

January 12, 2009

Memorandum

To: IRA Legislative Action Team
From: Rich Long, IRA Director of Government Relations
Subject: Economic Stimulus Legislation

Congress is now considering a massive spending bill to stimulate the US economy. Providing funds to schools to support construction activities is on the table; however, we know that money to support teachers and education could also be considered.

IRA believes that investing in high quality professional development (multi-sessions with stipends) will enhance the stimulus package. We suggest that funds—in addition to being spent over the summer in multi-week academies, or on weekends during the school year—be allotted for teachers to take critical courses to improve reading instruction.

Please consider sending the letter below *under your signature*. Or, draft a similar letter with local examples of why professional development is needed and how it will quickly stimulate economic activity *in your community*. Send it to your House Member and Senators. Schools will get immediate benefit from this spending. Also, significant professional development over the next two years will have an even longer-term impact on students and teachers. (Alan Farstrup, IRA's executive director, sent this letter to Capitol Hill.)

Send your letter via e-mail. (All paper correspondence is irradiated and will be delayed by weeks.)

Find your Member's email address here:

www.house.gov <<http://www.house.gov>> (look in the upper left hand corner and put your zip code in)

For your Senators use:

www.senate.gov <<http://www.senate.gov>> (look in the upper right hand corner).

For more letter tips please see the LAT manual:

http://www.reading.org/downloads/legislative/advocacy_manual0701.pdf
<http://www.reading.org/downloads/legislative/advocacy_manual0701.pdf>

Date (send as soon as possible but no later than 1/20/09)

The Honorable

Name

United States House of Representatives or United States Senate

Washington, DC 201

Re: Economic Stimulus Package

Dear Representative (or Dear Senator) x:

Literacy professional development is the most powerful tool policy makers have to improve reading achievement of high need students. These vulnerable students are the core of Title I, Title III, and IDEA programs.

The United States has over 18 million struggling learners – at all grade levels. Unfortunately, most of these children attend schools with the most challenges and the fewest resources. Professional development as a primary intervention for improvement will increase student learning. (This has been documented by Richard Correnti (AERA, 2007) and an IES's 2007 study by the Regional Education Laboratory at Edvance Research.)

- American schools need professional development programs that:
- fund consistent and precise instruction for teachers and administrators,
- coordinate with the needs of the schools, and
- target schools that are in school improvement *or* schools that have been identified by the state education agency as a school in need.

Professional development in the economic stimulus package will have an immediate *and* long-lasting impact on a part of the workforce that is frequently left out of “infrastructure” programs: women. The teaching workforce is 75% female. Also 18% of teachers have less than three years experience. Targeting these novices will make them better and induce them to stay with teaching, thus combating a persistent and costly retention problem.

Adequate funding is essential, not only for professional development programs themselves, but to cover the costs of substitute teachers that allow the classroom teachers the time to expand their knowledge and practice of teaching high-level content to vulnerable children.

The International Reading Association asks that you include professional development in the economic stimulus package. In doing so, Congress will be providing a stimulus to the economy, helping the largely female teaching force as it invests in the neediest children in the United States, and preparing a lost segment of our children to compete in this complex and technological society.

Sincerely yours,

If you have questions or wish to share any responses, please contact us at irawash@reading.org <<mailto:irawash@reading.org>> and for continual updates on Legislative Activities log into <http://sites.google.com/site/iralatupdate/> <<http://sites.google.com/site/iralatupdate/>>

Richard M. Long, Ed.D.
Director, Government Relations
International Reading Association
Suite 523
444 North Capitol Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 624-8800
(202) 624-8826 (fax)