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COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548



RELEASED

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Dear Mr. Thompson:

In accordance with your letter of June 16, 1972, and later agreement reached with you, we have obtained information from school districts in the 17 Southern and Border States on the total number and estimated value of (1) schools closed each year since 1969 and (2) schools closed as a result of actions either by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) or by the courts for reasons of promoting racial balance.

The information was obtained through questionnaires sent to a sample of 2,503, or about 61 percent, of the 4,108 school districts which, according to HEW, were in operation during the 1971-72 school year in the 17 States. The sample is one the Office for Civil Rights, HEW, used in conducting periodic racial/ethnic surveys of public schools in carrying out its responsibilities under title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. According to the Office for Civil Rights, the sample includes all districts eliminating racially or ethnically dual school systems under terms of voluntary plan agreements with HEW or under Federal court order, regardless of school district enrollment, and other school districts selected in a statistically random manner based on district enrollment size.

Our questionnaire requested from each school district for each of fiscal years 1970, 1971, and 1972 information on the number and estimated value of (1) schools in operation at the end of each fiscal year, (2) schools closed permanently for any reason, and (3) schools closed permanently for reason of desegregation by separate categories according to who recommended the closing. We did not verify the accuracy of the information submitted by the responding school districts.

Of the 2,503 school districts which were sent questionnaires, 2,228, or about 89 percent, responded. The information received showed that, of approximately 21,200 schools valued at about \$15.8 billion in operation during the last 3 fiscal years, 558 schools valued at about \$127 million were closed permanently for desegregation reasons. A detailed presentation of the data received in response to our questionnaire is shown in the enclosure.

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We do not plan to distribute the report further unless you agree or publicly announce its contents.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "James B. Peck". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Comptroller General
of the United States

cl/ The Honorable Fletcher Thompson
House of Representatives

Enclosure

ENCLOSURE

SUMMARY OF DATA RECEIVED FROM SCHOOL DISTRICTS
 IN 17 SOUTHERN AND BORDER STATES
 RESPONDING TO GAO'S QUESTIONNAIRE
 CONCERNING SCHOOL CLOSINGS

	Fiscal year 1970		Fiscal year 1971		Fiscal year 1972	
	Number	Amount	Number	Amount	Number	Amount
	----- (dollars in millions) -----					
Total number of schools and their total estimated cost or market value, whichever is lower, as of the end of the indicated fiscal years	21,214	\$14,922.0	21,068	\$15,714.4	21,217	\$16,627.7
Total number of schools which were closed permanently for any reason during the indicated fiscal years and their total estimated cost or market value, whichever is lower	382	59.6	322	54.7	252	56.5
Total number of schools which were closed permanently during the fiscal years indicated, on the recommendation of one of the following as part of a desegregation plan filed in accordance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the total estimated cost or market value, whichever is lower	282	50.8	177	37.0	99	39.5
1. School Board--schools closed on the basis of a voluntary desegregation plan not submitted to HEW for approval	36	7.1	24	3.8	13	3.1
2. School Board--schools closed on the basis of a voluntary desegregation plan approved by HEW	117	24.5	57	12.3	22	7.1
3. State Department of Education	-	-	8	1.1	7	.3
4. Courts--schools closed by Federal, State, or municipal court action	123	18.2	87	19.7	57	29.0
5. HEW--schools closed after termination of support for not submitting a voluntary desegregation plan or not following an approved voluntary desegregation plan	2	.3	1	.1	-	-
6. Other--schools closed on the basis of recommendations of parties not mentioned above	4	.7	-	-	-	-
School districts which only partially completed the questionnaire--most indicated no schools closed for reason of desegregation	100 school districts representing 905 schools		93 school districts representing 791 schools		86 school districts representing 767 schools	

Notes:

- Questionnaires were sent to 2,503 school districts, of which 2,228, or 89 percent, responded.
- The 17 Southern and Border States are Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.
- A school was to be considered closed by the school district if the building was closed permanently and the students transferred to another school or if the building was being used for any purpose other than as a school. A school was not to be considered closed if the building was torn down and another one erected to replace it.