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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

Just when you thought nothing else could befall the Nation's Capitol during this week of record snowfall, the Metro derails Friday morning, shutting down the system and two major downtown thoroughfares. Those who were relieved to finally make it to work might find themselves stuck there for the weekend. Snow is piled high and though the sun has been shining for two days now it will take many more sunny days for Washingtonians to see their sidewalks and fully recover from the mighty blizzard of 2010.

Congress found itself frozen out as well this week as the federal government closed for an unprecedented four out of five days. That did not stop the Senate from trying to come up with a jobs bill that would show the public they do know what the number one concern of the Nation might be (jobs), and that they can actually play well with others. Majority Leader Reid (D-NV) announced the details of a surprisingly small, bi-partisan jobs plan on Thursday evening. By Friday morning, Republicans were complaining that the announcement was premature and the bill was moving too quickly. It seemed the short-lived détente would be coming to a close. Perhaps next week's President's Day Recess will give cooler heads time to prevail. The bill is modest in scope but, according to Reid, is just one of many jobs measures that the Congress will unveil in the months ahead.

On the budget front, Education Secretary Arne Duncan was forced to cancel two appearances in the House of Representatives—one before the Education and Labor Committee, and one before the Budget Committee—during which he would have explained and defended the Administration's FY 2011 education spending plan. These hearings were postponed, not cancelled, but new dates have not been announced. In the Senate, the Secretary is scheduled to appear before the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee on March 17. He will likely appear later that same day before the same House Subcommittee, but that has not yet been announced.

Washington was shocked and saddened to hear of the sudden death this week of Congressman John Murtha (D-PA), senior Member of the House Appropriations Committee and confidant of Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA). This week was also marked by surprising announcements from Members of Congress who have decided enough is enough. Ardent STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education supporter Vern Ehlers (R-MI) will not seek another term and former teacher Diane Watson (D-CA) also announced her retirement. And perhaps the most surprising of all, Congressman Patrick Kennedy (D-RI), who has a seat on the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee, announced his retirement at age 42 after 8 terms in the Congress. That brings the number of sitting Members of the House who have decided to call it quits to 27.

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2. AYPF Holds Forum on College and Career Preparation

On Friday, February 5, the American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF) held a forum to highlight its recently released publication, *Success at Every Step: How 23 Programs Support Youth on the Path to College and Beyond*, to showcase a variety of programs that support college- and career-readiness, and to explore related federal and state policy options. Representative Chaka Fattah (D-PA) and Michael Wotorson, Executive Director, Campaign for High School Equity, each provided opening remarks for the event. Both emphasized the crisis facing American public schools, especially for students of color, who are four times more likely than non-minority students to attend a high school “dropout factory,” and three times less likely to attend a high school with very high graduation rates. The resulting economic impact is startling. Wotorson pointed out that the dropouts from the class of 2008 will cost the U.S. almost \$319 billion in lost wages over their lifetimes. Wotorson said, “We know what effective college preparatory programs work, but we need the will to implement them.” Following opening remarks, the co-authors of *Success at Every Step*, Betsy Brand, AYPF’s Executive Director and Sarah Hooker, AYPF Program Associate, presented an overview of the publication and discussed the common programmatic and structural elements that contributed to the included programs’ effectiveness. Programmatic elements included: rigor and academic support; relationships; college knowledge and access; project-based, relevant learning experiences; youth-centered programming; and effective instruction. Structurally, successful elements included partnership/collaboration; strategic use of time; leadership and autonomy; and effective assessment and use of data.

Lastly, Greg Darnieder, Special Assistant to the Secretary on College Access, provided an overview of the Department of Education’s efforts to improve high school graduation rates and college access and completion rates. According to Darnieder, “We’ve opened the door to all sorts of opportunities to turn around low-performing schools and it’s not the time to be bashful and sit in a corner.” He pushed policy makers and advocates to “step outside the box” to take advantage of all the funding opportunities made available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, as well as the President’s proposed FY 2011 budget. Ryan Reyna, Policy Analyst at the National Governors’ Association’s Center for Best Practices, noted that as a first step, states must define college and career readiness; they then must develop an accountability system that values college and career-readiness; and finally, they must create policies that try to connect high school and post-secondary options. Katharine Oliver, Assistant State Superintendent for Career and College Readiness in Maryland, acknowledged Maryland’s school reform effort began in 1989 with a comprehensive accountability plan. Subsequently, a voluntary state curriculum was developed which included consolidation of early childhood

programs as well as a focus on re-engineering of the State's career and technical education programs. For more information about this event, go to: <http://www.aypf.org/forumbriefs/2010/fb020510.htm>.

