

The Education Report

A weekly report of public policy issues in American Education from

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1. The 107th Session of Congress Adjourns; Plans for the 108th Congress Underway

Earlier this week, the Senate passed the Homeland Security Bill and went into final adjournment. As we go to press, the House is wrapping up final business and will adjourn by the end of the day. Before leaving, the Congress passed a fifth Continuing Resolution that will extend government funding at last year's level until January 11, 2003.

Leaders of the newly elected 108th Congress that convenes in January have begun to meet and lay out a strategy for finishing FY 03 funding bills. The goal is to pass an omnibus bill before the President's State of the Union Address on January 28 that will include FY '03 funding for the remaining 11 appropriations bills that have not yet been enacted. Funding for the Labor/HHS/Education bill will be a part of that omnibus package.

Last Friday Rep. CW Bill Young (R-FL), chair of the House Appropriations Committee and Senator Ted Stevens (R-AL) Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee for the 108th Congress met with President Bush to discuss what the final funding figures would be. The President urged lawmakers to stick to his number of \$750 billion. Congressional leaders had been urging a package that totaled about \$759 billion. Some of the disputed differences are in education funding -- the Senate Appropriations Committee had passed a bill with a \$3.2 billion increase for education spending. The President's budget calls for a far more modest increase that includes eliminating some programs to provide funds for others. Work will continue through the holiday period to try to reach agreement on an

overall spending figure. Republicans are likely to want swift and decisive action on this spending bill early in January as a show of force and solidarity in their new found domination of the House, the Senate and the White House. Education groups are concerned that this momentum will lead to lower numbers for education funding. They are rallying the troops over the holiday break to communicate the importance of increases in education funding to Members of Congress when they are back in their districts.

2. White House Proposes Elimination of the Perkins Voc Ed Act

The Administration has purportedly put forth a plan that will cover a \$1.3 billion shortfall in the Pell Grant program by discontinuing the \$1.2 billion Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act. The proposal is part of a draft FY04 budget that the White House has sent to the Office of Management and the Budget.

While not final, the plan likely reflects a lack of interest of the Bush Administration in maintaining career education. Growing deficits and a desire to decrease federal spending are likely to generate more proposals to cut or eliminate education programs as the new fiscal year approaches.

Vocational education supporters have taken the rumored cut very seriously, despite the lack of printed materials from official sources on the alleged elimination of Perkins. They are organizing to oppose the proposals and urge careful congressional scrutiny of such activities. The education community generally opposes taking funding from one education program to give it to another one.

3. Sen. DeWine Introduces Education Legislation as 107th Congress Adjourns

In a flurry of last minute legislative activity, Sen. Mike DeWine (R-OH) introduced five education bills intended as place holders for when Congress begins the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act in earnest next year. While the bills die at the end of the 107th Congress, they serve as a preview of legislation that will likely be introduced again in the 108th Congress. Three of the bills are loan forgiveness bills – one for child care providers, including preschool teachers; one for social workers who work in child protective agencies and one for attorneys who represent low-income families.

Of particular interest to the education community, is S. 3163, the “Ready to Educate All Children Act of 2002.” This bill authorizes \$200 million annually for grants to institutions of higher education to establish partnerships with local school districts to establish or enhance clinically based elementary or secondary school teacher training programs. The bill also establishes student loan eligibility for students whose programs require a fifth year of study in order to obtain a teaching degree.

4. Report Released Supporting Scientifically Based Research in Education

The Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy has issued a report calling for a major effort to fund studies that randomly assign students to treatment and control groups in order to establish what works in educating American children. Released at a policy forum with U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige and senior officials from the departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Labor, Justice and the Office of Management and Budget, *Bringing Evidence-Driven Progress to Education: A Recommended Strategy for the Department of Education*, states that randomized trials in other fields have produced extraordinary advances and suggests that it is time to take this “gold standard” and apply it to education.

One of the key components to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 is that federal funds should be used for programs that have the backing of scientifically-based research. According to Secretary Paige, “this report offers, specific, valuable recommendations for implementing that concept in an effective way, so as to spark cumulative advances in the quality of American education.”

The report can be accessed online at:

<http://www.excelgov.org/displayContent.asp?Keyword=prppcEvidence>

5. Secretary Paige Outlines International Education Priorities

Secretary of Education Rod Paige announced Wednesday that the Department of Education must do more to nurture relationships with other countries and to improve international studies in our schools. In order to do so, he outlined the Department’s new priorities for International Education and unveiled new initiatives to help achieve his goals:

1. Increase the U.S. knowledge and expertise about other regions, cultures languages and international issues
2. Sharing with other countries information about U.S. education policies and practices, providing leadership on education issues and working with international partners on initiatives of common benefit
3. Learn more about the effective practices and policies of other countries to improve teaching and learning in the U.S.
4. Support U.S. foreign and economic policy by strengthening relationships with other countries and promoting U.S. Education

Secretary Paige’s full speech can be accessed online at:

<http://www.ed.gov/Speeches/11-2002/11202002.html>

6. Survey Finds Little Difference in Peer Pressure Across Races

On Tuesday the Minority Student Achievement Network, a national coalition of relatively well off and racially diverse school districts, released the results of a survey that discounts a mainstream explanation for the existence of the achievement gap: peer pressure.

According to the survey, black and Latino students are just as likely as white and Asian students to be interested and eager students. The survey also found that levels of peer pressure were relatively constant among the four racial groups. When asked if “studying a lot tends to make you less popular,” 13 percent of blacks, 19 percent of Latinos, 19 percent of whites and 22 percent of Asians agreed with that statement.

40,000 middle and high school students completed the survey during the 2000-2001 school year. Among the school districts to participate in the survey were: Arlington, VA; Amherst, MA; Berkeley, CA; Madison, WI; White Plains, NY; Evanston, IL; and Montclair, NJ.

The survey is available on-line at <http://www.msanetwork.org>