

Make Your Voice Matter.

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Krista Heckler, Editor

kheckler@wpllc.net

The Education Report, a weekly publication of WPLLC, provides an executive summary of public policy issues affecting American education. **Please use the bookmarks below to navigate to your area of interest:**

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1. Budget and Appropriations

Congress has been on a wild spending spree lately in a desperate attempt to adjourn the 110th Congress and get on the campaign trail. Unfortunately, most of the money they would spend must be printed by the U.S. Treasury before it can be distributed. Targeting unforeseen “emergencies”, this money is considered “off budget” and therefore does not come out of collected federal revenues, but is added to the federal deficit. It is safe to say the total proposed spending, approved and under consideration, is a number most of us would be nervous to even know about at this point. Between years of funding for wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (all off budget), recent natural disasters (Hurricanes Katrina, Ike, Gustav and others), stimulus packages (the second of which will cost \$56 billion if Democrats have their way), and the barrage of bailouts for Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, AIG and the biggest of all, Wall Street, federal debt is moving towards a staggering level.

Unlike these off budget emergencies, the annual budget for the government uses real dollars. Because of ongoing and escalating disagreements about domestic spending priorities, the Congress was unable to pass budgets for all but three federal agencies for FY 2009. Those that made it through conference include plans for the Department of Defense, Homeland Security and Military Construction. Is a pattern emerging? For everything else, adoption of a continuing resolution (CR) is necessary to avoid a shut down of government agencies and services on October 1—the first day of FY 2009. The House easily passed a continuing resolution on Wednesday that would provide for the same level of spending in FY 2009 as the current year. For the Department of Education, the FY 2008 figure is \$62 billion. Included in the CR is additional money for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (\$5 billion) and the Pell Grant program (\$2.5 billion), which experienced significant shortfalls; and \$25 billion in loan guarantees for the automobile industry. The CR passed by the House will expire on March 6, 2009, throwing final resolution of the FY 2009 budget to the next Congress and Administration. The Senate has scheduled its vote on the CR for Saturday, September 27.

Missing from the continuing resolution was a provision that has been adopted every year for the past decade that prohibits expansion of off shore drilling for oil. This was the bitter pill the Democrats were forced to swallow to garner enough votes to pass the legislation. The President and many Republicans had been pushing for a continuing resolution that would expire in November, and force the Congress to return to Washington for a lame duck session. The crisis over credit on Wall Street and the need for emergency legislation for the Department of the Treasury forced both sides to negotiate in order to provide a sense of stability around the federal budget.

As the week comes to a close, negotiations continue on the bailout bill; presidential candidates are heading to Mississippi for their first debate; and the Congress remains in Washington, anxious to avert a crisis of confidence that would cause further injury to the economy while avoiding infuriating a public that will go to the polls in five short weeks. It does make you wonder what it is that makes these individuals run for office.

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2. AEI Hosts Forum on Educational Testing

On Monday, the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) hosted the forum, “What Educational Testing Really Tells Us” to discuss the value and the shortcomings of educational testing. Clearly, the requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and current school reform efforts rely heavily on assessments and what they say about high- and low-performing schools. It remains to be seen, however, what can be gained from the resulting information and how it can best be used by educators and policymakers.

Dan Koretz, author of a new “non-technical” book, *Measuring Up: What Educational Testing Really Tells Us*, began the discussion by outlining issues key to testing and the interpretation of test scores: validity; reliability and measurement error; and the adverse impact on setting standards. Koretz suggested that NCLB’s focus on high-stakes testing has created an inappropriate instructional focus on tested subjects, creating score inflation and an “illusion of progress”. Koretz urged policymakers to use tests “sensibly” and never as the only indicator of success. Accountability cannot rely solely on test scores. Rather, test scores need to be understood as a very valuable, but limited, source of information about student achievement.

