

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

June 15, 2005

Honorable Mike Simpson
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Simpson:

Thank you for your recent questions about the time frame within which all paraprofessionals working in Title I-funded programs must meet certain qualifications.

The relevant qualifications and time frame for paraprofessionals are detailed in section 1119(d) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). In general, this section states that all Title I paraprofessionals hired before enactment of NCLB must demonstrate competency by no later than four years after the law's enactment, *i.e.*, January 8, 2006.

As you may know, the ESEA permits all veteran teachers of core academic subjects to have until the end of the 2005-2006 school year to demonstrate that they meet the requirements of NCLB; yet, as mentioned above, Title I paraprofessionals have only until January 8, 2006--the middle of the school year. We agree that it is unusual to have a deadline in the middle of the school year, and believe that the paraprofessional and highly qualified teacher provisions should be consistent. The Department will continue to be supportive of States, school districts and schools, in implementing these particular requirements.

You have suggested that the timeline for Title I paraprofessionals be consistent with the timeline for teachers. Your suggestion is reasonable and practical. Therefore, to enable the Department to enforce these two requirements in an efficient, effective and coordinated manner, the Department will align the paraprofessional timeline with the teacher timeline.

Thank you again for contacting me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Raymond Simon".

Raymond Simon

cc: Chairman John Boehner