

## The Education Report

**APRIL 27, 2007**

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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

For the past two years, national leaders in business, education, research and technology have warned legislators about a pending crisis for the United States. According to these individuals, armed with facts, figures and countless studies, our position as the leader in the global marketplace is at risk because of our declining achievement in science, technology, engineering and math. Plummeting achievement scores in math and science and growing high school dropout rates translate to a poorly trained and less competitive American workforce. This week the enormous pressure brought to bear on the Congress regarding this issue by the business, technology, research and education communities brought about results. In the Senate, S.761, the America COMPETES Act passed by a wide margin of 88-8. This omnibus measure will infuse the National Science Foundation, the Departments of Energy and Education and all other science related agencies with new programs and potentially new capital to address these concerns.

In the House of Representatives, several other bills were adopted that similarly create new sources of funding for STEM educators, researchers and technology developers. Though these proposals differ in design and it will take time to come up with compromise policies, it is clear that the Congress is heeding the voices that have promoted the need for a dramatically increased federal investment in the STEM fields.

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When Congress was not debating STEM policy this week they were debating the future of federal spending in Iraq and Afghanistan. After weeks of tense back and forth between the Democratic and Republican leaders in the Congress and the Bush Administration, a \$124 billion compromise emergency supplemental spending bill was adopted in the House and Senate and will soon be sent to the President for a certain veto.

The impending veto means that next week will be devoted to developing an alternative spending plan. It also means a further delay in consideration of a compromise budget resolution for FY 2008. It is anticipated that conferees will be appointed next week to come to agreement on a spending amount for next year. If an agreement has not been reached by May 15, and a budget resolution has not been adopted, appropriators are free to begin drafting legislation absent Budget Committee guidance. Congressman David Obey (D-WI), Chair of the House Appropriations Committee, has made it clear he intends to do just that. A mark-up of the spending bill for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services and Education (LHHS) is tentatively set for May 16. This is indicative of the commitment of the Democratic leadership in the Congress to get all appropriations bills adopted prior to the end of the fiscal year—September 30—and to take up the historically most troublesome of those measures first—the LHHS bill.

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## **2. House and Senate Pass Competitiveness Legislation This Week**

On Wednesday, the Senate completed several days of debate on the America COMPETES Act, S. 761. The bill won overwhelming bipartisan support, passing by a vote of 88-8. The number of co-sponsors prior to floor debate on the measure reached 69, signaling a strong bipartisan commitment to the proposal, as well as a fairly amicable floor debate. STEM education advocates watched the debate closely, and there was cause for concern among supporters of National Science Foundation (NSF) education programs as Senator John Sununu (R-NH) offered an amendment that would have eliminated the bill's proposals to strengthen programs at the Education and Human Resources (EHR) directorate at the National Science Foundation.

Senator Sununu argued that requiring increases in funding for programs under the EHR directorate that are commensurate with increases for the NSF as a whole, as specified in the bill, undermined the Foundation's operations and goals. On the floor, he said this provision would set "a bad precedent," and that, "Once we move away from the peer review process, once we move away from independence within the National Science Foundation to allocate funds as the leadership there sees fit, then I think we run the risk of undermining the great strength that the National Science Foundation has represented over the past several years." The Senator failed to persuade his colleagues about these fears. His amendment failed by a vote of 24-74.

On the other side of the Capitol, the House passed HR 362, the “10,000 Teachers, 10 Million Minds” Science and Math Scholarship Act. This bill expands math and science education programs at the National Science Foundation and is the House’s contribution to legislation to address the competitiveness issue. The House passed the bill by a vote of 389-22 on April 24, 2007. The same day, the House also approved HR 363, the Sowing the Seeds Through Science and Engineering Research Act, which is a bill that expands and increases the federal commitment to research efforts at the NSF. This bill was also passed by an overwhelming vote of 397-20.

Staff indicates that collectively, these bills will allow the House and Senate to conference on “competitiveness” legislation and ultimately proceed with approval of a compromise bill. Hopes are that these efforts can get a final bill to the House and Senate this summer.

