

SEPTEMBER 19, 2008

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:**

1. [Budget and Appropriations](#)
2. [PCAST Meeting Features Discussion of STEM Workforce Issues](#)
3. [Effectiveness of Afterschool Strategies](#)
4. [In Brief](#)
5. [New Publications](#)
6. [In the News](#)
7. [About WPLLC](#)

1. Budget and Appropriations

You need a reliable crystal ball at this point to predict the path Congress will take to get out of town by the end of September and keep the government afloat until a new Administration takes over in January. Passing a Fiscal Year 2009 budget by the end of Fiscal Year 2008 (September 30th) is a goal that was abandoned months ago. Writing a continuing resolution (CR) that will keep the government running until February, and that can garner the necessary votes for passage while avoiding a presidential veto is also mighty tricky.

The partisan rhetoric continued to escalate all week, and there were signs that Members would like to go home to face voters with a few accomplishments under their belts. It appears that a tax extender bill, which has been in the works for months, will in fact make it to the President's desk by month's end. After weeks of torturous debate, the Senate passed a Defense Authorization bill on Wednesday by scuttling a package of earmark amendments in deference to loud criticism from both presidential campaigns. A conference committee with the House convened almost immediately upon passage so this bill could see the finish line as well. And then there is the financial crisis that the Congress and the executive branch are working on to bailout Wall Street without bankrupting Main Street.

Several versions of comprehensive energy legislation have been written and will be debated in the Senate, but whether or not a bill can pass and be brought to conference with the House remains uncertain. The Republicans did score a major victory on the "drill, baby, drill" front by forcing Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) to acknowledge that they lacked the votes necessary to maintain the current ban on offshore drilling. This provision is written into the Interior spending bill every year but would provoke both Republican "no" votes and a veto from the White House if added at this time.

While annoying to environmentalists, this might prove to be the key to finding agreement on a temporary spending plan. The leadership has made it clear they want a CR that will carry over into the new Administration, hoping to avoid a “lame duck” session of the Congress in mid-November. The White House is ambivalent on this point. There are trade agreements and other so-called “legacy issues” that the Bush Administration wants addressed by the 110th Congress. Time for such action will run out if adjournment takes place as planned on September 26th. A short term CR would require Congress to return to Capitol Hill post-election. This is something all sides would like to avoid, but given the difficulty of negotiating bi-partisan agreements in the midst of campaign rhetoric, the odds are good that Members of Congress—winners and losers alike—will be forced to return to the Capitol after the last Election Day vote is counted.

[Back to top.](#)

2. PCAST Meeting Features Discussion of STEM Workforce Issues

This week, the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) met at the National Academies to consider a number of issues, including an ongoing examination of concerns regarding the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) workforce, to hear a number of presentations from colleagues on initiatives and studies of interest, and to approve a draft report on university-private sector partnerships for research. President George Bush originally established PCAST in 1990 to enable the President to receive advice from the private sector and academic community on technology, scientific research priorities, and math and science education. In recent years, its membership and agenda reflect persistent concerns related to the country’s competitiveness.

The distinguished panel heard a number of interesting presentations that provoked discussions, although one from Brian Wells of Raytheon Corporation detailed the work that the company has done to build a model that simulates the development of the STEM workforce. Working with the Business Higher Education Forum, Raytheon has applied its technical expertise relative to systems modeling to the many levers and decision points that determine the make up and size of the STEM workforce. This work notes that a number of factors, such as proficiency in math, as well as interest in STEM disciplines are crucial. Interestingly, the research shows that the girls who are proficient in math when they graduate from high school often are not interested in pursuing STEM study or careers, while males are more interested and less proficient. It could be this situation that feeds the fall out rates in college—women who are proficient lack the interest to see it through, while males discover they do not have the aptitude for pursuing the fields they find interesting. Countless other factors are considered in this model, which will ultimately be given to the Ohio State University so that it can be “open sourced” and available to researchers who can use these findings to further study the STEM workforce. Ultimately, supporters of this project hope that the various points of leverage in the STEM workforce pipeline can be taken advantage of with remedies that can yield growth.

