



LATE RECOGNITION AND EQUITY. (L to R) Former US Army Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba, representing the VA Secretary, presents the \$15,000 "Equity Compensation" check to Alberto Bacani, a 98-year-old Filipino American veteran from Alexandria VA, as Philippine Ambassador Willy Gaa looks on, in the Bataan Day of Valor reception at the Philippine Embassy in Washington. Bacani received the lump-sum payment from the US Department of Veterans Affairs on April 8, in recognition of his US military "active service" during World War II. The first 195 checks were issued on April 6 to qualified Filipino WWII veterans. More than 26,000 applications have been received by the VA and 766 have been reviewed and completed.

ACFV photo by Eric Lachica

US schools chief says kids need more class time

DENVER—American schoolchildren need to be in class more—six days a week, at least 11 months a year—if they are to compete with students abroad, Education Secretary Arne Duncan said Tuesday, April 7. "Go ahead and boo me," Duncan told about 400 middle

and high school students at a public school in northeast Denver. "I fundamentally think that our school day is too short, our school week is too short and our school year is too short." "You're competing for jobs with kids from India and China. I think schools should be open six, seven days a week; eleven, twelve months a year," he said.

Instead of boos, Duncan's remark drew an unsurprising response from the teenage assembly: bored stares.

The former Chicago schools superintendent praised Denver schools for allowing schools to apply for almost complete autonomy, which allows them to waive union contracts so teachers can stay for after-school tutoring or Saturday school.

He also applauded Denver's pay-for-performance teacher pay system, which some Democrats and teachers' groups oppose.

"Talent matters tremendously. ... It's important that great teachers get paid more," Duncan said.

He visited at the invitation of Democratic US Sen. Michael Bennet, who was Denver's

schools superintendent from 2005 until his appointment to Congress this year. The city's pay-for-performance plan was one of Bennet's chief accomplishments while in charge of the 75,000-student system.

During visits to two schools Tuesday, April 7, Duncan promoted education reforms proposed by the Obama administration. But he hasn't shied away from challenging Democratic positions on education since joining the Cabinet.

Last month, he said poor children who receive vouchers to attend private schools in the District of Columbia should be allowed to stay there, putting the Obama administration at odds with Democrats trying to end the program. Duncan talked up school choice during his Denver visit, though he didn't mention vouchers.

"I'm a big believer that students and parents should have a choice what school they want to go to," he said.

Bennet, greeted by hugs from teachers lining the hallways of the two schools, sided with Duncan. He told reporters he wanted to help steer any education reform proposals from the White House through the Senate.

"A change needs to come, especially in urban school districts, and it's not going to be easy," Bennet said. "I will do absolutely everything to get myself in the middle of that conversation."

Colorado, along with other states, is preparing to apply for some \$5 billion in federal education grants from the economic stimulus package. Duncan said details of how that money will be awarded haven't been decided.

The US Department of Education already has released \$44 billion to the states. According to Colorado estimates, the state is due about \$487 million for K-12 education. (AP)

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