

A. Robert Smith

A Triumph of
Statesmanship:
Senator Wayne Morse
Delivers Federal Aid
for Education

*Fifth in a Monograph Series
Celebrating the
Wayne Morse Legacy*

Published by the
Wayne Morse Historical Park
and the Wayne Morse Center
for Law and Politics,
University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon
June 2011



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

Preface

The Wayne Morse Legacy: A Monograph Series

“Wayne Morse is our reminder, forever, that one man with unlimited courage can move mountains of apathy and despair.”

—Joseph L. Rauh Jr., attorney, civil rights activist, and former occupant of the Wayne Morse Chair for Law and Politics

The Wayne Morse Legacy series of monographs is intended to honor the life and work of Senator Wayne L. Morse by examining key policy areas in which he was involved and had an impact. The series is a continuing project of the Wayne Morse Historical Park Corporation and the Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics at the University of Oregon.

The monographs preserve knowledge of Morse’s colleagues and friends as well as present interpretations by a new generation of scholars. They are not academic or technical works. Rather, the monographs are intended to be original and accessible essays for the general public, students, and scholars. This is in keeping with the Wayne Morse Center’s role as a “citizen academy” that celebrates, through speakers, conferences, and publications, the Morse ideals of intellectual independence and integrity. The Wayne Morse Park Board aims to help people learn and understand the legacy of Senator Morse and how he gave to others even as he served them.

The corporation board and the center believe that Wayne Morse’s contributions illustrate the Webster definition of history that speaks of “acts, ideas, or events that will or can shape the course of the

future.” These monographs will examine how Morse affected education, natural resource policy, foreign affairs, human and civil rights, and labor and industrial relations.

The current monograph, the fifth of the series, has been long awaited. It examines in depth Senator Morse’s contribution to U. S. public education. Working with presidents Kennedy and Johnson, Morse successfully guided the landmark legislation that changed federal education policies. His legislative leadership was widely praised, and colleagues and President Johnson began to refer to him as “Mr. Education.”

Author A. Robert Smith was on the scene as a journalist covering Capitol Hill for newspapers, including several in the Northwest. Smith was the senator’s first biographer, publishing *The Tiger in the Senate* well before Morse’s legislative accomplishments detailed in this monograph. As Smith so aptly observes, Wayne Morse worked positively with Democrats and Republicans to move American education forward to include all grades and all national areas. It was, indeed, “a giant step for his country.” And it is for readers today a positive example of the value of bipartisanship.

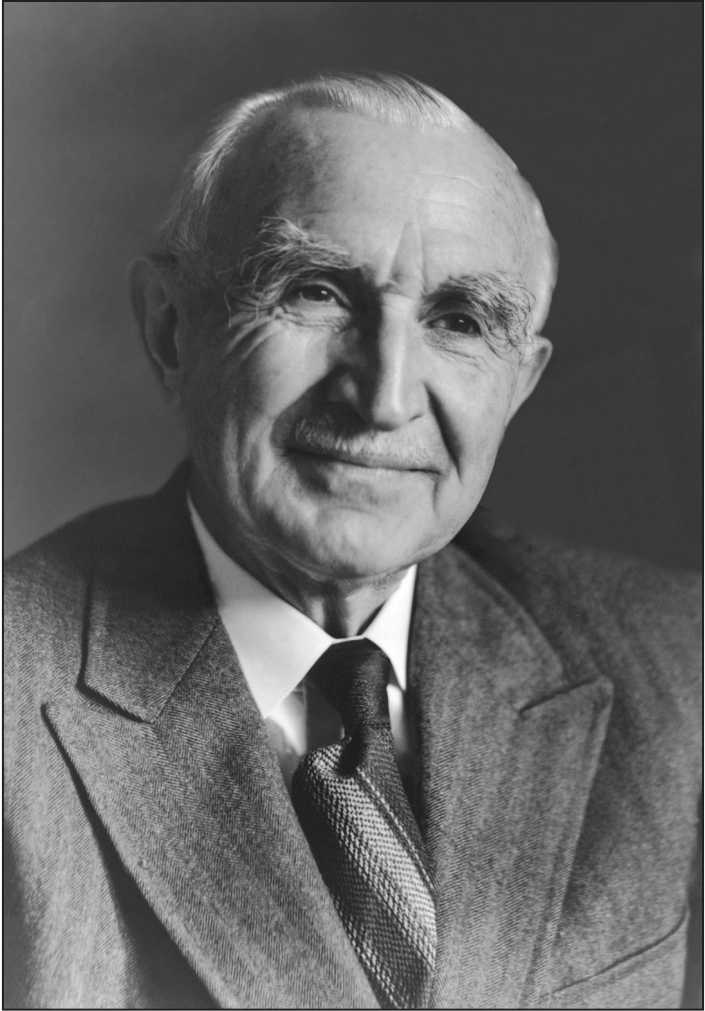
*Jan Mueller and Laura Olson,
Wayne Morse Historical
Park Corporation Board*

*Margaret Hallock, Director,
Wayne Morse Center
for Law and Politics*

Table of Contents

“For the scholar who began in a one-room schoolhouse in rural Wisconsin to become the dean of a major university was a big personal step; and for the dean to fulfill his ultimate promise in the United States Senate by leaving such an uplifting imprint on American education was a giant step for his country.”

