

2021 Rocky Mountain Farmers Union Proposed Special Order of Business

Education Challenges Related to COVID-19

Whereas: the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continues to force large numbers of students, both urban and rural, to receive their primary schooling through virtual settings and many rural areas have little or no internet connectivity and where it is available, connection speed and broadband capacity is below the requirements needed for virtual classrooms, and

Whereas: social interaction is a significant part of the education growth process and maturation of young adults, and

Whereas: most educational professionals have received little or no formal training on teaching in a virtual classroom and current curriculums do not take into consideration the challenges of virtual learning, and

Whereas: students with special needs rely heavily on “hands-on” learning with significant one-on-one tutoring in person required, and

Whereas: studies have shown students who fall behind academically in middle school have a greater chance of dropping out or entering the workforce at low wage levels, and

Whereas: many parents cannot remain home to oversee and assist their children’s virtual learning sessions due to job and career commitments.

Therefore, be it Resolved: Rocky Mountain Farmers Union members urge a comprehensive broadband buildout plan utilizing the cooperative model, patterned after the “Rural Electrification Project” of the forties and early fifties be immediately developed with its first priority be providing the speed and capacity to assure an equal educational opportunity for virtual schooling region-wide.

Therefore, be it Further Resolved: a nation-wide plan for sourcing computer equipment be developed with the goal of each student to have a tablet or laptop available to access virtual classrooms provided by their school district.

Therefore, be it Further Resolved: we urge the U.S. Department of Education, Colleges of Education and school districts work together to develop courses that qualify for continuing education credit hours, focused on providing tools and training to teach virtual learning skills. We must develop best practices for on-line learning that focus on honing current and prospective educational professionals’ skills for teaching in a virtual setting. State departments of education must refocus their resources to support these on-line and virtual challenges.

Therefore, be it Further Resolved: we urge funding and resources be identified to support the challenges facing essential workers and single parent households in supporting virtual educational efforts.