



StraightA's

Public Education Policy And Progress



HOUSE PASSES FY 2007 FUNDING MEASURE: Education Programs Slated to Receive Additional Funding

On January 31, the House of Representatives voted 286–140 to keep government running for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2007 by passing a \$463.5 billion yearlong continuing resolution. The resolution was necessary because the 109th Congress failed to pass nine of the eleven annual appropriations bills before adjourning. Instead, it passed a *temporary* continuing resolution to fund the government until February 15. The new resolution now goes to the Senate, where it is expected to pass as soon as this week; it will fund programs until September 30, when the fiscal year ends. The White House has indicated support, as the resolution keeps to the spending limits that President Bush and congressional Republicans insisted upon last year.

Rather than trying to pass each of the remaining appropriations bills individually, the incoming Democratic chairmen of the Senate and House Appropriations Committees, **Senator Robert C. Byrd (D-WV)** and **Representative David Obey (D-WI)**, chose this way of quickly dispensing with FY 2007 spending in order to move on to the FY 2008 budget process, which began in earnest when the president submitted his budget on February 5 (see article on page 2).

The continuing resolution freezes most programs at their FY 2006 funding levels. “I don’t expect people to love this proposal; I don’t love this proposal, and we probably have made some wrong choices,” said Obey. “But in contrast to last year’s Congress, which decided to duck these choices, at least we have made them in order to bring last year’s issues to a conclusion so we can turn the page and deal with next year’s priorities.”

Push for Additional Funding for Education and Health Care is Successful

For the last several weeks, a coalition of approximately 250 health, education, and other domestic organizations, including the Alliance for Excellent Education, pushed hard for an additional \$2 billion for domestic priorities on top of the \$5 billion increase already included in the resolution; the House-passed measure did include that additional \$2 billion. The amount sought was significant for two reasons: it would restore cuts in funding that were made in FY 2006, and it would honor the commitment that the Senate made in March 2006 when it approved an amendment by **Senators Arlen Specter (R-PA)** and **Tom Harkin (D-IA)** that set aside an additional \$7 billion for the Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, and Labor. The amendment had passed 73–27, with considerable bipartisan support.

Assuming that the resolution is passed in the Senate and signed by the president, the U.S. Department of Education will receive a total of \$57.5 billion. Specifically, the Title I program

House Passes FY 2006 Funding Measure

(Continued from p. 1)

will receive \$12.8 billion, an increase of \$125 million. Funding also includes an additional \$125 million for the Title I School Improvement Fund, a new program that targets assistance to the 6,700 schools that failed to meet No Child Left Behind requirements in the 2005–2006 school year. Under the program, schools can use funding for improvement activities, such as teacher training, tutoring programs, and curriculum upgrades. In addition, the resolution provides \$10.7 billion for special education (an increase of \$200 million), and \$6.9 billion (an increase of \$103.7 million) for Head Start. It also raises the maximum Pell grant award from \$4,050 to \$4,310, the first increase in four years.

Other programs slated for increases include the National Institutes of Health, global HIV/AIDS, and Community Health Centers. Most other programs are funded at FY 2006 levels, although the resolution includes increased funding to avoid imposing furloughs and hiring freezes, or cutting critical services such as medical care for veterans.

Senator Byrd and Representative Obey were able to redirect approximately \$10 billion in funding for these programs by eliminating earmarks—sometimes referred to as “pork”—from the nine unfinished appropriations bills, rescinding unused funds for transportation programs and reducing more than 60 programs below their FY 2006 levels.



PRESIDENT BUSH RELEASES FY 2008 BUDGET: Proposal Includes Several High School Initiatives, but Would Cut Overall Education Spending

When he released his Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 budget on February 5, President Bush described it as a plan that “sets priorities and, at the same time, emphasizes fiscal restraint.” The emphasis on fiscal restraint was apparent in the section of the budget that proposes a cut of \$550 million from the U.S. Department of Education’s FY 2006 spending level and is approximately \$1.5 billion less than is likely to be spent this year. (The FY 2007 yearlong continuing resolution is currently pending in Congress—see article on page 1).

Despite the overall education spending decrease, some programs would receive an increase under the president’s proposal. For one, the Striving Readers program would receive \$100 million, an increase of \$70.3 million over FY06. The Advanced Placement program would receive \$122.2 million, an increase of \$90 million over FY06. In addition, the president proposed a \$1.2 billion increase for the Title I program that would be designated for high schools in an effort to increase the high school share of Title I allocations and expand the impact and rigor of NCLB standards into high school.