Preface	2
About Senator Wayne L. Morse	7
About A. Robert Smith	8
Introduction	11
Uncle Sam’s Hands Off of Education	12
The Land Grant Remedy for Poor Schools	12
Boosting Practical Skills	13
FDR Resisted Education Aid	14
Separation of Church and State Complicates Aid Measures	15
Ike Lukewarm	15
Aid Endorsed by White House Conference	16
Race and Religion Stall Congressional Action in 1950s	17
Sputnik Triggers Limited Action in 1957	17
Morse a Long-time Advocate	18
The Turning Point: 1961	18
Bottleneck Broken	20
A New University for D.C.: 1968	23
Impressive National Benefits of the Morse Bills	23
The Making of a Statesman	25
Appendix	27



About Senator Wayne L. Morse

As a law professor and dean of the University of Oregon School of Law, a labor arbitrator, and a United States Senator, Wayne Morse left a deep legacy of commitment to democratic representation, the rule of law, and intellectual independence to the University of Oregon, to the State of Oregon, and to the nation and its people.

During Wayne Morse's twenty-four-year tenure in the Senate, from 1944 to 1968, he was a leader in a wide range of issues, including the antiwar movement, education, civil rights, and international law. He is perhaps best remembered for his historic stance as one of two senators who opposed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which initiated U.S. military intervention in Vietnam.

Wayne Morse took his first law professorship at the University of Oregon School of Law and became the dean within nine months. At thirty, he was the youngest dean of any American Bar Association-accredited law school in the country. His extraordinary effectiveness as a labor arbitrator eventually consumed Morse's time and energy to the point where he resigned as dean.

Morse's mission as an arbitrator was to uphold what he saw as the sanctity of the contract, the rule of law in the field of labor relations. Deeply committed to fairness and justice, he was popular both with unions and employers. He later served on the National War Labor Board.

When President Eisenhower adopted Taft's economic policies favoring big business in the early 1950s, Senator Morse left the Republican Party and became an Independent. His reason was succinct: "Principle above politics." Morse joined the Democratic Party in 1955, but two years later he voted against Senate Majority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson's watered-down Civil Rights Bill, calling it an "unconscionable compromise." And when John F. Kennedy supported the Landrum-Griffin Act, which weakened unions' legal protections in the name of rooting out organized crime, Senator Morse became so outraged that he ran against Kennedy in the 1960 presidential primaries.

Morse held the liberal conviction that the purpose of democratic politics is not to amass wealth, but rather to enable the country's true wealth—its people—to flourish. In Morse's own words: "If you want to understand my political philosophy, here's the basic tenet: I think the job of a U.S. Senator is to seek to translate into legislation values that promote the welfare of people. Because . . . the keystone of the Constitution is the general welfare clause, and the wealth of America is its people, not its materialism."

About A. Robert Smith

This monograph was written in the spring of 2011 by A. Robert Smith, author of the biography of Wayne Morse *The Tiger in the Senate*, and a former newspaper correspondent who covered Senator Morse for *The (Eugene) Register-Guard* from 1951 until the senator's death in 1974.

Before he ever became a reporter, Bob Smith was an admirer of Morse as a student at Juniata College in Pennsylvania, when he read about Oregon's freshman senator whom the Republican Party found impossible to control. When hired by *The Register-Guard* to cover Morse, he found the senator a reporter's dream to write about—a man of action who had a quotable opinion on everything. Because Morse was such an outspoken maverick, many people asked Smith, "What makes him tick?"

"I didn't know how to answer them, but I wanted to know and began looking into his background, interviewing members of his family in Wisconsin, colleagues at the University of Oregon, and other senators, and before I realized it I was preparing a biography," said Smith.

"The senator gave me many interviews for the book, as well as for my newspaper articles. I promised the book would not be published during an election year, but my publisher overruled me and brought it out in 1962, six months before his re-election. He blasted it in the Senate as part of a campaign to defeat him and barred me from his office for several years.

"My only regret about the book is that his finest hours came after it was published, during his opposition to the Vietnam War and his monumental achievements in delivering federal aid for education," said Smith. "This essay is an attempt to fill that gap."

This is a journalist's account, not an academic paper. Bob relied heavily on his reporting of events; the senator's files in the University of Oregon's Knight Library; the *Congressional Record*; the reporting of Yvonne Franklin; the well-documented account of the education debate in *Wayne Morse, A Political Biography*, by Mason Drukman, published by the Oregon Historical Society Press in 1997; and his own biography of the senator. He is indebted to Margaret Hallock,

director of the Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics, for proposing this project; to Linda Long, the Special Collections librarian at the University of Oregon, and her student aides for digging into the Morse trove; and to Laura Olson and Jan Mueller, and other keepers of the legend through the Wayne Morse Historical Park Corporation.

As a Washington correspondent for twenty-seven years, Smith wrote dispatches that were also published in *The Oregonian*, *the Salem Oregon Statesman*, *The (Pendleton) East Oregonian*, *Medford Mail Tribune*, *The Daily Astorian*, *The (Bend) Bulletin*, and *The (Roseburg) News-Review*, as well as newspapers in Washington state, Idaho, and Alaska. He wrote a cover story about Morse for the *New York Times Magazine*.

