

**ALLIANCE FOR
EXCELLENT EDUCATION**

Straight A's:

An Update on Public Education:
Policy and Progress

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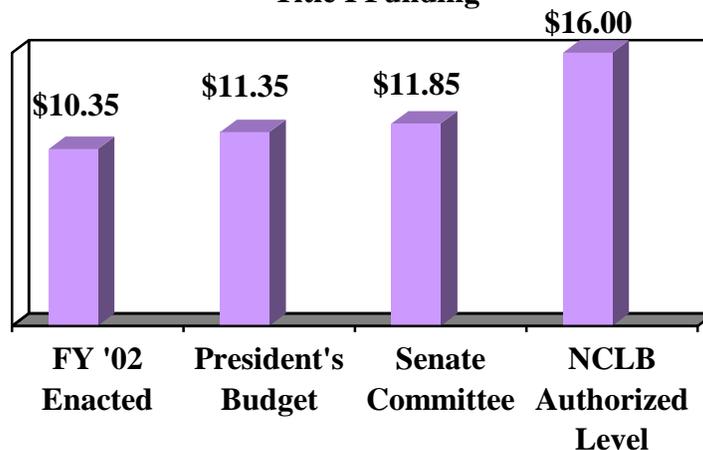
Editor's note: This issue of Straight A's contains a special insert that outlines the spending totals for education programs that help middle and high school students as reported by the Senate Appropriations Committee.



SENATE COMMITTEE PASSES \$4.2 BILLION INCREASE FOR EDUCATION: House Action Expected After August Recess

On July 18, the Senate Appropriations Committee unanimously approved a \$4.2 billion increase for education over last year and \$2.8 billion more than the President's budget for fiscal 2003. The bill was essentially the same as the bill that **Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA)** reported out of the Senate Education Appropriations subcommittee that he chairs. A similar increase is unlikely in the House where many Republicans are hesitant to spend more than the amount the President requested. The Senate bill included a \$1.5 billion increase for Title I— \$500 million more than the President's budget, but \$4.15 less than the amount authorized in the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*.

Title I Funding



Last week House conservatives secured a promise from **Speaker J. Dennis Hastert (R-IL)** that the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill would be the first spending bill Congress considers after its August recess. House conservatives sought the deal because they do not want to exceed the President's request of \$759 billion for all appropriations bills. They feared small increases to noncontroversial bills would use up all of the money available for increases in the Labor-HHS-Education spending bill. If that happened,

Senate Committee Passes \$4.2 Billion Increase for Education

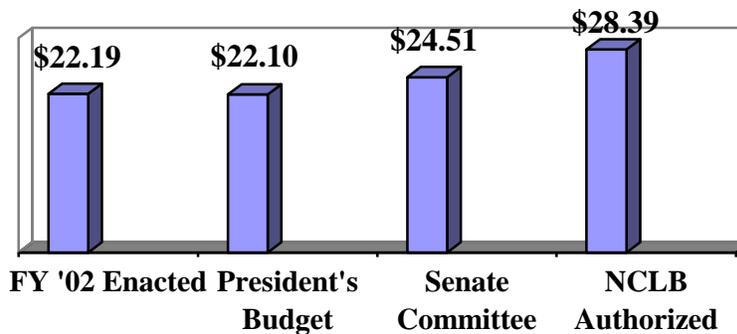
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Congress would have no choice but to go over the President's budget in order to get the votes to pass the Labor, HHS, Education spending bill. In the words of **Rep. Nick Smith (R-MI)**, as quoted in *CQ Weekly*:

"We pass the early bills that are somewhat popular, somewhat overspending, and then we end up with the tough bills later on for veterans, education—with an appropriation that is so low, so below anybody's request that you have to increase the [overall] amount . . . and you come up busting the budget."

Most observers believe that few, if any, Democrats would support a Labor-HHS-Education bill at the President's requested level and it would have to pass entirely on Republican support—forcing many Republican members to cast a politically damaging vote very close to an election. The House Appropriations subcommittee is set to mark up the bill Sept. 5.

