

**Washington D.C.** – Congressman Kevin McCarthy today commended the Defense Department’s approval of a \$1,125,480 grant for the first phase of the renovation project at Irving L. Branch Elementary School on Edwards Air Force Base. These funds will help ensure the children of our military men and women at Edwards Air Force Base and families in the Antelope Valley have modernized learning facilities.

*“Today’s announcement will help ensure that Branch Elementary School can continue to provide a world-class education to the children of the men and women who serve at and support Edwards Air Force Base,” said Congressman McCarthy. “Many of our families in the Antelope Valley who work on the base do cutting-edge research in state-of-the-art facilities that support the men and women defending our nation, and these resources will help ensure their children are able to learn in a similar state-of-the-art environment. As a parent, I know that teachers are critical to our children’s education, and ensuring students learn in modern facilities enhances our teachers’ ability to provide them a first-rate education. That is why as Majority Whip, I led my colleagues in passing two bills that provided these funds for Branch and other public schools on military installations. Edwards is a premier Air Force installation, and ensuring it has premier educational facilities to educate America’s next generation of leaders increases opportunities for our students and quality of life for our families at Edwards and in the Antelope Valley.”*

Local parents, educators and business and military leaders agree that the design and pre-construction of Irving L. Branch Elementary School will help meet the needs of the students and families at Edwards:

**Loretta Gibson, Superintendent, Muroc Joint Unified School District** – This is a great day for Muroc J.U.S.D. and our military community on Edwards Air Force Base. We are thankful to the Department of Defense, our partners at Edwards AFB, and the support from Congressman McCarthy for this fantastic opportunity to modernize the facility at Branch Elementary School. Schools are the heart of the community and all of our hardworking military families, students, and staff will benefit from the enriched educational possibilities and resources that will become a reality through this grant.

**Ross E. Swindlehurst, President, Muroc Joint Unified School District Board of Trustees** - As the president of the Muroc Joint Unified School District Board of Trustees, I express my thanks to everyone who has worked so very hard to bring us to this milestone. I am pleased to

hear that the DOD OEA has awarded the district funds for the proposed project on EAFB to upgrade and modernize the facilities at Branch Elementary school. This is a wonderful opportunity, in difficult financial times, to improve the safety, health and learning environment for students, faculty, administrators, and the visiting public at this site. Considerable work is still required to see this project to completion. We are committed and ready to go forward.

**Kathy Wilson, Principal, Branch Elementary** - I am very excited to hear Branch Elementary has made it to the next phase of the Federal Grant Project! It is an extraordinary opportunity to modernize our school site and enhance the educational experience of our military children and their families. The updates to the site will give our Mustangs a renewed sense of pride in their school community.

**Kalee Riemenschneider, President, Branch PTO** - This is amazing news, especially during these economic hardships. When parents find out how hard the administration has been working to secure funding for renovating our outdated facilities, they will be pleased. It will encourage the student population and future generations of students. I look forward to the energy this will bring to the students, teachers, staff and parents of the Branch community.

**Background:** In 2011, Congress enacted the Department of Defense and Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2011 (Public Law 112-10) and the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2012 (Public Law 112-74) that together included \$500,000,000 “to construct, renovate, repair, or expand elementary and secondary public schools on military installations in order to address capacity or facility condition deficiencies at such schools.” With these provisions, Congress recognized the need to update aging public schools on military installations and the importance of ensuring students of military families and communities that support these defense installations have access to modern facilities. Irving L. Branch Elementary School was opened in 1980 and currently serves approximately 900 students. This funding will be used for the first phase (design and pre-construction) of the Branch Elementary renovation project.