Smith is the author of six other books, including *Washington, Magnificent Capital*, with Eric Severeid and Fred Maroon, and *No Soul Left Behind, the Words and Wisdom of Edgar Cayce*, and is currently writing a memoir about his Navy service in World War II in the Pacific and in the trenches of Oregon political journalism, entitled *God Gave Me a Mulligan*. He has also been an editorial writer for the *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, the editor of *Venture Inward* magazine, and has been honored by the University of Alaska, the Alaska Press Club, the University of Oregon's Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics, the Society of Professional Journalists, and Who's Who in America.

He resides in Virginia Beach, Virginia, and may be reached at abob@cox.net.

A Triumph of Statesmanship:

Senator Wayne Morse Delivers Federal Aid for Education

Introduction

The indelible image of Wayne L. Morse is a portrait of an outspoken dissenter, a public servant ever vigilant to protect and champion the interests of the common man, a fearless maverick beholden to no party, a tireless critic of those who exploit the many on behalf of the few. For twenty-four years as a United States senator from Oregon, his aggressive combat with presidents and colleagues of either party was relentless. His filibusters against proposals he condemned and his flaming oratory against such issues as “giveaways” of public resources or the Vietnam War both inspired and infuriated many.

He was truly the Tiger in the Senate.

His most lasting achievement, however, and arguably his most valuable public service, was of a much different quality. It challenged him to deliver a priceless gift at the behest of the president he railed hardest against on other issues. Adopting unfamiliar leadership tactics, framed by an uncharacteristically ingratiating style, Wayne Morse succeeded where countless legislators had failed for decades before him: He masterminded the federal government’s most sweeping patronage of public education.

Acts of Congress that he piloted through white-water rapids of partisan resistance have since then delivered hundreds of billions of dollars for building and operating schools in every state and territory, at every level, from kindergarten through college. This artful deed—condemned by some as unconstitutional, applauded by progressives as overdue—was revolutionary.

Uncle Sam's Hands Off of Education

Historically, education has been strictly a state and local responsibility. The federal government had no hand in organizing schools, developing curricula, or determining requirements for enrollment and graduation. Defenders of local control were determined to keep it that way out of fear that the overarching bureaucracy would gain an insidious influence over the minds of our youth.

Wayne Morse had no such apprehension, either as a Republican in the 1940s or as a Democrat from the 1950s on. He was on record as favoring federal assistance, and during the 1960s assumed leadership of this movement. It was less a role he sought than a task that fell to him. It was as though he had been called to this assignment. The political zodiac aligned him as the right man in the right place at the right moment.

The condition that cried out for reform was the sorry state of America's common schools. The poor education many children were receiving was not recognized until World War I, when the military draft exposed an alarming number of draftees as illiterate. This should not have surprised anyone, for the 1910 U.S. census reported 5.5 million illiterates, or 7.7 percent of 71 million American residents. An illiterate was defined as a person ten years or older who was unable to write in any language. Of these, about 40 percent were black, 30 percent immigrants, 28 percent native whites, and 2 percent Native Americans, Chinese, and Japanese. Later surveys measured functional illiteracy at over 20 percent of the population when determined by a tougher standard—those who could not read or write above a fifth-grade level.

The Land Grant Remedy for Poor Schools

Such bleak results of the public school system raised the question, should the national government assume responsibility and take corrective action? Not that it had never offered assistance—it had done so generously on several occasions since the Civil War, starting with free land grants. Yet this idea met with resistance from the start. The first bill granting vast acreage to the states for school support was vetoed as unconstitutional by President James Buchanan in 1859. A modified version, the Morrill Act of 1862, was signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln. It assisted the states in building land-grant colleges to foster learning about farming, engineering, and military tactics.

The Morrill Act was a most practical remedy because of the abundance of the public domain. The national government, as its custodian, seized upon the device of giving acreage to the states to support various public needs. As early as 1802, when Ohio was admitted to the Union, land granted to the new state carried a proviso that one section (640 acres) in each township was to be set aside for schools. The Ohio formula became the pattern for grants to new states upon their admission.

In all, over 80 million acres was distributed to thirty states as they came into the Union. Another 3.5 million acres was earmarked for land-grant universities. Eastern states that lacked public lands were allotted cash instead.

The land-grant method was politically appealing because it required no sacrifice in the form of higher taxes or reductions in spending on other government programs. Selling the land to settlers or developers was a natural step in the nation's growth. It supported free common schools for all children, an admirable goal—indeed, it was the linchpin for the wheel of the new democracy that rolled across the continent.

Boosting Practical Skills

The illiteracy count prompted special remedies to teach English to the unlettered, but nothing was done to upgrade school facilities. The one-room country schoolhouse was, for most rural regions, as good as it got. Congress did, however, authorize funding for instruction in such practical skills as home economics, farming, trade, and industrial subjects. This law, the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, has been amended from time to time to strengthen vocational training, a specialty that found favor across party lines.

Attempts to enlarge the role of the federal government in supporting education were impeded by partisanship, the political parties oddly switching sides over the years. The initial advocate, during the 1870s, was a Republican, Representative George F. Hoar of Massachusetts. Hoar was a progressive thinker who campaigned for women's suffrage as early as 1886 and opposed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. But he was unable to gather support for general aid for education.