The panel heard other presentations about the incentives that certain prizes can inject into research working toward technological solutions to certain problems, such as clean energy or ultra-efficient automobiles. The panel also approved a draft of a report on the factors affecting academic and private sector investments in basic research and how it might grow.

For more information on PCAST and its reports, visit <http://www.ostp.gov/cs/pcast>.

3. Effectiveness of Afterschool Strategies

On Wednesday, September 17, Scientific Evidence in Education (SEE) Forums held a briefing titled, “Reinventing Afterschool: A Review of New Research on Afterschool Interventions.” The event featured research experts who presented their review of research studies on the effectiveness of afterschool program strategies. In addition, a U.S. Department of Education representative discussed policy implications of the research. This discussion elucidated the links between research, policy, and practice in the area of afterschool programs.

The overall panel discussion centered on the strategies of effective afterschool programs and the role of research in afterschool program development and policy. The researchers clarified that their charge was studying strategies to improve afterschool programs, not just the outcomes. Fred Doolittle (MDRC) and Robert Granger (William T. Grant Foundation) see their roles as discovering how to make afterschool programs better, not to render judgment on the merits of all afterschool programs. According to the speakers, finding practices that have systematic effects is more important than any broad-based conclusions drawn from their studies.

The researchers also shared findings that show an afterschool program’s focus on personal and social development yields positive academic effects as well. When asked whether any of this research has changed the Department’s priorities or position on SES, Doug Mesecar with the Office of Innovation and Improvement responded that the research had reinforced the notion that there are pockets of successful programs and that further study was needed to know why and how programs achieved this success. He also stated that the research findings have made the Department more convinced that they need to solve current implementation challenges.

For more information on this forum, visit www.seeforums.org.

4. In Brief

ECM LAUNCHES STEP UP FOR KIDS DAY

On Tuesday, September 16, the Every Child Matters Education Fund (ECM) held a press conference to kick off their nationwide event, “Step Up for Kids Day.” Featured participants shared comments arguing that the well-being of American children is in jeopardy and that the news media and political campaigns should put children at the forefront of the issues they discuss and promote. “The argument is simple. Strong children are the essential building block for a strong country, and America’s children and families are waiting to hear from Senator McCain and Senator Obama that help is on the way,” said Michael Petit, President of ECM. Renowned pediatrician Dr. Terry Brazelton argued, “the faltering economy and need for families to work outside the home, poor quality child care, the dissolution of extended family and cultural values, and under-funded community support systems” are just a few of the reasons parents are too stressed to provide adequate caring attention to their children. The panelists, including Renee Jenkins, President of the American Academy of Pediatrics; Elizabeth Clark, Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers; and James Hmurovich, President of Prevent Child Abuse America, all emphasized the importance of

early intervention, high quality early childhood education and care programs, and federal programs such as Head Start, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), Medicaid, and the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). "As politicians, it's no longer good enough to kiss a baby during the campaign," Jenkins said, arguing that political candidates must instead prove that they will make children one of their highest national priorities. For more information, visit <http://www.everychildmatters.org/>.

NO CHILD LEFT INSIDE PASSES IN THE HOUSE

On Thursday, the House passed H.R. 3036, the "No Child Left Inside Act" by a vote of 293 to 109. The legislation, introduced by Rep. John Sarbanes (D-MD), would amend the National Environmental Education Act of 1990 to strengthen K-12 environmental education and teacher training. The bill encountered opposition by Republicans, who argued that the House should address more pertinent legislation before the anticipated adjournment on September 26. The bill's champions insist that strong environmental education will encourage new generations of scientists and entrepreneurs to try their hand at solving the country's energy crisis. In the end, the House approved the bill, and an amendment to extend grant eligibility to government agencies that partner with educational organizations to deliver instruction on environmental justice, as well as an amendment to encourage dialogue on multiple energy resources, including existing coal and nuclear power, in the classroom. The bill will now go to the Senate, but it is uncertain if they will have an opportunity to vote on it before recess. To view a copy of the bill, visit http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=110_cong_bills&docid=f:h3036eh.txt.pdf.