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### **3. Senate HELP Committee Holds High School Reform Hearing**

On Tuesday, April 24, the Senate Health Education Labor and Pension Committee held a hearing titled, “NCLB Reauthorization: Modernizing Middle and High Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” Members present at the hearing agreed on the need to reform and modernize American middle and high schools now in order to help prepare students to succeed in college and in today’s diverse and highly skilled workforce. The timing of the hearing also gave Chairman Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Senators Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) and Richard Burr (R-NC) the opportunity to promote their bill, the Graduation Promises Act (GPA), authorizing \$2.5 billion for high schools which was introduced late in the afternoon on Monday, April 23.

Governor Bob Wise (D-WV), Alliance for Excellent Education, commented that currently, federal funding in education targets the “bookends of the education system by concentrating on grades pre-K-6 (about \$18 billion) and higher education (about \$16 billion).” The “missing middle” is the nation’s secondary schools, which receive little to no funding from the federal level (about \$5 billion). Robert Balfanz, Talent Development Middle School Project and Center for Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University, added to Wise’s comments and stated that the federal government can play a catalytic role in ending the nation’s dropout crisis by creating a system of secondary schools which graduate all students prepared to succeed in college, career and civic life. Balfanz highlighted the GPA as “one large step in this direction” and urged members of the HELP Committee to both support its authorization and funding. John Podesta, Center for American Progress, focused on why passage of the GPA is of vital importance to the nation’s continued economic viability. He explained that the GPA will provide critical federal resources to aid states in their efforts to develop, implement and expand proven methods for keeping a diverse range of students in school all the way through graduation.

Chairman Kennedy closed the hearing by asking about the distinction between middle school and high schools. Wise responded by using the image of building a strong foundation for a new house. In the early grades of education, a strong foundation is critical. However, as students get older their differing needs and learning mechanism must be recognized. He compared this to continuing to build a house after the foundation is laid. Construction does not stop at the foundation but rather plans are created in order to complete the house so individuals can actually live in it. It appeared that members on both sides of the aisle could not agree more.

More information on the hearing is available at [http://help.senate.gov/Hearings/2007\\_04\\_24/2007\\_04\\_24.html](http://help.senate.gov/Hearings/2007_04_24/2007_04_24.html).

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#### **4. Recent Campus Violence Spurs Schools Safety Hearings**

One week after the tragic shootings at Virginia Tech, lawmakers in Congress began weighing in on ways to prevent more tragedies on college campuses. Several Committee hearings were scheduled this week to focus on college campus safety issues. The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee held a joint hearing on Monday titled “Security on America’s College Campuses.” The hearing explored the adequacy of campuses’ mental health resources, security plans and communications systems.

Committee Chairman Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) opened the hearing with many questions on his mind and asked witnesses: Are America’s colleges and universities doing enough to maintain security? What are the best ways to do that? What methods and technologies does experience tell us have been most effective in keeping college communities safe? The consensus from the witnesses was that campus safety precaution strategies need to also prepare and plan for the worst case scenarios. It was also suggested that needed today on most college campuses is training in threat assessments and in analyzing a threat in order to provide an appropriate response. Maintaining a safe campus requires a “holistic approach” that brings all relevant personnel and tools together in a coordinated and balanced effort.

On the opposite side of the Capitol, the House Education and Labor Committee took a different approach, and held a hearing combining two critically important issues that will be addressed during the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act: 1) dropout prevention and 2) enhancing school safety. While the title of the hearing, “NCLB: Preventing Dropouts and Enhancing School Safety” included school safety, the majority of the hearing focused on dropout prevention and how the No Child Left Behind Act can address this problem.

Several witnesses emphasized the importance of student engagement on safety and dropout prevention. Former Governor Bob Wise (D-WV) stated, “in order for students to succeed in high school or at any level of education, it is critical that they feel safe and engaged in their schools. Safety and engagement are the pillars of dropout prevention in our schools.” Kenneth Trump, president and CEO of National School Safety and Security Services said Congress needs to require schools to report campus-based criminal incidents so lawmakers and parents can make informed decisions. It was clear from witness testimony consensus is growing about a necessary national strategy to prevent students from dropping out of high school and to improve school safety.