The first president to recommend federal aid for primary schools was also a Republican, Ulysses S. Grant. The Democratic Party platform of 1876 declared the schools to be exclusively a state province.

The GOP platforms during the 1880s favored national action but Congress was unmoved. Not until the 1920s was the issue raised anew, inspired by the number of illiterate army recruits. This time the parties reversed positions. The Democrats favored federal aid to end illiteracy, to increase teachers' salaries, and for instruction in citizenship, while the Republicans opposed all aid except that for vocational and agricultural training.

FDR Resisted Education Aid

The 1930s found the Democratic Party avoiding endorsement of an expanded education program because President Franklin D. Roosevelt resisted the idea and even tried to reduce federal aid for vocational training. Congress, however, rejected Roosevelt's appeal and passed a measure in 1936 that expanded the vocational education program. Roosevelt signed the bill, but appointed a committee to review all aspects of federal education policy.

The committee in 1938 recommended a multimillion-dollar education-assistance program, including assistance to private and parochial schools. Roosevelt did not endorse its report, but pledged to accept an aid program that limited assistance to those states unable to fulfill their own educational needs. "If a suitable standard is to be maintained in all parts of the country," Roosevelt wrote, "the federal government must render aid where needed—but only where it is needed."

Roosevelt's restraint may have been influenced by the controversy stirred by aid proponents. At a convention of school superintendents in 1938, Protestant educators expressed fear of Catholic influence in education. They noted that the church already dominated some public-school systems, such as New Haven, Connecticut, where two public schools were staffed by nuns. There were warnings that subsidizing Catholic schools might revive the spirit of Ku Klux Klan bigotry. George Drayton Strayer of Columbia University's Teachers College cried out: "Let's not have any church—Catholic, Protestant or Jewish—using public money to make propaganda for any policy or belief peculiar to itself. . . . Keep the public schools public."

The chairman of the president's committee explained that they had recommended that federal aid be limited to free textbooks, bus service, health services, and scholarships, just as several states already provided parochial schools.

Harry S. Truman, upon succeeding Roosevelt in 1945, took a more

positive stance, endorsing aid to help the states equalize educational opportunities and achieve satisfactory standards. The Senate responded by passing such a bill, but the House didn't consider it. After Truman was re-elected, he pressed for it again, and a House committee voted out a bill providing grants to public elementary and secondary schools, but not private schools.

Separation of Church and State Complicates Aid Measures

The objection cited by most members of Congress to aiding private schools, especially those of the Roman Catholic Church, was the historic doctrine of "separation of church and state." Some Catholic lawmakers, however, opposed any aid unless church schools benefited equally.

Senator Morse favored helping both private and public schools and tried to resolve the conflict by offering loans for private and parochial schools. But his bill was defeated.

This religious conflict stalled further action on Truman's proposal, leaving both sides searching for an acceptable compromise. One idea that attracted support was the approach adopted by some states to provide supplemental assistance, such as school bus service and textbooks, to church schools. But no such bill reached Truman before he left office.

Ike Lukewarm

The election of President Eisenhower in 1952 raised a new barrier. He was lukewarm to federal aid, but as pressure for relief from the public increased he formed a White House Conference on Education in 1955 and outlined his position on federal aid:

It should be under the control of the family and the locality. It should not be controlled by any central authority. We know that education, centrally controlled, finally would lead to a kind of control in other fields which we don't want and will never have. So we are dedicated to the proposition that the responsibility for educating our young is primarily local. At the same time we know that everybody must have a good education if they are properly to discharge their functions as citizens of America.

And so we come to the heart of this whole problem. We want good facilities on the one hand, and we know that

there are many areas in which people cannot afford to build the schools, to provide the facilities that the populations of that particular area need.

If we depend too much on outside help, too much on the Federal Government, we will lose independence and initiative. But if the Federal Government doesn't step in with leadership and with providing credit and money where necessary, there will be a lack of schools in certain important areas. And this cannot be allowed.

So this is a problem again where the private citizen, the locality, the State and the Federal Government all have a function to perform, all have a responsibility to meet—always in conformity with those two basic truths that education must be free and it must be good.

Aid Endorsed by White House Conference

The White House conference concluded that “The schools have fallen far behind both the aspirations of the American people and their capabilities. . . . There is growing resolve throughout the nation to close the gap between educational ideals and educational realities.” Overall, the conference endorsed federal aid. The administration responded by recommending limited federal assistance—for school construction only. Democrats stigmatized it as weak compared to their bill for direct grants for school operations. A compromise was reached in a House committee, but it was defeated by a conservative Republican-Dixiecrat coalition in the House chamber. For by then an even more volatile issue had arisen to exacerbate the conflict: racial segregation.

In 1954, midway through Eisenhower's first term, the Supreme Court rendered the most provocative decision of many years, against the entrenched “separate but equal” practice of segregating students by race in the public schools of the former Confederate states. Resistance in the South to the court's verdict was more widespread than acceptance. How would federal aid treat the “separate but equal” system if states refused to integrate their black and white schools? Surveys showed that most dual systems were unequal in quality, and the Supreme Court had directed them to integrate, a decision that made education policy the hottest political issue in the nation for the next decade.

