

The Education Report

A weekly report of public policy issues in American Education from

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1. Congress Passes Additional CR Funding Government Agencies Through Oct. 18

The House and Senate have passed yet another Continuing Resolution providing funding for Federal departments and agencies for which no regular appropriations for FY 2003 have been approved. Unfortunately, this includes most of the Federal Government. The most recent CR, the third passed by Congress since the start of Fiscal Year 2003 on October 1 is H.R. Res. 120. Funding is provided through October 18th, the date on which Congress hopes to adjourn.

As of this writing the impasse stalling progress on the FY 2003 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations measure continues. Hope has been abandoned by most for action on the bill before Congress recesses for the mid-term elections. A lame duck session following the 2002 elections is now considered a virtual certainty, but the Congressional leadership has not worked out the specifics as to when the session will convene and how long it might last. Other than setting a date to reconvene, decisions relating to the lame duck session will not be made until after the elections results are known.

The text of H.J. Res. 120 is accessible at <http://thomas.loc.gov/>.

2. House Subcommittee Holds Star-Studded Literacy Partnership Hearing

The House Education and the Workforce Subcommittee on Education Reform held a hearing Tuesday October 8th on “Literacy Partnerships That Work.” The hearing featured numerous celebrities and well-known corporate leaders, including Mr. James Earl Jones and Mr. Mike Rawlings, President of Pizza Hut Inc.

Subcommittee Chairman Michael Castle (R-DE) opened the hearing by emphasizing the utter importance of battling the problem of illiteracy, a condition that affects both children and adults.

Mr. Jones, who is Verizon’s National Literacy spokesperson, was the first to testify, and he spoke of his deep passion for reading. As a young boy, Mr. Jones battled a severe speech impediment, and turned to books to “find his voice.” He went on to say that “to be illiterate in America—or anywhere for that matter—is to be unsafe, uncomfortable and unprotected.”

The other “celebrity” witness was Theo the Lion from the immensely popular “Between the Lions” children’s show; Theo was accompanied by one of the show’s executive producers, Ms. Judith Stoia, who testified that the show’s methods of teaching reading are based upon evidence-based research.

Mr. Rawlings was one of three private sector representatives testifying at the hearing. The Pizza Hut literacy program, “BOOK IT!,” works by offering incentives to kids (free pizza) for meeting their reading goals set every six months. Pizza Hut has deemed the program a success, and Mr. Rawlings stated that 90 percent of participating teachers have reported that “BOOK IT!” either met or exceeded their expectations.

Chairman Castle expressed his concerns regarding the role businesses play in education to Mr. Rawlings, Mr. Ivan Seidenberg, President and CEO of Verizon, and Mr. Ralph Kuebler, Executive Vice President of MBNA Corporation. He speculated whether entrepreneurial competition gets in the way of truly helping the literacy cause.

In the spirit of NCLB, Rep. Biggert (R-IL) asked if the various programs utilized research-based modes of instruction? All the witnesses answered yes.

For more information about this hearing, or to receive a longer, more detailed summary of the hearing, please contact Mairin Brady at mbrady@wpllc.net.

3. House Subcommittee Holds Teacher Training Hearing

On Wednesday, October 9th, the House Education and the Workforce Committee’s Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness held a hearing titled, “Training Tomorrow’s Teachers: Ensuring a Quality Postsecondary Education.” The hearing was called to learn about the implementation of amendments to Title II of the Higher Education Act (HEA) during its 1998 reauthorization. Specifically, the Subcommittee wanted to look at whether competitive grant programs were helping to improve the quality of current and future teachers.

Cornelia Ashby of GAO reported that the Department of Education has awarded over \$460 million in grant funds under the 1998 Higher Education Act (HEA) amendments to enhance the quality of teacher training programs and the qualifications of current

teachers. She stated that at this point it is too early to determine the grants' effects on the quality of teaching in the classroom.

Kurt Landgraf, CEO of the Educational Testing Service, stressed the importance of accountability and stated that teacher certification should hold teachers to the highest standards.

Wendell Cave of the Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board stated that he believes the requirements of Title II have caused states to become more cognizant of the need to carefully study available data, and to use the results to promote changes that will improve the quality of teaching.

Dr. Allen Mori of the California State University, Los Angeles Charter College of Education testified on the success that his institution has had in preparing quality teachers. He highlighted the shortage of educational faculty at institutions of higher education as part of the challenge faced in implementing Title II.