Roberto Rodriguez, Senior Education Advisor for the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions believes that there is an overall consensus that using assessments and the resulting data to improve student achievement must be done better at the federal, state and local levels. Stressing the need to foster innovation at the state and local levels relative to improved and “richer” assessments, Rodriguez said that educators and policymakers can learn from states that are “leading the way” and suggested that common practices across states can be developed. He conceded, however, that all tests must be anchored to standards and should be “coach-proofed.”

During the question and answer period, all agreed that, inevitably, policymakers will need to make compromises; however, Koretz argued, “We must know what compromises work.” Ultimately, all of the speakers argued they are *not* anti-test, but they urged a realistic look at what educational testing can and can not demonstrate. To learn more about the event, visit <http://www.aei.org/events/filter.all,eventID.1799/summary.asp>.

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3. Coalition for Community Schools Releases Agenda for Public Schools

The Coalition for Community Schools hosted an event this week to announce the “Community Agenda for America’s Public Schools.” This Agenda is an effort supported by education organizations; community based groups; government entities; youth development organizations; afterschool groups; and state and local organizations. The core beliefs which guided development of the Agenda include: 1.) communities and schools are fundamentally and positively interconnected; 2.) schools can make a difference in the lives of all children; 3.) children do better when their families do better; and 4.) the development of the whole child is a critical factor for student success.

Anne Bryant of the National School Board Association said schools are not “islands” but are communities in and of themselves. According to Bryant, the primary task of public education is developing future citizens. Speaking on behalf of the Afterschool Alliance, Executive Director Jodi Grant strongly endorsed the Agenda, stating that the Alliance is working towards similar goals. Grant described some of the creative and highly successful programs that community partners have developed in conjunction with afterschool to help kids succeed academically by engaging them in fun, relevant programs in the hours after school. President of the American Federal of Teachers (AFT), Randi Weingarten, pledged the strong support of the 1.4 million AFT members for the vision and goals of the Agenda. According to Weingarten, full service community schools are vital for tackling out of school issues that influence what happens during the school day. It was emphasized that all institutions must be held accountable to and share the responsibility for educating all children—not just the local school. The job is too big and the task today too large for schools to take on alone.

For more information on the Community Agenda for America’s Public Schools, visit: <http://www.thecommunityagenda.org/>

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4. In Brief

OBAMA AND BIDEN PLAN FOCUSES ON STEM EDUCATION

In *Investing in America’s Future*, the recently released plan for science and innovation from Senators Barack Obama (D-IL) and Joe Biden (D-DE), the presidential and vice presidential candidates outline the steps they plan to take to renew America’s commitment to the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. By improving American investment in the STEM fields, Senator Obama aims to foster economic growth, create millions of high-tech, high-wage jobs, strengthen national security, and improve U.S. international competitiveness. The basic outline of *Investing in America’s Future* includes measures to restore integrity to U.S. science policy; double federal investment in basic science research over the next 10 years; make a national commitment to STEM education and training by tripling the number of National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowships; make permanent the research and development tax credit to encourage American innovation; and address the “grand challenges” of the 21st century. For more information on *Investing in America’s Future*, visit: <http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/issues/FactSheetScience.pdf>.

HEAD START RECOGNIZES 25 MILLIONTH CHILD ENROLLED

On Wednesday, the National Head Start Association (NHSA) held a news conference to recognize the 25 millionth child enrolled in Head Start. “It is a true success story in terms of

creating opportunities and hope where it may not have existed before,” NHSA Board Chairperson Ron Herndon said. Dr. Edward Zigler, the man who is credited as “The Father of Head Start,” joined Head Start leaders from across the nation to celebrate the milestone. Dr. Zigler said that Head Start’s success is due, in large part, to its comprehensive development program and unique partnership with parents. Also in attendance was four-year-old Cynthia Martinez-Cardoso of Washington, D.C., who was chosen to represent the 25 millionth Head Start child. “Cynthia and her family are shining examples of how Head Start remains a viable program, yielding positive results for everyone involved and the communities in which they live,” said Almeta R. Keys, Executive Director of the Edward C. Mazique Parent Child Center, Inc. and a former Head Start parent. For more information, visit <http://www.nhsa.org>.

