

IRA Legislative Update

January 19, 2011

Introduction

The 112th Congress has convened and the new majority in the House of Representatives is moving quickly on several key issues. The Senate, as is tradition, is waiting to initiate legislative action after the President's State of the Union message on January 25. The President will submit his budget to the Congress on February 14. The deadline for a new funding bill for the balance of this federal fiscal year is March 4.

Much closer to the classroom are activities at state capitols and state agencies. Issues include funding cuts for the upcoming school year, the work on the new Core Curriculum Standards and the state literacy teams.

Please note that there are several changes on the Advocacy page <<http://www.reading.org/General/Legislative.aspx>> to help state councils and members stay informed. There is a new sign up sheet for a new Literacy Action Team and information on the upcoming Legislative Workshop on March 17 and 18 in Washington, DC.

Education in the House of Representatives

The new majority in the House of Representatives is making several changes. The name of the education committee is changing from the House Education and Labor Committee to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. There will be fewer members on the committee. Of the 23 Republicans, 12 will be new. These new members were not a part of previous negotiations and we do not know their positions on several key issues. The number of Democrats on the committee and who they will be has not been finalized.

The new chair of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, Chairman Kline (R-MN) has said there will be four subcommittees (not six) and that they will produce shorter bills. This is likely to mean that if there is a rewriting of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that it will be done in sections.

The House of Representatives in general will require all bills to have a specific spending amount. This is to make more precise how much money will be needed for each legislative initiative. Plus any new measure will need to include what is being cut to fund this new program.

Funding

The new Republican majority in the House is pushing to roll back funding levels to 2008. Their first opportunity to make this a reality will be when the funding measure for the final six months of the fiscal year expires on March 4. All parts of education could be cut significantly. The K-12 the funding for this year isn't sent to the schools until the fall of this year.

Most other departments spend their money as the year unfolds. IRA will be focused on spending for literacy professional development in Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (FY 2010 at \$250 million). Please see the current funding levels compared to the proposed drop to 2008 levels for Title I Part A; English Language Acquisition (ELA); and education research:

FY 2008 funding	FY 2010 funding
Title I Part A: \$14,894.47 million	\$15,605 million
ELA: \$700.40 million	\$750 million
Education research: \$546.11 million	\$659 million

What will be interesting to see is what the President recommends for the next fiscal year in his budget proposal. All indications are that the Administration will be pushing for funding for their flagship programs: Race to the Top and School Improvement Grants. We also expect to see proposed cuts in a wide range of programs in order to reduce the overall federal deficits.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (currently called No Child Left Behind)

The Senate education committee chair, Senator Harkin (D-IA) expects to have a bill out by this summer. The committee has been working on a comprehensive change to ESEA/NCLB for almost a year. There is a broad consensus on many of the elements of change - with many specifics to be finalized. One senior staffer says they will move the measure as soon as they have the votes in committee.

As reported elsewhere, the House is still organizing and decisions on ESEA/NCLB will be made by a significantly different committee. There will be more discussions on vouchers, charter schools, and other significant issues.

Core Standards

Core standards is a state, national, and federal issue. Over 40 states have said that they are going to adopt the core standards. Currently they have committees looking at the standards and deciding on what needs to be adapted for their state. Some of these committees include IRA members and representatives of IRA state councils. IRA is going to hold a session at the IRA annual meeting on what states are doing and allow state councils to share their experiences. Race to the Top includes a requirement that states adopt the standards to receive the funding, making this an important state issue. In addition, in drafting the new ESEA many expect the new standards to be a requirement.

Nationally, two consortiums have been funded to develop assessments for the standards. IRA hopes to hold a webinar where both PARCC and SMARTER Balance present. More information on this shortly.

State Literacy Teams

Forty-eight states have applied for funds to develop state literacy teams. This is part of the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program. Several IRA councils have membership on their state teams. This is the first step in a two step process for states to apply for funding to support professional development in literacy for teachers working with students age 0 - grade 12. The first round of grants will go to 8 to 12 states and if funding holds for this fiscal year, 8 to 12 more states will be funded.

Literacy Action Team

With a new Congress we need to refocus our legislative efforts. If you wish to participate - and receive information and contact your member of the House and Senators to educate them on what is important for literacy, please sign up for the new action team by using the following link.

<https://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?formkey=dGhiRVQ5OHdzdi1fMEMtNnZPV3p5WHc6MA>

IRA Legislative Workshop

On March 17th and 18th in Washington, DC IRA will host a legislative workshop for IRA members. (The third in this series will be on June 27th & 28th.)

AGENDA

March 17 and 18, 2011 Washington, DC Government Relations Legislative Workshop, IRA
444 North Capitol St, NW; Washington, DC

Thursday, March 17

11:30 - 12:00 Registration

12:00 - 1:00 Lunch (provided for all workshop participants)

Discussion of Reading Legislation including:

- * LEARN Bill
- * Reauthorization of NCLB
- * Middle School Reform Legislation
- * Funding

1:30 - 2:30 Initiatives At Department Of Education And How Reading Will Be Impacted:

- * Professional Development
- * School Improvement Grants
- * Race To The Top
- * Other Programs

2:30 - 3:00 Meeting Your Legislator:

- * How to deliver your message
- * Talking Points
- * LEARN Bill
- * Funding for reading programs

3:00 - 5:30 Hill Visits

Friday, March 18

8:30 - 9:00 Breakfast (provided)

9:00 -12:00 Applying Lessons Learned to State Advocacy

How can you help your State and Local Council in their advocacy efforts?

- * Selecting Issues

- * Teaching others how to talk about these issues
 - * Being engaged in the "the process"
- 12:00 - 1:00 Lunch (provided)
- 1:00-3:00 Identify Legislative Issues and Set Priorities
- * Using surveys/Identifying needs
 - * Internet information
 - * Legislative Agenda

Committees
Governors
SEA

Call the IRA Washington office with questions regarding the workshop at 202-624-8800 or email irawash@reading.org<<mailto:irawash@reading.org>>. Additional details will be posted on the Advocacy page<<http://www.reading.org/General/Legislative.aspx>>.

To sign-up go to:

If you have trouble viewing or submitting this form, you can fill it out online:

<https://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?formkey=dE40b1NKVFEyRUdsdG1VSHZvRVZKamc6MQ>

Overall

The legislative outlook is bleak. Funding for education is in jeopardy. The new core standards are being implemented at a time where there will be few resources for the professional development that is needed. Teacher evaluations are being tied to student performance at the same time requirements are increasing and resources are dwindling.

IRA is very involved in discussions on many of these issues. In the short term we will be convening conference calls for state council leaders to talk among themselves about core standards and state literacy teams.

We continue to push for the adoptions of the LEARN Act (Literacy for Every American, Results for the Nation); for changes in ESEA/NCLB; and for teachers to be empowered to be able to make the decisions that they need to be able to make to make a greater difference for their students.

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