Elementary and Secondary Education Programs (Billions of Dollars)



NCLB Authorized: For elementary and secondary education, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) programs are currently funded at \$6.2 billion below the FY02 authorized funding levels.



CONGRESS CONTINUES TO ADD BILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO LAST YEAR'S BUDGET: Stage Set for Appropriations Fight this Year

Last week, Congress passed the fiscal 2002 supplemental spending bill, ending a tumultuous several weeks of spending standoffs between Congress and President Bush that many observers believe will pale in comparison to the upcoming showdown during the next appropriations debate.

On July 11, appropriators in both chambers agreed to spend an additional \$30.4 billion and thought the White House would go along. Later that night, however, **White House budget director Mitchell E. Daniels** came to the Capitol and informed appropriators that the President would not sign a bill greater than his initial \$28.8 billion request. In response, congressional appropriators presented a \$29.6 billion offer only to be rebuffed again. It was not until July 18 that House and Senate conferees finally settled on a \$28.9 billion measure that President Bush is expected to sign.

The supplemental spending bill includes \$14.4 billion for defense, \$6.7 billion for homeland security, \$5.5 billion for New York for expenses related to the Sept. 11 attacks, and \$1 billion for the Pell Grant program for college students.

The back-and-forth posturing between Congress and the President is expected to play out again as Congress sends fiscal 2003 spending bills to the White House for signature. The process is especially complicated because the Senate is operating under a spending ceiling that is \$9 billion higher than the House ceiling; House appropriators are squeezing every penny to come in below the President's \$759 billion budget while the Senate's \$768 billion ceiling allows more spending for politically popular programs. If the 2002 supplemental spending bill is any indication, the higher spending totals in the Senate will need to be brought closer to the President's budget in order to gain Presidential approval.

The battle over how much Congress is willing to invest in education is expected to be one of the most politically charged in the upcoming debates. Many Democrats believe that the \$4.2 billion increase in the Senate bill is inadequate to meet the mandates in the newly enacted *No Child Left Behind Act* and will seek to add more funding when the bill comes to the Senate floor. Meanwhile, the House leadership will try to hold education as close to the President's request as possible—\$1.4 billion below the current Senate bill. With educational services for millions of children at stake, educators across the country are watching these debates carefully.



ALLIANCE FOR EXCELLENT EDUCATION APPOINTS TWO NEW SENIOR STAFF MEMBERS

The Alliance for Excellent Education recently announced the appointment of Cynthia Harlow Sadler as director of external relations and Scott Joftus as director of public policy.

Sadler brings more than 20 years of experience in development and public relations to the Alliance. Prior to joining the organization, she inaugurated the development program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Other organizations for which she has led fundraising and outreach efforts include the Economic Policy Institute, National Mental Health Association, and *The American Prospect* magazine. She also has worked in various capacities for members of the House and Senate, and in presidential and congressional campaigns.

Scott Joftus joins the Alliance with a broad range of experience in education policy and analysis. He most recently served as director of policy, research and evaluation for The McKenzie Group, a national comprehensive educational consulting firm. Previously, he was a senior policy analyst for the Council for Basic Education. He holds a doctorate in Education Policy and Administration from The George Washington University, was awarded a master's degree in Public Policy from the University of California at Berkeley, and received his B.A. from Duke University. Joftus has written extensively on education policy issues, and is lead author of the Thompson Publishing Group volume, *An Administrators' Guide to the No Child Left Behind Act*.

To read the complete press release, visit: <http://www.all4ed.org/media/072302.html>



AMERICAN VOTERS CITE EDUCATION AS KEY ISSUE IN ELECTIONS THIS YEAR: Poll Shows Pro-Education Candidates Will Win Over Deficit Hawks

According to a new poll an overwhelming majority (79 percent) of registered voters view increased federal funding for education as an important factor in deciding whether to support a candidate in the Congressional elections this fall. The poll also showed that education continues to be the top domestic priority of adults nationwide.