Race and Religion Stall Congressional Action in 1950s

Advocates of general federal aid now faced two turbulent issues, race and religion. Their only success thus far had been in obtaining limited funding to relieve the impact of military bases located in school districts. Many schools educate the children of military personnel who live on land that can't be taxed to support the school system. The solution was the Lanham Act of 1940, providing federal payments in lieu of taxes to impacted school districts. Year after year impacted aid was doled out while opposition to general federal aid grew stronger. By 1960 general aid legislation in one form or another had been debated in Congress eighteen times without any legislation enacted. Three times the Senate passed a bill only to see it die in the House.

While many Republicans simply opposed expanding the federal role, race and religion were most responsible for the stalemate. An amendment attached by Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, requiring states to abide by the Supreme Court's integration mandate in order to qualify for aid, sparked explosive opposition by most southern representatives.

Sputnik Triggers Limited Action in 1957

As action languished in Congress, public support grew. It was stimulated by such popular books as *Illiterate America* by Jonathon Kozol and *Why Johnny Can't Read* by Rudolf Flesch. An unexpected international development in 1957—the launch of Sputnik—finally triggered action. The Soviet Union's initial space success inspired Congress to adopt the National Defense Education Act, authorizing grants for the improvement of science, mathematics, and foreign language instruction in elementary and secondary schools, as well as loans to college students and graduate fellowships. Like the military impact aid program, the NDEA had a special national security purpose—to help ensure that America could compete with the Soviet Union in scientific and technical fields.

Morse a Long-time Advocate

Where was Wayne Morse during these years of mounting controversy and unfulfilled efforts to enlarge the federal role? As a journalist covering the Oregon senator from 1951 to 1968, I don't recall his early focusing on education issues. The big three on his overall agenda during his first three terms in the 1940s and 1950s were labor legislation—working against adoption of the Taft-Hartley and the Landrum-Griffin acts; natural resource policies—opposing the “giveaways” of natural resources to private power, mining, and oil companies; and foreign policy—opposing Cold War alliances with anti-Communist dictators, among others.

Nonetheless, as a Republican, he was one of a minority in the GOP who favored federal aid for education. In his first term he joined his floor leader, Robert A. Taft of Ohio, in cosponsoring federal aid measures. Their bill, offering grants to the states for public school construction, avoided the parochial school issue by allowing each state to decide what was the boundary between church and state. The bill passed the Senate by a comfortable margin, 50 to 15, but floundered in the House over an attempt to exclude Catholic schools. Catholic Cardinal Spellman accused opponents of “religious prejudice against Catholic children.” Eleanor Roosevelt, in her syndicated newspaper column, said proponents “cannot be accused of prejudice when we do not want to see public education connected with religious control of our schools.”

The issue was revived during the 1960 presidential campaign. The Senate took up a bill limited to aiding public school construction. Morse cosponsored a successful amendment broadening the bill to allow states to use the money to improve teacher salaries. Private schools were excluded when the committee rejected offering them long-term loans. The National Catholic Welfare Conference, working behind the scenes while the bill was being debated, persuaded Morse to offer the loan provision as an amendment during the Senate debate. Morse was not their preference as a sponsor, but he was the only senator who would risk it, I was informed. It was rejected 49 to 37.

The Turning Point: 1961

Prospects for success, however, dramatically improved when President John F. Kennedy took office and Democrats gained control of both houses of Congress in 1961. Senator Morse gained a position of greater influence than he had ever before enjoyed.

In his first two terms, as a Republican, Morse served during the administrations of Democrats, Roosevelt and Truman. When he switched parties to become a Democrat, a Republican, Eisenhower, became president. In short, until 1961, he had always been a member of “the loyal opposition,” the party out of power.

Had Wayne Morse begun his Senate career as a member of the majority party, perhaps he would not have become the most outspoken dissenter on Capitol Hill. That he savored that role, there is no doubt. The circumstances of his first sixteen years in office were too inviting for him to be anything but the outspoken critic that he became.

But now, suddenly, he was on a different playing field. He had risen in seniority sufficiently to claim the chairmanship of the Senate Education subcommittee. An attempt to block his promotion failed when Morse threatened an all-out battle with party leaders if he were denied. With his party in control at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue, a committee chairmanship gave him an enormous opportunity for leadership. But many observers questioned whether he could lead. As the liberal columnist Doris Fleeson put it, could he “keep his head?” Could he work within the system, a party man instead of an outsider?

President Kennedy had determined to emphasize aid for schools. As the first Catholic president, he undoubtedly believed that by pressing for a bill to help the nonsectarian public schools—and not parochial schools—he would demonstrate that he had no intent to favor his church, as some skeptics feared.

Morse found himself in synch with the president, a rare experience for him. “Some people don’t seem to realize that when I am given a responsibility, I do a job,” Morse told me. “I’m going to bleed for my president. I have a responsibility to him, and I’m going to carry it out.”

The senator swung into action, conducting exhaustive hearings, inviting testimony from all sides, building a record of many points of view. Kennedy had been explicit in seeking grants only for public schools. But to placate private school supporters, Morse’s bill offered them loans to build classrooms for science, math, and foreign languages. A reprise of his 1960 rider that failed, this now proved successful. Within a few months two major pieces of general aid legislation came out of his committee, one aiding elementary and secondary schools, and the other higher education.