The president’s budget would also double funding for Statewide Data Systems from \$24.6 million in FY06 to \$49.2 million in FY08. According to the U.S. Department of Education Fiscal Year 2008 Budget Summary, the request would “support awards to enhance state capacity for accurate reporting of high school graduation rates and dropout data, and increase the capacity of states to efficiently satisfy federal reporting requirements...”

While advocates were happy to see the president's proposals for high school reform, they were disappointed that the president chose to cut other programs to pay for them, including some that currently benefit high schools. For example, the president's budget would cut vocational and technical education (Perkins) in half, from \$1.18 billion in FY06 to \$600 million in FY08, and would eliminate funding for smaller learning communities, which was funded at \$93.5 million in FY06. In total, 44 education programs that received funding in FY06 were eliminated in the president's FY08 budget.

“In presenting his education budget for high school reform, the president is like the football coach who plans an overall good game strategy; unfortunately, he insists on running some plays that have been proven to lose yardage,” said **Bob Wise, president of the Alliance for Excellent Education and former governor of West Virginia**. “The winning game strategy is the president focusing on improving the nation's high schools by providing new funds for Title I targeted to high schools, Striving Readers assistance to boost adolescent reading and comprehension, grants for improving low performing schools, and building data systems. But in other parts of the budget, the President's elimination or cutting back of other high school programs will only lose ground with the Congress.”

Complete coverage of the president's education budget, including additional analysis, is available on the Alliance for Excellent Education's website at <http://www.all4ed.org/legislative/index.html>.



STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESSES: Governors Link Education to Economic Interests, Push Math, Science, and Technology Education

Over the last few weeks, many governors across the country used their state of the state addresses to highlight the critical connection between excellence in education and healthy state economies. Specifically, their proposals focused on postsecondary preparation and access; better math, science, and technology education; and keeping talented youth in state to attract and fill new jobs.

Alaska: Palin Pledges to Work Toward a “World-Class” Education System

In her state of the state address on January 17, incoming **Alaska Governor Sarah Palin (R)** called education the central tool that government can provide to help citizens improve their standing. To that end, she pledged to fully fund a “foundation formula” for K–12 education aid, but added that her education vision goes beyond spending and includes an open-minded approach to rethinking how schools—especially high schools—operate.

“We'll look at successful education programs statewide and outside that can be replicated, and we'll look at new approaches,” she said. “We've got to do something different. Our high school graduation rate is 61 percent. That's unacceptable! Our vo-tech opportunities need to grow so that our kids stay in school and then fill the voids in our industries. And at the same time, we need to make sure those who want to go to college are ready.”

Governor Palin's complete speech is available at <http://www.gov.state.ak.us/speeches.php?id=66>.

Delaware: Minner Aims to Expand Upon “Tremendous Progress” in Education

In her state of the state address on January 18, **Delaware Governor Ruth Ann Minner (D)** pointed to Delaware’s fourth- and eighth-grade students’ scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which ranked among the best in the nation in 2005, and to the state’s well-above-average Advanced Placement exam results as evidence of the state’s “tremendous progress” in raising student performance.

In an effort to continue this progress, she pledged to place an additional ten math specialists in Delaware’s public middle schools, which would complete her plan to have a math specialist in every middle school. Turning to high schools, Minner talked about the state’s pending participation in the National Guard’s Youth Challenge program, which has helped to reclaim recent high school dropouts in other states and targets participants who are unemployed, drug-free and law-free high-school dropouts, 16 to 18 years of age. “As I have said on many occasions, we cannot afford to have any child drop out of our education system, and this new initiative will provide us with yet another tool to ensure that all of our children have a better future,” she said.

Governor Minner’s complete speech is available at <http://www.state.de.us/governor/speeches/2007%20state%20of%20the%20state.shtml>.

Hawaii: Lingle Calls for STEM-Focused Workforce Development

In her state of the state address on January 22, **Hawaii Governor Linda Lingle (R)** declared that her state is uniquely positioned to take advantage of global economic transformation—if it invests wisely and innovatively in education and in other areas.