For more information and witness testimony from the Senate and House hearings visit: <http://hsgac.senate.gov/index.cfm?Fuseaction=Hearings.Detail&HearingID=438> and: <http://edworkforce.house.gov/hearings/fc04>

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## **5. House Committee Approves NSF and NIST Reauthorization Bills**

Separate bills that would reauthorize the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) were approved by the House Science and Technology Committee this week. Upon completion of Committee action, the panel’s Chairman, Representative Bart Gordon (D-TN) said, “Each of these bills addresses issues at the core of our economic health and prosperity. I’m glad my colleagues understand the important role that both of these agencies play in our nation’s ability to innovate and to inspire future generations of innovators.”

H.R. 1867, the National Science Foundation Authorization Act of 2007, authorizes \$21 billion for the National Science Foundation for the period FY 2008-2010. The bill would:

- Keep NSF on a 10-year doubling path;
- Establish a pilot program of one-year seed grants for new investigators to help improve funding rates for young investigators and stimulate higher-risk research;
- Encourage NSF to foster relationships between academia and industry in order to spawn U.S. competitiveness; and
- Further the agency’s tradition of supporting education in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields by increasing funding for certain NSF education programs including programs authorized under H.R. 362, “10,000 Teachers, 10 Million Minds” Math and Science Scholarship Act.”

H.R. 1868, the Technology Innovation and Manufacturing Stimulation Act of 2007, is the first full reauthorization of the National Institutes of Standards and Technology since 1991. It authorizes \$2.5 billion for NIST for FY 2008-2010. The bill would:

- Increase funding for the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP), a public-private partnership which leverages federal, state and private investments to implement and stimulate new manufacturing processes and technologies. Funding for MEP would be scheduled to double within 10 years;
- Replace the Advanced Technology Program (ATP), which was eliminated from the President's FY08 budget request, with the Technology Innovation Program (TIP), to better reflect global innovation competition by funding high-risk, high-reward, pre-competitive technology development, focusing on small and medium-sized companies;
- Set the funding of research labs at NIST on a ten-year path to doubling; and
- Provide construction funding to complete much-needed lab upgrades.

Committee leadership hopes these bills will be considered on the floor of the House in coming weeks.

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## **6. In Brief**

### **EDUCATION AND LABOR COMMITTEE HOSTS NY ATTORNEY GENERAL**

On Wednesday, New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo served as the sole witness for a House Education and Labor Committee hearing on marketing practices in the student loan industry. The hearing, "Examining Unethical Practices in the Student Loan Industry," offered Cuomo the opportunity to share the findings of his investigations into the relationships between schools and lenders and proffer his opinion on the role of the federal government in "restoring consumer confidence" in the student loan system. According to Cuomo, his investigation has "revealed an unholy alliance between lenders and many trusted institutions of higher education," and members of the Committee on both sides of the aisle suggested that Department of Education oversight of the lenders in the Federal Family Education Loan Program needs strengthening. After the hearing it was announced that Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings would appear before the Committee on May 10 to answer questions on oversight of the student loan and Reading First programs. For more information, visit:

<http://edworkforce.house.gov/hearings/fc042507.shtml>.

### **STEM ED CAUCUS HOSTS BRIEFING ON SCHOOL COUNSELORS**

This week, the House STEM Education Caucus held a briefing that featured a panel discussion of the role school counselor's play in fueling the science, technology, engineering and mathematics pipeline. Attendees heard about the role of the school counselor, the effect that Sputnik had on the profession, today's competitiveness crisis and how school counselors have joined their fellow educators in using data to inform and improve practice. In addition, they heard how one remarkable young student credits school counselors with providing important information to aid decision-making, and how

industry works collaboratively with schools and school counselors to create opportunities for students. The briefing was sponsored by the American School Counselor Association and featured remarks from a North Carolina counselor with significant experience with at-risk populations and steering them to these fields and a representative of Junior Engineering Technical Society (JETS), who spoke of industry's efforts to encourage young people's interests in these areas. For more information, visit <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/>.