The Oregon senator was not the sole promoter of the education program, simply the leader in the upper chamber. The House of Representatives had equally passionate champions of this cause, chief

among them Congresswoman Edith Green of Portland, Oregon. A former junior high school teacher, she gave education legislation her highest priority and strongly favored federal funding of schools at every level.

Bottleneck Broken

In Kennedy's first year in the White House, Morse steered the legislation successfully through the Senate, gaining the praise of colleagues for his adroitness. Unfortunately, the House Rules Committee blocked it when a Catholic member joined opponents because the bill failed to aid parochial schools. A year later Morse again got the bill through the Senate, but it was killed on the House floor by a Republican-Dixiecrat coalition. In 1963 Morse successfully steered the administration's omnibus bill, aiding all but private schools. The House acted this time, but limited its approval to college construction loans. The "Morse-Green bill," as President Johnson called it, was signed into law in December 1963.

"The legislative bottleneck had been broken," wrote a Morse biographer, Mason Drukman. "For the first time since 1945, a general education law had been based not . . . on the needs of national security, but on the merit, on the idea that improvement in education was, in its own right, vital to the well-being of the nation."

The senator's legislative aide, Charles Lee, attributed Morse's success to his talent as an arbitrator, a skill that won him renown in settling labor-management disputes before he entered the Senate. The Democratic floor leader, Mike Mansfield of Montana, called him "the strong man of the Senate" that year. *The (Portland) Oregonian* reported that "Morse has completed a legislative assignment in the Senate in a remarkable fashion which is altogether unique in the annals of his maverick career."

The more disputed portion of the aid package, for primary and secondary schools, would await the outcome of the 1964 presidential election. Besides, Southern resistance to integrating the schools intensified in several states, pushing education bills aside as too volatile for Congress to act upon. Virginia adopted a "Massive Resistance" policy, closing public schools to avoid integration, some not to be opened for a decade. President Kennedy sent troops to Little Rock to protect black students who dared enter the University of Arkansas. Martin Luther King Jr. led protest marches across the South and into Washington, D.C. And a few months later the president was assassinated.

President Lyndon B. Johnson's landslide election victory in 1964 revived aid to elementary and secondary schools as a major component of his "Great Society" agenda. "I propose that we declare a national goal of full educational opportunity," Johnson told Congress. "Every child must be encouraged to get as much education as he has the ability to take." He asked for \$1.5 billion to bring better education to disadvantaged youths who need it most; provide the best equipment and ideas within reach of all students; and advance classroom technology and the training of teachers.

"This expenditure is a small price to pay for developing our nation's most priceless resource," he said. "Nuclear-age problems cannot be solved with horse-and-buggy learning."

Senator Morse hailed the "farsighted vision" of Johnson's program. He said he had met with the president that morning and promised to "proceed with dispatch" on "this great piece of legislation." He was especially pleased that the administration had endorsed the clever method he and his staff had proposed for allocating federal aid: it would be dispensed to school districts impacted by poverty. Areas with low-income families would be regarded as "impacted areas." Whatever the cause of poverty, needy school districts throughout the country would be eligible for grants for both public and private schools, for libraries and textbooks, and for programs in the arts, music, languages, and student counseling.

"This proposal carries out the principle of the Morse bill of last year," the senator noted. The criteria for payments included the number of children of unemployed parents, or receiving welfare support, attending schools in blighted areas that do not have the tax base to support quality education. He said children attending these schools are educationally disadvantaged because their parents are economically disadvantaged. Introducing the president's program, Morse told the Senate:

"It is a truism that a democracy, so far as its enlightened action is concerned, can be no stronger than its educational system. When we are dealing with the schools of America, which should be dedicated to the development to the maximum extent possible, of the intellectual potential of our own people, we are dealing with the greatest security weapon a democracy ever possesses.

"When the president recognizes this, as he does in this great bill that I have the high honor of introducing, and when he recognizes the need for strengthening the elementary and secondary school systems of this country, he is demonstrating what a great Jeffersonian Democrat he is. What he is doing is implementing the great lesson that

Jefferson taught us, namely that a democracy can be no stronger than the enlightenment of its people.”

Remarkably, Morse won bipartisan support in his committee. Charles Lee, his aide, attributed the senator’s success to being “a master of small-group dynamics.” Lee said: “Morse was a master at retreating on a bill’s language in order to retain its substance. . . In mark-up sessions he could sense intuitively where someone had gotten off the track, and he would carefully back up until it got back to the basic agreement, and then without being intrusive, gently probe to find out what this person’s real agenda was and why he was holding up progress. You could always find room for compromise on details that do not really affect the principal involved.”

On the Senate floor, the new Wayne Morse displayed fine form in a chamber that dotes on courtly behavior. As Yvonne Franklin, a correspondent for Oregon papers, described it, Morse “took his Southern opponents like Grant took Richmond. Morse, however, ‘took’ his foes by negotiating cease-fire compromises, not with oratorical gunfire of scorn and abuse of the Southern position. Morse won over his opponents with ‘understanding’ and ‘fairness,’ according to his chief antagonist, Senator Richard Russell of Georgia.”