“The reality is that the future economic fortunes of our state will be determined by the capabilities and creativity of our people...and by their ability to work and communicate effectively with others from around the world,” she said. “No one is better suited than the citizens of Hawaii to work with people from diverse backgrounds...in a global economy...that will be focused on the Asia-Pacific region.”

Lingle’s workforce development strategy is designed to empower Hawaiian students to compete globally, with efforts focused on science, technology, and math education. She proposed expanding hands-on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) learning opportunities in grades six through nine; establishing high school STEM academies, staffed by a faculty of community college professors, that grant college credit; and funding scholarships to state institutions of higher education for students who successfully complete the STEM curriculum.

Governor Lingle’s complete address is available at http://www.hawaii.gov/gov/leg/2007-session/STATE_OF_THE_STATE_ADDRESS_2007.pdf

Indiana: Daniels Seeks Bipartisan Consensus to Raise Educational Performance

Reflecting on two years in office, **Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels (R)** noted success in “repaying” schools with funds that were cut in more economically turbulent times, while simultaneously balancing the state’s budget. He used his January 16 address to call on elected officials to forge a bipartisan vision, with improving the state’s educational outcomes as a central imperative.

“The better education of our children is a shared goal and a top priority of every Hoosier I know,” he said. “The best efforts of today’s committed educators have not sufficed to produce the results today’s world demands. When one in four Hoosier kids drops out, when one in three fails even that very basic measure we call [the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress], when 30 percent of those who complete high school go no further, when our state has the 6th lowest percentage of college graduates in America, we are not getting the job done.”

To improve education in the state, Daniels pledged to invest “at least a quarter of a billion dollars” above current education funding levels. He also committed to work toward a bipartisan plan for universal full-day kindergarten and expand the state’s pool of college graduates by creating lottery-funded Hoosier Hope Scholarships geared at keeping talented students in state.

Governor Daniels’s complete speech is available at <http://www.in.gov/apps/utills/calendar/presscal?PF=gov2&Clist=196&Elist=88044>.

Minnesota: Pawlenty Vows to Address the “Silent Crisis” in High Schools

On January 17, **Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty (R)** devoted a significant portion of his state of the state address to calling for a transformation of the state’s high schools. The governor, recently elected to his second term, praised the state’s high-ranking test scores as the product of “fantastic educators, engaged parents, and, of course...above average students.” However, he added, “Nation-leading in student performance isn’t good enough anymore. Our students need to be world-leading, not just nation-leading.”

Pawlenty pledged to increase general school funding by up to 4 percent—with 2 percent conditioned on individual schools receiving at least a three-star rating in reading and math on the State Report Card. However, he added that pouring funds into the existing secondary school system would not suffice and, echoing Bill Gates’s diagnosis, said that “American high schools are obsolete in their current form.”

“Too many of our high school students today are engaged in academic loitering for much of their high school career,” he said. “In too many cases, our high school students are bored, checked-out, coasting, not even vaguely aware of their post-high school plans, if they have any, and they are just marking time. It’s costing us a lot of money and it’s costing them their future. This is a silent crisis and has the potential to devastate our future prosperity if we don’t fix it.”

The centerpiece of Pawlenty’s proposal for high school transformation is a \$75 million proposal to create “3R” high schools (standing for rigor, relevance, and results). In return for increased

Minnesota: Pawlenty Vows to Address the “Silent Crisis” in High Schools

(Continued from p. 5)

funding, schools that join the 3R initiative would be required to implement “rigorous and relevant” courses for all students, including high-demand career-and-technology areas. In addition, schools would be required to have every student complete a full year of college while still in high school, provide all students access to college-credit opportunities, and provide work-based learning and internship opportunities.

Governor Pawlenty’s complete speech is available at http://www.governor.state.mn.us/stellent/groups/public/documents/web_content/prod007925.pdf

Missouri: Blunt Highlights Economic Need for Improved Skills, Curriculum

Hoping to capitalize on optimism and on a communal spirit stemming from an economic upswing and a balanced budget, **Missouri Governor Matt Blunt (R)** used his January 24 address to call for expanded and smarter investments in preparing students to compete in the global economy.

“Today, 36 percent of Missouri’s college freshmen require basic remedial courses in college,” he said. “In college, they are being taught skills they should have learned in high school or even junior high. Taxpayers should not have to pay twice for the same classes. Parents have told me that they are concerned about this, and they are worried about the good family-supporting jobs around the country that are being moved overseas.”

