

IRA Legislative Update
March 5, 2011

There is a critical vote coming up on Tuesday in the Senate. And you may want to have your voice heard.

The budget battle in Congress is now entering it's next phase. On Tuesday, March 8th the Senate will vote on two budget proposals for funding the government for the balance of the fiscal year (seven months). The first vote will be on the House passed measure HR 1. It cuts education by 16%. Specifically it cuts Title I by 5%, Striving Readers by 100%, and eliminates the National Writing Project, RIF, and other programs. As you recall, this is a part of the push to reduce the deficit and the climbing national debt. Having said that, it is important to also recall that this measure only touches 14% of the budget (the group of programs called non-defense discretionary spending.) It doesn't impact cut defense, or entitlements.

HR 1 is anticipated to be voted down by the Senate. The critical vote is the one on the Senate Democratic Alternative being offered as an amendment by Senator Inouye (D-HA) the chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee. It restores funding for Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy program, increases Title I, and puts the National Writing Project and RIF into the Investment in Innovation Fund (I3) where they would no longer be categorized as an earmark. The amendment is being strongly supported by our two champions for Striving Readers, Senator Harkin (D-IA) and Senator Murray (D-WA) who played significant roles in structuring the amendment.

Now for the political reality. It too is expected to not get the 60 votes needed to pass. At this point the budget negotiations will begin. If the Inouye Amendment fails to get a significant number of Senators voting to support it than the negotiators will not be able to push for education to have some protection and Striving Readers to be funded in the upcoming fiscal year (FY 11). This is where we need your help.

Please contact your Senators by calling 202-224-3121 or emailing them. You can find out their email address by going to:

http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm

The message is fairly simple:

Please restore funding for literacy programs by voting for the Inouye Amendment to the CR.

If you want more information on the entire package the Senate Appropriations Committee chair is proposing, which includes cutting federal spending by over \$51 billion below the president's request for the fiscal year go to:

<http://appropriations.senate.gov/news.cfm?method=news.view&id=7e62b4eb-ed09-4dd4-86f0-411534783127>

Thank you for your time and effort.

Richard Long, Ed.D.
Director of Government Relations
International Reading Association
202-624-8800