Steve Brandick of the Los Angeles Unified School District discussed the current teacher shortage in the Los Angeles area and programs such as the Apprentice Teacher Program, which he believes are helping to ensure that qualified teachers are entering classrooms.

Chairman McKeon (R-CA) expressed his interest in making sure that all teachers are qualified to teach the subjects they are currently teaching. He mentioned his concern over states' attempts to report a 100 percent pass rate on licensure exams. McKeon also expressed interest in making sure that we do more to help mid-career professionals move into teaching, and that we make an effort to make sure that quality teachers do not decide to leave the profession.

Vernon Ehlers (R-MI) also mentioned his concern over the shortage of teachers choosing to teach math and science and stressed that we must also address the fact that female students are not choosing to pursue careers in math and science.

Overall, it was evident that the Members of the Subcommittee believe that teacher-training programs need to be held more accountable for ensuring that we are placing quality teachers in every classroom

4. The Department of Education Releases NCLB Reference Guide

The Department of Education released earlier this week a 181-page desktop reference guide to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The guide outlines new provisions under NCLB for each program that originated under the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 and other related statutes. The ED publication also spells out how accountability, flexibility and local control, parental choice and "what works" (the four primary guiding principles of NCLB) will play out in the programs described in the guide. Those programs that did not request funding for FY02 or FY03 were not included in the reference guide.

The pdf file address for No Child Left Behind: A Desktop Reference is:
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/reference.pdf>

5. MetLife Releases 2002 American Teacher Survey

This past Thursday, MetLife and Harris Interactive released the results of *The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher, 2002: Student Life—School, Home and Community*. This year's MetLife survey explores the varied factors, forces and themes that play integral roles in students' lives. The results demonstrate that students' lives at school are greatly affected and closely related to their lives at home and in their community. According to the survey, students lead active lives that sometimes compromise academic performance; a large gap exists between teacher's knowledge of their students' communities; and secondary schools are not meeting the expectations of their students.

While the survey topics have differed from year to year to reflect timely concerns and issues, its purpose has always been to give students and teachers a platform for their voices to be heard. Harris Interactive (formerly Louis Harris and Associates) has been conducting the MetLife American Teacher surveys since 1984. For more information, or to obtain a copy of the survey, contact: Jennie Morgan @212-578-5527, or jmorgan3@metlife.com.

6. NCLB Resource Available On-Line From House Education and the Workforce Committee

The House Education and the Workforce Committee has posted on-line a kit entitled "*Protecting Parents, Workers, & Children -- GOP Education & Workforce Accomplishments of the 107th Congress.*" The kit is a summary of the NCLB, education, pension-related accomplishments of President Bush and the 107th Republican Congress. The kit is available on line at:

<http://edworkforce.house.gov/issues/107th/endgamekit/index.htm>.

7. Capitol Hill Rally For Education Funding

On Tuesday October 8, 2002, a rally was held on Capitol Hill to voice opposition to a long-term continuing resolution and to urge Congressional action on the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill before Congress recesses for the midterm elections. The rally was well attended by many key congressional staff, education advocates, and members of the press, all crowding into the room to listen to speeches delivered in front of giant billboard that read "Fund Our Schools Keep Your Promise". Several members of Congress including Senators Ted Kennedy (D-MA), Tom Harkin (D-IA), Jim Jeffords (I-VT), Paul Wellstone (D-MN) Jack Reed (D-RI), and Representatives George Miller (D-CA) and David Obey (D-WI) delivered speeches. Despite strong efforts to foster a

bipartisan rally, Michael Castle (R-DE), Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY) and Lincoln Chafee (R-RI) were unable to accept their invitations due to scheduling conflicts.

The partisan stage was soon exploited when Senator Harkin fashioned a large, orange, parking cone adorned with the letters G-O-P, likening the Republican Party to a “roadblock” in this conquest to pass a Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill. As Chairman on the Senate Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations, Senator Harkin has three times tried to bring this spending bill to the floor, but tough Republican resistance has kept the committee passed bill from seeing time on the floor. Harkin vowed, however, to knock over this “roadblock” and to fulfill Congress’ promise to fund education, at which point he physically launched the parking cone from atop the podium amidst great cheers from the audience.

The overarching message rang through clearly--failure to act on the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill before Congress adjourns for the midterm elections will be very detrimental to our nation’s education system. A long term continuing resolution that allows Congress to leave town before they finish their business will in effect cut education funding below inflation levels, disrupt state budgets and undermine most new school reform efforts nationwide.