.4 million children, instead of the 2.8 million children called for in that landmark legislation. In December 2003, a bipartisan group of all 14 Senate women sent a joint letter to President Bush urging him to provide enough funding to allow the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC to grow in the next fiscal year.

The *Breakfast of Champions* was held the day after the Alliance released the first-ever household survey exploring what America's children do after school. *America After 3 PM* found that just 6.5 million youth in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade are in afterschool programs. Ninety-one percent of parents with children in afterschool programs are extremely or somewhat satisfied with the program their child attends. The JCPenney Afterschool Fund provided funding for the survey, and JCPenney Afterschool Fund Chair Gary Davis spoke at the *Breakfast*. "While we've known for some time that the demand for afterschool far exceeds supply, this new data shows that the parents of more than 15 million kids say that their children would participate in an afterschool program if one were available in the community," Davis said. "This is the best evidence yet that we need more afterschool programs."

The Alliance also unveiled Afterschool for All: Project 2010, a new united national voice in support of afterschool programs. Supported in part by the Open Society Institute, this unprecedented new initiative already has brought together almost 250 powerful groups and national leaders representing more than 20 million Americans who believe that all children and youth should have access to high-quality, safe and enriching afterschool programs by the year 2010. Research shows that afterschool programs are a good investment. Youth who participate have been shown to perform better in school and to hold greater expectations for the future, while children who are unsupervised during the afternoon hours are at greater risk of becoming involved with crime, substance abuse and teenage pregnancy.

*The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization supported by a group of public, private, and nonprofit entities working to ensure that all children and youth have access to afterschool programs by 2010. More information is available at [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org)*

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