

# **McCollum: Paige should quit after 'terrorist' remark**

**Kevin Diaz**

Star Tribune Washington Bureau Correspondent

Published 02/25/2004

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum, D-Minn., called for the resignation of Education Secretary Rod Paige on Tuesday, a day after he called a major teachers' union a "terrorist organization."

McCollum, joining a flood of criticism, gave a speech on the House floor calling Paige's remark "a hateful comment beneath the dignity of a Cabinet secretary."

She also called it "neo-McCarthyism," a reference to the 1950s-era Communist-baiting U.S. senator from Wisconsin, Joseph McCarthy.

Paige has apologized for his statement, which he said was directed at lobbyists for the 2.7 million-member National Education Association (NEA). He used the phrase in a private meeting at the White House on Sunday with the National Governors Association.

His defenders have suggested he used the words in humor after being asked for his opinion of the NEA, which has opposed the administration's No Child Left Behind law.

McCollum, a former substitute teacher in social studies, dismissed the explanations.

"This vile language was no joke," she said. "It was not insensitive. It was in fact a deliberate attack, an example of neo-McCarthyism at its worst. The secretary's words harm public education and are clearly intended to threaten the millions of American citizens the NEA honorably represents. It is time for Mr. Paige to resign."