### **SPELLINGS ANNOUNCES TASK FORCE ON STUDENT LOANS**

This week, Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings announced the formation of a Task Force on Student Loans to build upon the progress and work of recent negotiated rulemaking sessions. The internal task force includes representatives from the Department's Office of Post Secondary Education, Federal Student Aid and Office of the General Counsel, and representatives from the Office of Inspector General will participate in an advisory role. The Task Force will focus on several key issues that sparked controversy in recent negotiated rulemaking sessions. These issues include the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS), preferred lender lists, and prohibited inducements. The Secretary will consider the draft language and propose draft regulations based upon the recommendations of the Task Force. Secretary Spellings will then submit proposed regulatory language to go through a period of public comment before the final regulations will be posted in the Federal Register on or before November 1, 2007. For more information visit:

<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2007/04/04242007.html>

### **NATIONAL ACADEMIES INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE RELEASES DISABILITIES REPORT**

On Tuesday, the National Academies Institute of Medicine held a conference call briefing releasing a new report titled "The Future of Disability in America." According to the National Academies, the Centers for Disease Control, the Department of Education, and the National Institutes of Health, asked the Institute of Medicine to assess the current status of individuals with disabilities in key areas and provide recommendations for improvement, which resulted in the report. The report concludes that immediate action is essential for the nation to avoid harm and to help people with disabilities lead independent and productive lives. For more information on this report visit:

<http://www.iom.edu/CMS/3740/25335/42494.aspx>

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## **7. New Publications**

"Course Credit Accrual and Dropping Out of High School" Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics" (April 2007).

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2007/2007018.pdf>

“The Future of Disability in America” The National Academies Press (April 2007)  
[http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record\\_id=11898](http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=11898)

“Survey of the American Teacher: Expectations and Experiences 2006” MetLife (April 2007).  
<http://www.metlife.com/WPSAssets/81821402701160505871V1F2006MetLifeTeacherSurvey.pdf>

“The Promises and Pitfalls of Alternative Teacher Compensation Approaches” Education Public Interest Center (April 2007).  
<http://epsl.asu.edu/epru/documents/EPSSL-0704-231-EPRU.pdf>

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## **8. In the News**

“Panel Suggests Junk Food Ban in Schools to Help Fight Obesity” New York Times (4/26/07).  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/26/education/26lunch.html?\\_r=1&ref=education&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/26/education/26lunch.html?_r=1&ref=education&oref=slogin)

“Gates Foundation Takes on Education” ABC News (4/25/07).  
<http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/story?id=3076931&page=1&GMA=true>

“Billionaires Start \$60 Million Schools Effort” New York Times (4/25/07).  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/25/education/25schools.html?\\_r=1&ref=education&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/25/education/25schools.html?_r=1&ref=education&oref=slogin)

“House Passes Legislation to Increase Math and Science Teachers” CNN Online (4/25/07).  
<http://www.cnn.com/2007/EDUCATION/04/24/math.and.science.ap/index.html>

“Spreading Word of Campus Crisis Crucial, Senate Told” Washington Post (4/24/07).  
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/23/AR2007042301975.html>

“Three Lenders Agree to Change Lender Policies” CNN Online (4/23/07).  
<http://www.cnn.com/2007/EDUCATION/04/23/student.loan.probe.ap/index.html>

“Va. Schools Yield, Yet May Shape 'No Child’” Washington Post (4/23/07).

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/22/AR2007042201301.html>

“Education 'Peace Corps' Expanding Area Presence” Washington Post (4/23/07).

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/22/AR2007042201220.html>

“Laws Limit Options When a Student Is Mentally Ill” New York Times (4/19/07).

[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/19/us/19protocol.html?\\_r=1&ref=education&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/19/us/19protocol.html?_r=1&ref=education&oref=slogin)

“Colleges Relying on Lenders to Counsel Students” New York Times (4/23/07).

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/21/education/21exit.html?ref=education>

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## 9. About WPLLC

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