An effort to limit bussing of black children into white school districts, led by Senator Everett Dirksen of Illinois, also failed. Morse “gave not an inch on his civil rights principles,” reported Franklin. “Morse had the voting troops and Dirksen, faced with defeat, withdrew from the field. Morse’s tactic on other amendments was to outflank and encircle the foe, killing them with kindness.”

The Senate passed the Morse bill by a lopsided vote of 73 to 19.

The House, too, passed the administration’s program, owing to the huge majority of Democrats elected on LBJ’s coattails.

Signing the historic legislation into law in front of his own one-room schoolhouse in Stonewall, Texas, Johnson paid tribute to the bill’s supporters in Congress “as men and women who began a new day of greatness in American society.” No measure he had “signed, or will ever sign, means more to the future of America,” said the president, for it “represented a new commitment of the federal government to quality and equality in the schooling we offer our young people.”

The *New York Times* called the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law 89-10) “one of the year’s legislative miracles.” Columnist Walter Lippmann considered it “an epoch-making advance.” The authors of *An Act of Congress: The Legislative Process and the Making of Education Policy* noted that Morse’s image

as a troublemaker was fixed. "But when he is out of the spotlight of publicity and working with his fellow senators as a chairman and a colleague, his relations are warm and cordial."

Morse and Green occasionally differed on tactics or specific provisions of the legislation, but their leadership in their respective chambers was widely regarded as keys to adopting the principle of federal aid for education, truly a historic turn in American social policy and practice.

It was to be the most successful year of Senator Morse's legislative career. But he was not through. In 1966 he added the nation's capital to his string of beneficiaries. The District of Columbia, lacking representation in Congress, had been overlooked until the Kennedy Administration recommended that it receive educational funds. Wayne Morse, who had a special relationship with the local government in Washington, played a key role in guiding the bill through Congress.

A New University for D.C.: 1968

Morse's achievement here, ironically, resulted from his bolting the Republican Party in 1953, a decision that so outraged the GOP leaders of the Senate that they stripped him of his preferred committee assignments. Morse ended up on the Senate's District of Columbia Committee. No assignment in Congress offers less prestige or political advantage than a seat on the district committee, which is similar to serving on the city council, for in those days district residents had no vote and little influence on how they were governed.

A dozen years later, after Senator Morse had switched parties and regained choice assignments on the Foreign Relations and Labor and Education Committees, he took pride in assisting the nation's capital to cope with its neglected school system. He became in effect a "founding father" of a new "state college," the University of the District of Columbia.

Impressive National Benefits of the Morse Bills

It seems very much the American way that a teacher who gave up a brilliant career in the classrooms of the University of Oregon, should team up with a former school teacher in rural Texas to achieve such impressive benefits for students all across the nation. The results speak for themselves.

The number of students completing high school and attending college has reached new highs. High school grads constitute the most dramatic improvement. In the 1950s, when the campaign for federal aid began in earnest, about 50 percent of students dropped out of school without a diploma. Today, 87 percent of Americans twenty-five years or older are high school graduates.

College enrollment has also boomed, a trend that began when Congress in 1944 adopted the G.I. Bill of Rights, providing free tuition for World War II servicemen. It sent nearly 8 million veterans to college.

Federal aid programs, funneled through the U.S. Department of Education to the states, now distribute tens of billions of dollars each year. If such large sums sound like a federal takeover of education, as feared by those favoring local control, the division of financing shows otherwise: 89.5 per cent of the expense for elementary and secondary education still comes from state, local, and private sources. The 10.5 per cent federal aid includes such supplemental benefits as the Head Start program of the Department of Health and Human Services and the school lunch program of the Department of Agriculture. Besides, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 forbids federally determined curricula. The money is disbursed through state educational agencies to local educational agencies (LEAs). LEAs target the schools with the highest percentages of children from low-income families.

Elementary and secondary programs serve nearly 14,000 school districts and some 56 million students attending public and private schools. Additional support for low-achieving students in poverty-stricken districts is distributed to some 50,000 public schools. Extra instruction in reading and math, plus special classes to extend the regular curriculum, is included.

To qualify, a school typically has around 40 percent or more of its students from families defined by the Census Bureau as low income. Congress appropriated over \$14 billion in 2009 for this program, and nearly as much each year for the decade 2000 to 2009. Oregon schools received \$375 million in 2009. A sampling of other states shows Idaho received \$160 million; Alaska \$245 million; Washington \$648 million; Mississippi \$435 million; Oklahoma \$490 million; New York, \$2.6 billion; and the District of Columbia, \$104 million.

In addition, the Department of Education now invests over \$2 billion annually in higher education. Federal programs provide grants, loans, and work-study assistance to more than 14 million postsecondary students. Large sums help the historic black colleges and the institutions focused on the Hispanic population. The black schools

are primarily urban and rural two-year colleges that have an enrollment of at least 40 percent black Americans and that serve at least 50 percent low-income or college students.

The program also provided low-interest loans to colleges for the construction or renovation of academic facilities and housing. It also strengthened Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-serving institutions, institutions typically located in remote areas.

