

IRA Legislative Action Team Legislative Update March 1, 2009

Overview

- * Economic Stimulus - What is it? What does it mean to you, your local council, and to IRA?
- * Funding for Education - What is the Congress doing now for the upcoming school year?
- * And, the Budget proposal for the next school year - Are there changes I should pay attention to?

Economic Stimulus

An economic stimulus package was passed by the Congress and signed into law by the president. It basically is designed to send money from the federal government into a wide range of activities that are designed to save jobs, create jobs, build capacity for the economy to expand. Specifically there are almost \$900 billion in program funds and tax reductions. Of this about \$100 billion is for education. The largest part is for governors to use to support schools (it is called the economic stabilization fund). Money flows to K-12 and institutions of higher education to try to offset the loss of state revenues that had been used for these purposes. All of these funds are to be spent by 2011 and are not part of the usual appropriations process.

\$13 billion is to go to Title I of which about \$3 billion is for school improvement. These funds are to be used for professional development activities such as summer workshops, courses, and in-depth programs. They can also be used for summer school, extend day programs, and longer school year programs. In addition, many districts are expected to be able to send Title I funds to school buildings that have eligible students who have never been served. This could mean that there will be more Title I programs in middle and high schools a point that many have been talking about as a goal for Title I. One interesting note, the school improvement funds that had already been in use by schools have been used to hire literacy coaches.

There are also other funds and programs for IDEA, Head Start, teacher enhancement, technology and other areas. In addition there is a \$5 billion dollar fund for the Secretary of Education to administer for school reform. For more in-depth information, go to www.ed.gov <<http://www.ed.gov/>> .

The federal government has said that on March 19th they will send funds to the states (the school improvement funds will be on a separate track and sent out in July). Guidance is to be issued by US ED the week of March 2nd.

For up-to-date information on the stimulus and how your council could benefit from this program, participate in an audio conference on Tuesday, March 10th at 8:00 PM Eastern. For information on how to register email irawash@reading.org <<mailto:irawash@reading.org>> or call 202-624-8800.

Regular Funding for the upcoming school year

The regular funding process is called appropriations. For most parts of government funding is provided for the year it is appropriated. For example, this is fiscal year (FY) 09; however, for most education programs these funds are sent to school for the school year (SY) 09 - 10. This means that the discussion now going on in Congress for funding for this fiscal year (FY 09) will impact your schools this coming Fall.

As of March 1st, the House has passed its version of the appropriations program. It contains small increases for education - Title I for example increases, while the majority of other programs are level funded (no change). The one major difference is Reading First, it is being proposed for zero funding. Meanwhile, the Senate is working on their own spending plan - some observers are saying that the Senate will not offer any increases, as the stimulus package has put a lot of federal money into the education system.

To keep current with the frequent changes in the funding program, log on to the LAT website <http://sites.google.com/site/iralatupdate> <<http://sites.google.com/site/iralatupdate>>

Budget for the following school year

On Thursday, February 26th the president sent his budget proposal to the Congress. It wasn't long or detailed. It did outline areas of interest.

1. the development of an emphasis on early childhood
2. a \$500 million program to improve graduation rates
3. an emphasis on supporting innovative programs to improve schools

4. an increase funds for educational research, and
5. an increase in attention on teacher education programs.

In addition, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has said that he wants to make more use of charter schools, a policy point the president made in his speech to Congress on February 24th.

In addition...

There is a lot of buzz in the Congress about a whole host of issues. The House is working on the Workforce Investment Act - which includes the adult education programs and the National Institute for Literacy. There is also interest in a Pre K through 12th grade literacy program. One aspect of this initiative is to include 0 - 3 as a part of a comprehensive literacy agenda. On the horizon is the rewriting of the statute governing education research by the federal government at the Institute for Educational Sciences and the rewriting of the No Child Left Behind statute. For more information on this and other legislative activities go to the IRA Legislative Action Team site at:

<http://sites.google.com/site/iralatupdate>
<<http://sites.google.com/site/iralatupdate>> .