

## **Ending federal earmarks would devastate important NH programs**

By THAD MANDSAGER

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IN AN EFFORT to cut spending and clean out corruption, Congress is implementing a moratorium on earmarks (special appropriations that go to members' home districts) for the 2007 budget. While this respectable action should help alleviate the out-of-control spending of recent years, some cuts may devastate programs aimed at reducing crime and helping those most in need here in New Hampshire. Cutting that funding could also end up costing taxpayers more in the long run.

Two crucial programs established by the Eisenhower Foundation in New Hampshire are in danger of losing funding even though they have been proven to work in reversing rising violent crime, poverty and inequality. Most of the programs are in midstream, and their elimination will devastate the children and youth whose lives we are trying to change.

First is the Youth Safe Haven-Police Ministration, a model that merges an after-school safe haven for children and youth with a neighborhood-based police ministration. Staff provide youth development activities, tutoring and coaching for high-risk youth, and police officers mentor youth and undertake community-based policing in the neighborhood. There are safe havens in public housing neighborhoods in Dover, Nashua, Rochester and Somersworth.

Second is the Quantum Opportunities Program, also in Dover, which offers computer-based remedial education, mentoring and community service for low-income high school youth who are struggling with academic and social challenges. Youth join Quantum in the ninth grade, commit to stay in the program for four years, and receive stipends as an incentive toward high school graduation and postsecondary education or training.

The Dover Quantum site, the longest running of all Eisenhower Quantum Opportunities program sites, is in its fifth year, with a new group of students. The previous group completed the program in June, 2006. As part of its end-of-the-year activities, the group decided to travel to Gulfport, Miss. to assist with Hurricane Katrina rebuilding efforts. The students produced a video chronicling this life-changing experience. Of the original 20 program youth, 17 completed the program (three moved away). Sixteen of the 17

graduated. Further, 11 of the 17 have begun college-level work, and one has joined the Marines.

At least two additional program youth are scheduled to begin college in January. The control group, with which the program youth are compared, had a more than 35 percent drop-out rate, with only three known to possibly be enrolled in advanced education.

With the new cohort, Dover continues to move forward with the Quantum Opportunities model and is developing a new component of youth leadership and democracy building. Currently, Dover is in a recruitment phase and is providing outreach to the students who are in the bottom two-thirds of their freshman class to secure the cohort. Dover has another cohort of Quantum youth, funded by local sources, who are now in their junior year of the program.

At an age when youth typically begin to drift away from youth development programs and toward negative influencers, Dover's program success has made Quantum an attractive option for students as they enter high school.

These programs are needed here. Eliminating them would not only abandon the youth they serve, but also weaken the communities they are in. Is that how we want to start out the New Year?

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