ADA AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2008 PASSED

The ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (H.R. 3195/S. 3406) was passed in the House in June 2008 by a vote of 402 to 17. After an agreement between the disability and business communities was reached, the bill was brought to the Senate floor and passed by unanimous consent on September 4. The bill then returned to the House, where it was approved by a voice vote this week. The ADA is now headed to the White House for President Bush's signature and he is expected to sign the bill. The introduction of the ADA Amendments Act caused the business community to assert that the legislation would hurt businesses. In efforts to gain bipartisan support, Members of the House and Senate gathered the disability and business communities together to work towards an agreement and introduce legislation. Minor differences exist between the House and Senate bills. Broadly, both bills use a similar disability definition, that includes a list of "major life activities" that determine if a person qualifies as having a disability under the law. The language also includes a list of "major bodily functions" as part of the definition of "major life activities." Both bills make clear that the use of mitigating measures, such as medication, should not and would not remove an individual from being protected under the ADA. The House and Senate bills also reject Supreme Court cases that have contributed to controversy over the ADA—cases in which rulings have gone against the Congressional intent of protections being applied to all persons without regard to mitigating circumstances.

NWP, THE COLLEGE BOARD, AND RIF RELEASE *OUR BOOK BY US!*

On Monday, the College Board's National Commission on Writing, the National Writing Project, and Reading Is Fundamental held a briefing on the importance of early reading and writing and its connection to literacy and love of learning. The organizations celebrated the release of the jointly produced *Our Book By Us! / Nuestro Libro ¡Hecho Por Nosotros!*, a hands-on activity book for preschoolers in both English and Spanish. The book invites the child and caregiver to respond to and express their thoughts on reading passages using

pictures, symbols, and words. Rep. Rubén Hinojosa (D-TX), Chairman of the House Education and Labor’s Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness, stressed the importance of early literacy skills and the link to future academic achievement, saying we must “move away from reading test scores and instead foster a love for literacy that will sustain.” Ellen Frede, Co-Director of the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at the University of Rutgers, agreed that early literacy development prepares children for school success. “There is way too much focus on teaching proper writing or spelling,” she said. “We need to understand what represents children’s thoughts, make connections and respond to them.” The first 50,000 copies of *Our Book By Us!* will be donated to Head Start and early education programs. An electronic version is available for free download on all three of the organization’s websites.

FINANCIAL LITERACY AND EDUCATION

On Tuesday, the Financial Literacy and Education Commission held their fifteenth public meeting. This event gave the panel an opportunity to launch a new multi-media campaign about responsible spending and use of credit. The campaign, targeting young adults, is a combination of television, radio and Internet public service announcements designed to make young adults consider the “true cost” of purchasing something on credit. In addition, this campaign has created a new, fully interactive Web site with free financial information and tools designed to educate young adults on the importance of good credit and responsible spending. During this meeting, the Commission also heard updates on the current status of its subcommittees, as well as presentations related to the best financial education practices being used by private organizations. For more information on the new campaign, visit:

<http://www.controlyourcredit.com>. For more information on the Commission, visit:
<http://www.mymoney.gov>.

SCIENCE DEBATE 2008

In an effort to restore the topic of science and innovation as a significant focus for discussion in the presidential race, a small group of physicists, biologists, philosophers, screenwriters, and journalists have been calling for a presidential debate on science. The group formed in November of 2007, calling the effort, “Science Debate 2008.” Over 38,000 scientists joined in this campaign, submitting over 3,400 questions for candidates to answer. Working with the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, the Institute of Medicine, the Council on Competitiveness, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and Scientists and Engineers for America, Science Debate 2008 narrowed the list to 14 science-related questions, which Senators Barack Obama (D-IL) and John McCain (R-AZ) have answered. To read the candidates responses to these questions, visit:

http://www.sciencedebate2008.com/www/assets/files/SD2008_14_Answers_Obama_McCain.pdf.

