

## **IRA Legislative Update December 14, 2008**

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### **Administration's Transition**

Arne Duncan, Harvard graduate and current head of the Chicago school system who is known for stressing teacher quality, is Obama's choice for secretary of education. If confirmed he will join the transition team as they make plans and set agendas. Some of these plans may well unfold early in 2009, before the president-elect takes office. Key chatter from the new administration centers on stimulus and jobs; this will affect choices on federal spending and jobs that focus on what the administration wants to accomplish.

- By March 6th Congress needs to pass —and the president sign — the spending plan for this fiscal year.
  - The 110th Congress adjourned without passing the formal appropriations bills to keep the government open through the year. Congress did pass the “emergency spending plan” — referred to as a Continuing Resolution. This Continuing Resolution kept the government functioning by spending, for the most part, based on last year's levels. However this authority runs out on March 6th.
- Appropriators are planning to move their spending plan very early in 2009.
  - The 111th Congress convenes on January 6th (the new president is inaugurated on January 20th). Congress plans for this spending to be used as part of the stimulus package. They are looking for ideas, in education, where spending can be directed that doesn't result in obligations to spend in the following year.
    - One idea focuses on summer school. This would mean putting more money into the system to pay teachers — at the same time providing the opportunity to reverse the summer learning drop often observed in the test scores of high need students.
- The transition team for the US Department of Education (ED) has discussed changing some of the new regulations for NCLB that the ED has just enacted.
  - These new regulations include:
    - + requirements on using growth models,
    - + changes to the 20% set-aside for supplemental education services,
    - + graduation rates and other matters.
- Some observers claim that the team is going to recommend action to stay some of the requirements, while others are interpreting their comments to mean that they are studying all ideas.

- The current US Department of Education is creating guidance on these new regulations — and a set of PowerPoint slides outlining the relationship of RTI (IDEA funds) with Title I and Title III (ELL) funds.

### **Congressional Agenda**

- The 111th Congress and Elementary and Secondary Education Act
- Congressional education leaders are considering moving parts of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (of which No Child Left Behind was the 2001 amendment) rather than try to move an entire bill.
  - This idea floated around a bit in the last Congress. It has the advantage of moving some items and isolating the most difficult issues — which may result in making it harder to pass the more contentious items. However, it may make it easier to move forward with a new emphasis on literacy.
- Congress is also scheduled to rewrite the statute governing the Institute for Education Sciences (IES). IES is the arm of the US Department of Education that conducts research, technical assistance, and dissemination of research.

### **Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Reauthorization in the 111th Congress**

On November 17, 2008, the Senate Committee on Health Education, Labor and Pensions held the first in a series of discussions to identify key priorities, suggestions and challenges with stakeholders as Congress begins the new WIA reauthorization process.

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Title II of the WIA is important to family literacy because the law specifies family literacy as an option to meet adult education and literacy needs. One of the purposes of the act is to "assist adults who are parents to obtain the educational skills necessary to become full partners in the educational development of their children." Family literacy programs are eligible providers under this law. The provisions of the act are administered by the U.S. Department of Education.

Two bills of interest to IRA would amend the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act:

- "Adults Achieving the American Dream Act of 2007 (H.R. 2214)," would amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to reauthorize and increase appropriations for Even Start Family Literacy Programs through FY 013.
- "Strengthening Communities through Education and Integration Act of 2008 (S.3334)" seeks to
  - expand and increase the appropriation authorization for the Even Start Family Literacy Program,
  - expand learning time for middle and secondary school English Language Learners,
  - define the term English Language Learner, and
  - provide tax credits for teachers of English Language Learners.