

## January 2012 Legislative Update

### ESEA Reauthorization

Both the Senate and the House of Representatives have not been able to come to agreement with the reauthorization, last completed in 2007. The Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee in the Senate, and the House Committee on Education and the Workforce are working on their draft pieces of legislation in order to get them onto the floor of the Senate and onto the House for votes. A good piece of news for IRA is **Literacy for All, Results for the Nation** (LEARN Act) (HR4037) and (S2740) is now a part of ESEA for reauthorization. This bill has funds for state competitions that “enhance states’ roles in improving literacy instruction and support the creation of high-quality literacy programs in schools.” It includes funds for professional development to ensure that at all stages of careers - from teacher preparation to highly qualified teachers that opportunities occur for collaboration, mentoring, and differentiated professional learning.

Senator Harkin’s (D-IA) bill makes significant changes to testing and accountability and includes multiple measures of student achievement with the assessment of higher order thinking and understanding. The bill would allow states to administer the assessments once annually or at multiple times during the year with a single valid summative test score at the end of the year. It would eliminate AYP.

In the House, Chairman Kline has two bills to overhaul ESEA, currently NCLB. The first, the **Student Success Act** would get rid of NCLB requirements and return responsibility to the states for student achievement while maintaining high expectations. It would also remove requirements for basic, proficient, and advanced levels of achievement and require states to establish academic standards. Disaggregating data would be a part of it but testing in science would be eliminated. The School Improvement Grant program would be eliminated and these funds would go to Title 1.

Teacher accountability is a large part of ESEA. In both the House and Senate versions, highly qualified teacher requirements would be eliminated and shifted to the states

The second bill, **Encouraging Innovation and Effective Teachers Act** would require school districts to develop a teacher evaluation system after seeking input from parents, teachers, school leaders, and other staff in the school. The bill would require that student achievement data be a significant part of teacher evaluations. Committees are expected to vote on the bills in February.

In Maryland, beginning in 2013, 30% of the evaluation of educators will be based on student growth on the mandated assessment. 20% will be based on student growth with the local assessment, and the remaining 50% will include instruction, planning and preparation, classroom environment, and other professional responsibilities.

#### Waivers

Secretary Duncan has instituted a waiver program since ESEA has not been reauthorized. This allows states to have flexibility with the NCLB “one size fits all” mandates in exchange for common standards and teacher evaluations. So far, 11 states have applied for waivers.

### FUNDING

Congress passed and President Obama signed funding legislation that is at a lower level for the first time since 2007. In the Senate, Chairman Harkin (D-IA) of the Labor, Health, Human Services, and Appropriations Subcommittee explained that the \$100 million cut for education has been painful but that the bill puts education and job skills training as foremost.

Title 1 will receive 14 billion (\$1.1 billion) (-8% cut) and Special Ed \$11 billion (-13%). Head Start’s cut is \$590 million (-8%).

The **Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program**, as a grant program, has been restored. Maryland has not competed for this grant funding. This program promotes literacy from birth to grade 12 with ongoing professional development and state literacy teams.

### Highly Qualified Educators

Highly qualified teachers and student learning are strongly linked. President Obama, in his State of the Union speech, said that teachers should be rewarded and weak teachers removed.

### Race to the Top

Maryland is implementing the Common Core State Standards and has joined the PARCC consortium for the development of assessments. The goal of this program is to prepare students for college and careers.

### Early Learning Race to the Top

Maryland is one of 9 states that have won this grant (\$50 million) to improve early learning for at-risk students. The money will be devoted to publicly funded preschools and early childhood programs. Standards for high quality early childhood programs will be developed. A public rating guide of early childhood programs will be presented.

### **Higher Education**

Both federal and state support for universities has been cut. As a result, college tuition rates for public universities are increasing. However, in Maryland, Gov. O'Malley has maintained support for higher education and has frozen tuition. President Obama urged Congress to stop interest rates on student loans from doubling in July and to extend the tuition tax credit. However, he said that universities must "rein in" their costs.

### **Opportunities for Advocacy**

March 22-23 – virtual workshop (webinar) and in-person workshop on Capitol Hill with Rich Long, IRA Govt. Relations Director. Sign up at [www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org) (Advocacy link).

June 25-26 – Legislative Workshop, Capitol Hill. Sign up at [www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org) (Advocacy link)

March 28 – SoMIRAC Conference Legislative Panel Featured Session – 9:30 – 10:30  
Kathy Lauritzen, Barb Kapinus, Ken Ulman, and Judy Docca

May 1 – IRA Convention – Chicago  
Govt. Relations Symposium – 9:00 – 11:45 – McCormick Place  
Tim Shanahan, Don Deshler, Michele Goady, Rich Long, Barb Kapinus  
"Meeting the Demands of Poverty and High Need Students"

Suzanne Clewell,  
IRA & SoMIRAC Govt. Relations Chairperson