WHY GO TO COLLEGE

This week, the U.S. Department of Education announced the launch of their new higher education resource Web site, www.college.gov. The Web site is designed to motivate students to want to attend college, acting as a resource for high school students by providing information about planning, preparing, and paying for college. The site provides interested students with first-person accounts of college students who have faced—and surmounted—great challenges to attend college. For more information, visit: www.college.gov.

NTAC HOLDS FIRST PUBLIC MEETING

On Tuesday, the Department of Education's (ED) National Technical Advisory Council (NTAC) held their first meeting, discussing ED guidance related to performance indexes, growth models, and the development of new state assessments and their use in accountability systems. The recently created council, which consists of 16 experts in assessment and accountability, was established to advise ED on complex and technical issues regarding the design and implementation of state standards, assessments, and accountability systems in order to improve No Child Left Behind. An official ED summary of the meeting will not be available for a few weeks. For more information, visit:

<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2008/08/08132008.html>.

[Back to top.](#)

5. New Publications

“Implementing Graduation Counts: State Progress to Date, 2008” National Governors Association (September 2008).

<http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0807GRADCOUNTS.PDF>

“Science Debate 2008” ScienceDebate2008.com (September 2008).

http://www.sciencedebate2008.com/www/assets/files/SD2008_14_Answers_Obama_McCain.pdf

“Course Taking Patterns and Preparation for Post Secondary Education in California's Public University Systems Among Minority Youth” Institute for Education Sciences (September 2008).

http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/west/pdf/REL_2008035.pdf

“Education at a Glance 2008: OECD Indicators” Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (September 2008).

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/23/46/41284038.pdf>

“Preschool Education and its Lasting Effects: Research and Policy Implications” University of Colorado (September 2008).

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/09/17/04report-4.h28.html>

[Back to top.](#)

6. In the News

“Pell Grants Said to Face a Shortfall of \$6 Billion” New York Times (9/18/08).

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/18/education/18grant.html?_r=1&ref=education&oref=slogin

“The Recess Regimen” Washington Post (9/17/08).

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/16/AR2008091603150.html>

“Spellings Seeks to Boost ‘No Child’” Washington Post (9/16/08).

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/15/AR2008091501289.html>

“Teaching Kids a Financial Lesson” Los Angeles Times (9/16/08).
<http://www.latimes.com/news/education/la-fi-credit16-2008sep16,0,5940839.story>

“In Rush to White House, ‘No Child’ is Left Behind” Washington Post (9/15/08).
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/14/AR2008091402461.html>

“Why So Many Talented Educators are Leaving for New York” Boston Globe (9/15/08).
http://www.boston.com/news/education/k_12/articles/2008/09/14/brain_drain/

“Don’t Buy that Textbook, Download it Free” New York Times (9/15/08).
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/15/technology/15link.html?_r=1&ref=education&oref=slogin

“Navigators for the College Board” New York Times (9/15/08).
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/14/jobs/14starts.html?_r=1&ref=education&oref=slogin

[Back to top.](#)

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:

- Government Relations
- Public Relations & Communications
- Policy Research and Analysis
- Strategic Planning
- Grassroots Activities
- Association Management
- Meeting and Conference Planning

For more information, please call us at 202.289.3900 or visit our website at wpllc.net.

• • •

This publication contains links to Internet sites for the convenience of World Wide Web users. Washington Partners, LLC is not responsible for the availability or content of these external sites, nor does Washington Partners, LLC endorse, warrant or guarantee the information, services, or products described or offered at these other Internet sites.

Copyright 2008. Washington Partners, LLC. Redistribution of this memorandum or its content outside the immediate organization of the intended recipient without the express prior permission of Washington Partners, LLC is prohibited.

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