The poll, conducted by **Ipsos-Reid**, on behalf of the **Committee for Education Funding**, asked respondents to choose between two hypothetical candidates—a pro-education spending candidate and a pro-deficit reduction candidate. Responses showed that a congressional candidate who favors increased federal spending on education would defeat a deficit hawk by a landslide margin of 60 percent to 37 percent. When these results were broken down in terms of a respondent's party affiliation, the pro-education spending candidate would be the overwhelming favorite of Democrat and Independent voters, while the pro-deficit reduction candidate would hold on to the Republican vote by a narrow margin of 49 percent to 48 percent.

The poll also found that education remains the top domestic priority. When asked to set aside federal spending on the military and homeland security, 35 percent of respondents said that education should be the number one federal spending priority this year. Prescription drug benefits for the elderly and tax cuts came in second and third, respectively.

The poll was conducted between July 11 and July 14 via telephone and included a representative sample of 777 registered voters nationwide. The margin of error is +/- 3.5 percent.

The complete polling results are available at <http://www.ipsos-reid.com>.

Teacher Quality is Top Priority for Americans in New Ed Week/PEN Poll

In an ongoing effort to gauge public support for education, **Education Week and Public Education Network (PEN)** have teamed up to conduct a set of polls. For the second year in a row, Americans chose raising teacher quality as their first priority in improving schools and equalizing funding between rich and poor schools as the second priority. This year, letting for profit companies manage schools came in last out of eight choices. According to the poll, nearly three in ten Americans, 29 percent, are teachers or have close family members who are teachers or former teachers.

*To read the Education Week article on the poll, visit:
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/newstory.cfm?slug=42PEN.h21>*

*For the poll report visit:
<http://www.publiceducation.org/download/2002PollReport.pdf>*



ASSESSMENT : LEARNING :: SCALE : WEIGHT **College Board Announces Plans to Change SAT Exam**

Remember those word analogies that caused stress and confusion when taking the SAT, the country's most widely used college entrance examination? Last month, the College Board, publishers of the SAT, announced that beginning in 2005, the analogies will be eliminated, along with quantitative comparisons, in an effort to assess more accurately what students actually learn in high school. In addition, the new exam will include a written essay, multiple-choice grammar questions, and questions focused on high-level math skills.

Prodded by the University of California system, which threatened to drop the SAT due to its lack of alignment with high school and college curricula, the College Board's announcement elicited both praise and criticism. The new SAT should have a positive impact on schools, especially those that serve poor and minority students. Previously, schools could make the case that the SAT measured innate skill, not student learning, and therefore the schools could not be held accountable. With the new SAT that case will be harder to make. Schools will have to respond by helping students become better writers, readers, and mathematicians in order to help them succeed on the SAT and, ultimately, in college. Moreover, the new SAT reinforces the idea for students that school does matter, and that lessons learned through hard work are applicable after they graduate.

Critics argue that the new SAT will not measure student learning any more accurately than the current model or any other standardized test. They also argue that the increased rigor of the new SAT will further advantage white and wealthy students, who consistently score higher on the current SAT and who have more access to good schools and expensive tutoring than minority and poor students.

To read more about the new SAT visit:

<http://www.collegeboard.com/about/newsat/newsat.html>



STATE BUDGET DEFICITS GROW: Majority of States Forced to Cut Education

According to a new report, deteriorating fiscal conditions are forcing states to make very difficult spending decisions. The new report, *2002 State Budget and Tax Actions*, released by the **National Conference of State Legislatures**, showed that 43 states reported a budget gap and were forced to raise taxes, cut programs, and drain reserve balances.

In April, 43 states reported budget gaps totaling \$27.3 billion collectively. By June 30, the end of the fiscal year for almost all states, the gap had risen to \$35.9 billion, an increase of \$8.6 billion. Estimates for fiscal 2003 expect the aggregate budget gap to grow to \$57.9 billion. Of this total, California's budget gap of \$23.7 billion represents almost 40 percent.