In an effort to prepare more of the state’s students for the twenty-first century workforce, Blunt proposed funding for one hundred new “technology classrooms” that would spark achievement and interest in science and math. He also pledged to tighten accountability and standards for public colleges and universities in order to answer concerns from employers who are increasingly concerned about the declining literacy skills of college graduates in the state.

Governor Blunt’s complete speech is available at http://go.missouri.gov/State_of_the_State_2007.htm.

New Mexico: Richardson Seeks Tougher Standards, Stronger Teachers

In his state of the state address on January 16, **New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson (D)** pledged to work to “expand the bounds of opportunity for every New Mexican.” He added that a key component in that effort was having an education system that provided children with a “world-class education” that prepares them for success in the world of work.

To that end, Richardson proposed a substantial investment in modernizing public schools, including \$238 million to “relieve overcrowded schools and catch up on repairs” and \$20 million for charter schools. He also aims to increase the amount of time that students spend in their schools by investing in afterschool programs, expanding school days and years, and funding Reading and Math Summer Institutes.

Richardson recognized the role of high schools as a linchpin in the education pipeline. In calling for an increase in the dropout age from seventeen to eighteen years old, he noted that, “You can’t encourage success if you make it easy to drop out of school.” He also called for higher graduation requirements.

The governor pledged to forgive student loans for teachers in low-income schools and to give a tax credit to highly qualified teachers in low-performing schools. He also sought to expand college access and affordability and proposed additional scholarship funds, capping tuition hikes in the next three years, and providing a state tax credit to help pay for tuition and fees.

Governor Richardson’s complete speech is available at <http://www.governor.state.nm.us/MEDIA/PDF/StateoftheState2007.pdf>.

West Virginia: Manchin Enlists Business Community to Ensure Twenty-First Century Skills

On January 10, **West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin (D)** used his state of the state address to highlight the critical role of education in attracting jobs and in preparing workers for new challenges.

“I can’t travel anywhere on an economic development trip, whether it’s in West Virginia, across the country or around the world, without hearing from companies about their need to find an educated and dedicated workforce,” Manchin said. “MIT economics professor Frank Levy told our P-20 Jobs Cabinet...that jobs which rely on workers to follow simple instructions are disappearing, replaced by automation and low-cost overseas labor. Workers in today’s economy must have the advanced thinking, language and reasoning skills to solve problems and adapt to changing conditions. So, with a changing world economic climate, we need to look closely at our state’s education and workforce development programs.”

To ensure that students graduate from high school prepared for the global economy, Manchin pledged to continue his work with the state’s Jobs Cabinet, but he also said he would create a Governor’s Workforce Planning Council. The new council will identify current and future workforce needs and work with the state’s two-year colleges to make sure that academic programs are aligned to meet these needs. Manchin also announced a public outreach and “how to” campaign that will emphasize taking a rigorous high school curriculum and receiving individualized preparation for going to college.

Governor Manchin’s complete speech is available at <http://www.wv.gov/sec.aspx?id=100>.

Straight A’s: Public Education Policy and Progress is a biweekly newsletter that focuses on education news and events both in Washington, DC, 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 nonprofit organization working to make it possible for America’s secondary school students to achieve high standards.



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In this issue:

- House Passes FY 2007 Funding Measure: Education Programs Slated to Receive Additional Funding
- President Bush Releases FY 2008 Budget: Proposal Includes Several High School Initiatives, but Would Cut Overall Education Spending
- State of the State Addresses: Governors Link Education to Economic Interests, Push Math, Science, and Technology Education
 - **Alaska:** Palin Pledges to Work Toward a “World-Class” Education System
 - **Delaware:** Minner Aims to Expand Upon “Tremendous Progress” in Education
 - **Hawaii:** Lingle Calls for STEM-Focused Workforce Development
 - **Indiana:** Daniels Seeks Bipartisan Consensus to Raise Educational Performance
 - **Minnesota:** Pawlenty Vows to Address the “Silent Crisis” in High Schools
 - **Missouri:** Blunt Highlights Economic Need for Improved Skills, Curriculum
 - **New Mexico:** Richardson Seeks Tougher Standards, Stronger Teachers
 - **West Virginia:** Manchin Enlists Business Community to Ensure Twenty-First Century Skills

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