

## **IRA Update June 2, 2010**

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<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/05/26/33edujobs.h29.html?tkn=SQQFCfej275CIWQdVvprcNb4OqV%2FswrnkRGJ&cmp=clp-edweek>

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### **New Push Launched for Education Jobs Bill**

By Alyson Klein

The presidents of both national teachers' unions joined key lawmakers and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan on Capitol Hill today to drum up support for legislation that would provide \$23 billion to help school districts cope with a looming tidal wave of layoffs.

Supporters say up to 300,000 education jobs—including teachers, support-staff members, and others—may be riding on the latest version of the bill, which relies on a funding mechanism that supporters say is more narrowly targeted than previous education aid under the federal economic-stimulus program.

Rep. David Obey, D-Wis., the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, said he plans to introduce the measure as an amendment to the must-pass emergency-spending bill for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that his panel is considering tomorrow.

The original plan was for the Senate to vote on the language first, but the measure's sponsor, Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, the chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, said yesterday he didn't have the 60 votes needed to cut off debate in order to pass the bill.

But if the language makes it through the House of Representatives, it can be included in a conference report reconciling the two bills. Conference reports can't be amended, so if Republicans and moderate Democrats in the Senate decided to vote against the measure, they'd also be voting against the entire war supplemental-spending bill and could be accused of defunding the troops in an election year.

The House passed a similar provision on a different jobs bill back in December. But that vote was very close, and the legislation isn't a sure bet this time around. Moderate Democrats are concerned that there is no cut to offset the new education spending. And many Republicans oppose what they deem a "bailout" for education.

Supporters of the bill were quick to point out what they see as the reasons lawmakers may suffer politically if they don't vote in favor of the legislation.

Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., the chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, said that school districts, which have been working to implement changes to improve education, would have to lay off teachers because of problems caused by "financial scandals," an apparent reference to Wall Street.

"It will be a scandal on this Congress" if lawmakers fail to act, he said.

### **Administration Backing**

Secretary Duncan said that educators play a role in the overall economy, purchasing houses and groceries and contributing to their communities, so the economic impact of massive layoffs could be substantial. He said that the bill's language has the full support of the White House, and that he has spoken personally to President Barack Obama about it.

The language Mr. Obey is scheduled to introduce in his committee on Thursday differs from other versions of the bill in a few key ways.

Earlier proposals were modeled on the \$48.6 billion State Fiscal Stabilization Fund in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act-the stimulus program-which let states use their allocations first to restore state cuts to K-12 and higher education and then distribute the rest of the money to districts based on existing formulas.

Under the latest bill, money would flow directly to a state's governor, who would then distribute it right to school districts based on state formulas or the federal formula for Title I aid to disadvantaged students. Districts could then use the money to restore workers, hire new staff, or for compensation, benefits, and on-the-job training. The money could be used for early childhood education and K-12 positions, not higher education.

The measure would require states to sign off on the same four education-redesign-oriented assurances spelled out in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the 2009 federal economic-stimulus legislation that provided up to \$100 billion for education.

Those assurances-improving teacher quality and distribution, revamping standards and assessments, beefing up state data systems, and turning around low-performing schools-were left out of the bill the House passed in December, but Rep. Miller said the move was necessary to help ensure passage of the legislation.

The measure includes \$5.7 billion to shore up Pell Grants for college students. But, while the stimulus law asked states to restore cuts to both higher and K-12 education, the new legislation is aimed only at K-12 job losses.

One of the major complaints about the \$100 billion in the 2009 aid package was the lack of strong prohibitions on states' diversion of the money for education to other areas. Joel Packer, the executive director of the Committee for Education Funding, a lobbying coalition of education groups, said the language intended to discourage states from diverting money to purposes other than education appears to be strong.

Supporters didn't specify another strategy if this latest legislative tack doesn't work.

"You can't have a Plan B for stupidity," Rep. Obey said.

To help win passage of the bill, the National Education Association, with the help of the American Federation of Teachers, is working on a media blitz called "Speak Up for Education and Kids."

The effort by the two teachers' unions includes an NEA commercial in which children dressed in suits and carrying briefcases ask whether Congress would be more willing to save their teachers' jobs or keep their classes small if the children were Wall Street bankers. The NEA has also established a hotline to help supporters of the bill reach their representatives in Congress.

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PHOTO SIDEBAR: Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., the chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, left, Rep. David Obey, D-Wis., the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, and Catherine Poff, a teacher from Kentucky who has received a layoff notice, appear a press conference in Washington on May 26 that called for legislation that would provide \$23 billion to help school districts cope with a looming layoffs. -Andrew Council for Education Week

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PHOTO SIDEBAR: Anise Anderson, a teacher from Georgia who has received a layoff notice, speaks at the Capitol Hill press conference on May 26. -Andrew Council for Education Week  
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House Delays Vote on Jobs Bill, Medicare 'Doc Fix,' COBRA Subsidy

**HOUSE DELAYS VOTE ON JOBS BILL, MEDICARE 'DOC FIX,' COBRA**

**SUBSIDY** Unable to agree on a final bill, the House of Representatives recessed May 28 without voting on the omnibus Jobs bill (H.R. 4213). The next session is not scheduled until June 8. The Economic Policy Institute estimates that the bill's package of aid to states, infrastructure projects, extension of unemployment insurance and COBRA benefits, creation of summer jobs, loan guarantees for small businesses and other provisions will help save or create well over a million critically needed jobs, including more than 100,000 education jobs. The unemployment and COBRA extensions benefit nearly 10 million Americans who have lost their jobs and are receiving unemployment compensation while they look for work. Nearly half—46 percent—of all unemployed workers have been out of work for six months or more—some 6.7 million workers, the highest number of long-term unemployed since the Great Depression. The safety net spending also will benefit the economy as a whole by circulating cash into local communities and helping businesses avert further job cuts. Millions of people now are no longer eligible for up to 99 weeks of jobless benefits and the scheduled 21 percent cut in Medicare payments to doctors is now in effect. The measure, now stalled in the House, would replace the cut with a 1.3 percent increase for the rest of 2010 and a 1 percent increase for 2011. It would also extend unemployment benefits and a 65 percent federal pick up of COBRA health-insurance costs to help those newly laid off stay on their former employer's health benefits. The bill also closes a host of tax loopholes that have allowed many of the wealthiest Americans to pay a lower income tax rate than the average steelworker, encouraged businesses to move their operations overseas to escape U.S. taxes and allowed some professionals to forgo paying their share of Medicare and Social Security taxes. *Contributors and sources: Bernadette Bailey, New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, Associated Press, The Hill, Politico, Alliance for Retired Americans Alert, BNA Healthcare Daily Report, Kaiser Foundation Daily Policy Report, AFL-CIO Now. Frank Stella, editor; Mary Boyd, copyeditor; Janelle Bowe, design.*