AYPF HOSTS FORUM ON ATE AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES

On Friday, September 19, the American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF), in partnership with the American Association of Community Colleges, held the first in a series of forums on the work of Advanced Technological Education (ATE) Centers, the community colleges that host them, and their industry partners. AYPF considers ATE Centers to be “successful tools for providing high quality, industry-relevant training to community colleges across the country.” There are currently 35 ATE Centers nationwide. Friday’s discussion was centered on two centers that provide high quality technical training and have particularly strong ties with local business: the National Center for Telecommunications Technologies (NCTT) at the Springfield Technical Community College in Springfield, MA, and the Center for the Advancement of Process Technology (CAPT), housed at the College of the Mainland in Texas City, TX. Representatives of the centers emphasized the importance of partnering with government, education, and industry in establishing a globally competitive workforce. Bill Raley, Dean of Technical and Workforce Education at the College of the Mainland, revealed that there are too few students in the community college pipeline to fill the estimated 50,000 regional oil refinery and manufacturing jobs expected over the next few years. For more information, visit <http://www.avpf.org/>.

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5. New Publications

“Projections of Education Statistics to 2017” National Center for Education Statistics (Sep 2008).

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2008078>

“All Students Proficient on State Tests by 2014?” National Science Foundation (Sep 2008).

http://www.nsf.gov/news/news_summ.jsp?cntn_id=112312&govDel=USNSF 51

“Diploma to Nowhere” Strong American Schools (Sep 2008).

<http://www.edin08.com/diplomatonowhere.aspx>

“Gambling on the Future: Managing Education Challenges of Rapid Growth in Nevada” Migration Policy Institute (Sep 2008).

http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/NCIIP_Nevada.pdf

“Protecting Children During U.S. Emergencies: How Safe Are Our Schools and Day-Care Centers When Disaster Strikes?” Save the Children (September 2008).

<http://www.savethechildren.org/publications/reports/Disaster-Preps-Issue-Brief-Final-1.pdf>

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6. In the News

“New Effort Aims to Test Theories of Education” New York Times (9/25/08).

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/25/education/25educ.html? r=2&scp=2&sq=education&st=cse&oref=slogin&oref=slogin>

“Fast Track Program Combats Math, Science Teacher Shortage” Boston Globe (9/25/08).

http://www.boston.com/news/education/k_12/mcas/articles/2008/09/25/fast_track_program_combats_math_science_teacher_shortage/

“Advocates Say Early Education Is a Good Investment” Washington Post (9/25/08).

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/24/AR2008092401215.html>

“Bonuses Given at Schools, Failed” New York Times (9/24/08).

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/24/education/24bonus.html? r=1&oref=slogin>

“Fact Check: Rivals’ Ads Low on Truth” USA Today (9/24/08).

http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/election2008/2008-09-22-ads_N.htm

“Nutrition: Soda Ban in Schools Has Little Impact” New York Times (9/23/08).

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/23/health/nutrition/23nutr.html? r=1&ref=education&oref=slogin>

“College Panel Calls for Less Focus on SATs” New York Times (9/22/08).

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/22/education/22admissions.html?ref=education>

“Schools Sour on Giving Students Sweet Rewards” Washington Post (9/22/08).

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/20/AR2008092001962.html>

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7. About WPLLC

For over 30 years, the principals and staff at WPLLC have specialized in the field of education, making sure the voices of associations and nonprofit organizations are heard—on Capitol Hill and in the media. As a full service government affairs and public relations firm, we work in strong partnership with our clients to position them for the greatest success now and in the future. Working as a team, relationships are structured to maximize the strengths of each client; the client’s mission is our driving force as we help them clarify needs, set goals and craft and implement successful strategies. WPLLC provides expertise in a variety of services:

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- Policy Research and Analysis
- Strategic Planning
- Grassroots Activities
- Association Management
- Meeting and Conference Planning

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Readers are encouraged to send comments about this publication to Krista Heckler at kheckler@wpllc.net or call 202.289.3900.