State Budget Deficits Continue to Grow

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States tried different strategies to close the budget gap, but education was a common target. Of the 29 states that implemented targeted or across-the-board budget cuts, 19 states cut funding for higher education, expecting that higher tuition would offset the reduction. Meanwhile, twelve states reported spending reductions for K-12.

These state budget problems come during a time when the federal government is imposing higher standards and increased accountability through the *No Child Left Behind Act*, but providing scant resources. For instance, the President's education budget proposes only a \$1.4 billion increase for all education programs—the smallest increase in seven years—and actually cuts \$90 million from elementary and secondary school programs covered by the historic education reform bill.

To read more of the report's results visit:

<http://www.ncsl.org/programs/press/2002/pr020724a.htm>



TEST SCORES ARE IMPROVING IN URBAN SCHOOLS

In a study of 57 urban school districts in 35 states, the **Council of the Great City Schools** has found that test scores are climbing and the achievement gap between white students and their minority peers is narrowing on state tests. The new report, *Beating the Odds II*, is part of an ongoing plan to track cities' student-achievement results annually.

In four school systems, Albuquerque, N.M.; Anchorage, Alaska; Broward County, Fort Lauderdale, Florida; and Hillsborough County, Tampa, Florida; math and reading scores exceeded or matched statewide averages. Of all the eighth grade classrooms tested in math, 90 percent reduced the white-Hispanic achievement gap. The biggest gap closure—78 percent—between white and African American students was in fourth-grade reading.

Council executive director Mike Casserly said that although there is some improvement, there is more work to do. "Enough cities are now improving to begin asking why some are not," he said.

To read or download the Council's *Beating the Odds II* report, visit:

http://www.cgcs.org/reports/beat_the_oddsII.html

\$2 Million Education Program to Train Inner-City Teachers

The **Chattanooga Public Education Foundation (PEF)** announced a new \$2 million program to help teachers in nine inner-city Chattanooga, Tenn. schools to earn their master's degrees in inner-city education. The program, titled the **Osborne Fellows Project**, was made possible by an award of \$1.5 million by the Osborne Foundation of Nashville, Tenn., which PEF will supplement with an additional \$500,000.

The innovative master's program, which will be hosted cooperatively by Johns Hopkins University and the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, will focus on the skills and issues particular relevant to inner-city education. Dr. Bill Stacy, Chancellor of UTC explained to The Chattanooga.com, "Traditionally teacher preparation programs have prepared teachers as generalists to work in classrooms where the majority of students are suburban, middle class, white, and performing on par with peers [...] these educators need and deserve to opportunity to participate in master's level preparation focused specifically on the unique elements of education in urban settings." The goals of the program are to educate teachers on how to manage the classroom, improve student performance within the urban setting and ensure that all students are reading at or above grade level.

The Osborne Fellows Project hopes to endow the program so that funds will be available to get 20 teachers master's degrees each year for as long as the project is needed. The program will consist of 36 credit hours of coursework over a two-year period. It is hoped that if the program is successful it may serve as a model for the creation of similar programs across the country.

The Public Education Foundation was established in 1988 by an effort of the Chattanooga and Hamilton County schools. PEF works to provide professional development and training for teachers and future leaders and to build stronger partnerships between families and schools.

To read the article in Chattanooga.com, visit: http://www.chattanoogan.com/articles/article_24205.asp

To learn more about PEF Chattanooga, visit: <http://www.pefchattanooga.org>



During the month of August, the Alliance for Excellent Education will temporarily suspend its publication of *Straight A's: An Update on Public Education: Policy and Progress*. The next issue will be dated September 9. In the meantime, we encourage you to visit our newly revamped Web site at <http://www.all4ed.org>, and have a happy and safe month of August.

Straight A's: An Update on Public Education is a biweekly newsletter that focuses on education news and events both in Washington, D.C., and around the country. The format makes information on federal education policy accessible to everyone from elected officials and policymakers to parents and community leaders. The Alliance for Excellent Education is a non-profit organization working to make it possible for America's 6 million at-risk middle and high school students to achieve high standards and graduate prepared for college and success in life.