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3. In Brief

AEE HOSTS BRIEFING ON RURAL SCHOOLS AND FUTURE LEGISLATION

Last Friday, the Alliance for Excellent Education (AEE) held a briefing to discuss its latest report, *Current Challenges and Opportunities in Preparing Rural High School Students for Success in College and Careers: What Federal Policymakers Need to Know*. The event featured a presentation of the report's findings, as well as a panel of congressional and Department of Education staff that explored important federal policy considerations for rural high schools. Bethany Little, Majority Staffer on the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee in the U.S. Senate, shared some of Senator Tom Harkin's (D-IA) priorities related to rural schools. According to Little, Harkin is focused on passing the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act (SAFRA) as he believes savings from the Act could be reinvested into rural education. He is also supportive of a provision of that bill that focuses on turning around so-called "drop-out factories", since 20% of these schools are rural. Little said Harkin is also interested in ensuring the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is sensitive to the improvement needs of rural schools and incorporates school improvement methods other than firing staff that would be difficult to replace in rural areas, or focusing on creating partnerships with organizations often not located in rural settings. Caitlin Brosseau, staffer at the Office of U.S. Senator Kent Conrad (D-ND), echoed many of Little's comments but also said Senator Conrad is focused on ensuring rural schools are on equal footing with regard to access to effective educators. Allison Dembeck, staffer for Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH), said Gregg's focus is on increasing local control, empowering parents, protecting taxpayers by making sure programs are effective and ensuring teachers have the ability to teach without cumbersome state and federal regulations. John White, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Rural Outreach at the Department of Education, said the AEE Report affirms what the Department heard while visiting schools over the past year. White also said that there needs to be an improved focus on providing career and technical education options to rural students and schools. He said the budget also includes pathways programs so students are not only prepared for college, but have marketable skills as high school graduates as well. The budget request also sets the stage to improve STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) training and implementation. For more information, visit: <http://www.all4ed.org/events/BriefingRuralHSs020510>.

MICHELLE OBAMA ANNOUNCES OBESITY CAMPAIGN

Earlier this week, First Lady Michelle Obama introduced her "Let's Move!" campaign, a new initiative dedicated to eradicating childhood obesity. In announcing the initiative at a White House event, Mrs. Obama said, "Due to rising levels of childhood obesity, our Nation's youngest generation could actually face a shorter expected lifespan than its parents." She said rising child obesity rates, which have tripled over the past three decades, have resulted in a health climate where pediatricians are treating children with high blood pressure, high cholesterol and even Type II diabetes, diseases formerly found only in adults. The campaign will include funds for a variety of school-based initiatives. This includes getting the three major suppliers of school lunches — Sodexo, Chartwells Schools Dining Services and Aramark — to pledge to reduce the amount of fat, sugar and salt in their meals over the next five years. The Healthier US Schools

Challenge Program establishes rigorous standards for schools' food quality, participation in meal programs, physical activity, and nutrition education – the key components that make for healthy and active kids – and provides recognition for schools that meet these standards. The campaign will also include efforts to provide children safe routes to walk and ride to school, parks, playgrounds and community centers where they can play and be active after school, and sports, dance or fitness programs that are exciting and challenging to keep them engaged. For more information, visit: <http://www.letsmove.gov/>.

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4. New Publications

“2009 State Teacher Policy Yearbook” (January 2010)
<http://www.nctq.org/stpy09/>.

“Current Challenges and Opportunities in Preparing Rural High School Students for Success in College and Careers: What Federal Policymakers Need to Know” (February 2010)
<http://www.all4ed.org/files/RuralHSReportChallengesOpps.pdf>.

“Ringing the Bell for K-12 Teacher Tenure Reform” (February 2010)
http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2010/02/teacher_tenure_reform.html.

“Success at Every Step: How 23 Programs Support Youth on the Path to College and Beyond” (February 2010) <http://www.avpf.org/publications/SuccessAtEveryStep.htm>.

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5. In the News

“Education Secretary Pushes to Revise Student Loan Practices” Washington Post (2/10/10)
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/09/AR2010020903243.html?hpid=moreheadlines>.

“As College Costs Rise, Sticker Shock Eased by Student Aid” Washington Post (2/10/10)
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/09/AR2010020903832.html?referrer=emailarticle>.

“Virginia Governor Wants more Charter Schools in State” Washington Post (2/11/10)
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/10/AR2010021003851.html>.

“Education Gains Shield Women From Worst of Job Woes” Wall Street Journal (2/12/10)
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB20001424052748703389004575033762482114190.html>.

“National Merit Scholarship Bullies” ABC News (2/12/10) CBS Money Watch
<http://moneywatch.bnet.com/saving-money/blog/college-solution/national-merit-scholarship-bullies/1491/>.

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6. About WPLLC

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- Grassroots Activities
- Association Management
- Meeting and Conference Planning

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