Despite the heavy influx of federal funds, literacy remains a national challenge. The prison population represents the single largest concentration of adult illiterates. Before the Civil War, illiteracy was the common condition of millions of slaves. It was illegal to teach them to read, for reading was acknowledged as the tool needed to understand the social conditions and aspire to freedom. The separate and unequal schools for black students perpetuated a system of literary servitude. But as Martin Luther King Jr. said, "We shall overcome!" And the Morse education acts are helping.

The Making of a Statesman

In my biography of the senator, *The Tiger in the Senate*, published three years before his hour of glory on behalf of education, I quoted Edmund Burke: "To construct is a matter of skill; to demolish, force and fury are sufficient." Wayne Morse had gained fame as a vigorous demolition expert. But reliance on force and fury had limited his utility in constructing anew—until he led the education reform movement to victory.

No one can truly measure the deep human value, much less the sweeping national gain for America, from these far-reaching education measures. They may rightly be counted as Wayne Morse's crowning achievement.

Three years after his finest hour as a lawmaker, Wayne Morse was turned out of office. His loss at the polls in 1968 was not because of public disapproval of his remarkable achievement on behalf of education but largely because a more volatile issue, the war in Vietnam, overshadowed domestic issues. Just as hard as he had worked to support President Johnson's "Great Society" domestic policies, the Oregon senator criticized Johnson's war policy in speeches all over the nation. It was a political risk he accepted but which cost him dearly. That he helped turn the country against the war, establishing a sour mood that drove Johnson from office, there is little doubt. That it cost him his own office is certain. But defeat for such an honorable cause did not damage his lasting legacy. His transformation into a

skilled artisan of constructive lawmaking had elevated him into the ranks of statesmanship.

For the scholar who began in a one-room schoolhouse in rural Wisconsin to become the dean of a major university was a big personal step; and for the dean to fulfill his ultimate promise in the United States Senate by leaving such an uplifting imprint on American education was a giant step for his country.

Appendix

Education legislation passed during Senator Morse's tenure as chairman of the Senate Education Subcommittee, 1961 to 1968

Under the banners of Kennedy's New Frontier and Johnson's Great Society, Wayne Morse was the architect of Senate legislation that strengthened education at all levels and in all areas of the country. With Morse's leadership as chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Education and Senate floor manager for education bills, the Congress passed more education legislation than in the entire preceding history of the U. S.

Landmark legislation adopted during this period included:

Morse-Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1963 (Public Law 88-210), which strengthened vocational training programs. It expanded existing vocational education programs for people of all ages and authorized increases in matching grants to the states to carry them out. It also extended the National Defense Education Act and aid to school districts affected by federal activities.

Morse-Green Higher Educational Facilities Act of 1963 (Public Law 88-204), which authorized a three-year \$1.2 billion program for the construction of college classrooms, laboratories, and libraries through matching grants and low-interest loans. Passage of this legislation capped a three-year effort launched by President Kennedy to provide federal assistance for construction of academic and related facilities.

Morse-Dent Library Services and Construction Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-269). This expansion of the Library Services Act extended the program to urban libraries and provided \$45 million in matching grants for construction of library buildings.

National Defense Education Act Amendments of 1964 (Public Law 88-665), which increased funding for graduate fellowships, quintupling the number of NDEA fellowships from 1,500 in 1964 to 7,500 in 1968.

Educational and training aspects of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-452), to which Morse added the college work-study program for students from low income families and the adult basic education program.

Morse-Perkins Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law 89-10), which provided a breakthrough to resolve First Amendment difficulties that hindered efforts to enact broad federal support for elementary and secondary students. This second Morse-Perkins act authorized \$1.3 billion to improve elementary and secondary education. It provided a two-year program of aid to school districts on the basis of their percentage of pupils from low income families; a five-year program for supplemental education centers available for private and public schools; funds for purchases of textbooks and other teaching aids; and extended aid to school districts impacted by federal activities.

School Disaster Aid Act of 1965 (Public Law 89-313), which protected communities whose schools have been damaged or destroyed by fire, earthquake, or storm.

Higher Education Act of 1965, (Public Law 89-329), which authorized a student loan program, created the Teachers Corps, and established the Morse fellowship program. It also authorized funding for university extension and community service programs; for strengthening college libraries and training of librarians; and for aid to small, developing colleges.

National Sea Grant College Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-688), which extended the land-grant college principle to the untapped resources of the marine world.

International Education Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-698), which authorized a five-year program for establishment, or support, of language centers and of existing centers for advanced international studies and research.

Elementary and Secondary Education Amendments of 1966 (Public Law 89-750), which provided expanded financial aid for the education of students from low income families; funds for supplementary education centers and services available to public and private schools; and funds for acquisition of school library and instructional materials.

Higher Education Amendments of 1966 (Public Law 89-752), which extended the Morse-Green Act of 1963 for three years. Authorized \$4 billion for grants and loans for construction of academic facilities and loans for undergraduates and graduate centers.

Education Professions Development Act (Public Law 90-35), which extended the Teachers Corps program and broadened the scope of professional training available for teachers' aides in kindergarten through in-service training of potential college presidents.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act Amendments of 1967 (Public Law 90-247), the second major extension of the 1965 ESEA, which initiated new programs in bilingual education, special education for handicapped persons, and school bus safety.

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