

# **IRA Legislative Update**

## **June 28, 2010**

### Introduction

This update will touch on:

1. Overview of what is doing on
2. Funding - where are we on the Jobs Bill & regular appropriations
3. Core Standards & State Literacy Teams
4. ESEA reauthorization, the LEARN Act
5. Legislative Survey - The IRA Government Relations Committee wants to know what is important.
6. Misc... demise of National Institute for Literacy, rewriting of the Workforce Investment Act; vouchers
7. Upcoming Webinars

### Overview

Congressional action on a wide array of issues is clearly being impacted by speculations as to how the electorate is going to respond in the upcoming elections in the US. This is impacting education and literacy from several directions. Funding for states to be used to forestall the letting go of over 300,000 teachers is now down to \$10 billion and an estimated 140,000 teachers. The Core Curriculum standards have been released and states who wish to gather funds from the federal government through the Race to the Top process must agree to these standards by August. The guidance for the state literacy teams is being finalized and should be released soon. The rewriting of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is moving slowing and unlikely to be finished before the 2010 elections.

### Funding

The funding issue is in new sections - first is the fight over the supplemental appropriations and the second is the regular appropriations. Congressional democratic leaders in Congress have been pushing for funding to be provided to the states to allow them to reduce the number of teachers and other educators who otherwise would have been fired as a result of the continuing recession. In April, when this proposal was first being discussed the funding level was \$23 billion, by late May it was clear that the measure didn't have the necessary support to pass. Many conservative democrats and republicans are concerned that it would significantly increase the deficit. By mid-June debate centered on how to find funds to re-allocate to cover this expenditure. Currently the proposal is for \$10 billion in spending, with the costs being covered by a change in allocation from other programs. This would include funds not yet spent for last year's stimulus program AND the cutting of over \$800 million in current US ED grants programs. This proposal is now being evaluated on Capitol Hill to see whether or not the votes are there.

The second element is the funding for education through the regular appropriations process. These funds would go to schools for the school year beginning 2011 (September). While the

president proposed the creation of a literacy fund by combining six literacy programs, it is unlikely to happen. The proposal was based on the idea that there would be a new ESEA to fund. This hasn't happened. As a result it is anticipated that Struggling Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program will continue for another year as will Reading IS Fundamental, the National Writing Program and several others. However the overall funding level is still very much in doubt and programs like Title I and IDEA may suffer cuts as the Congress pushes to reduce the deficit by reducing spending.

### Core Standards & State Literacy Teams

State councils and others interested may wish to contact their state education agencies concerning how these two state oriented programs will be organized.

The Core Standards are now in the process of being reviewed and adopted by many states. For more information on the standards, including upcoming webinars being sponsored by the groups that created them go to [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)<<http://www.corestandards.org>>. A webinar is scheduled for June 30th.

One of the issues that is clear is that every state that decides to adopt the core standards will need to decide how to move forward with the professional development that will be needed to implement the standards. Who makes this determination will vary state to state. Plus, still to be determined will be the structure of the assessment procedures to along with the standards.

State literacy teams are funded to the overall level of \$10 million by this year's appropriations bill. Guidance is being finalized and soon states will be bring together professionals from various parts of the literacy community to make state policy covering age 0 to grade 12. States councils may wish to contact their state education agency, or the IRA Washington Office to get more information.

### ESEA & the LEARN Act

The rewriting of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) continues at a slow pace. The Senate education committee staff members have divided up into working groups and are discussing key concepts for the reauthorization. Ideas like expanding Title I to include 3 & 4 year olds are under discussion, as well as the LEARN Act to support professional development in literacy. During the recent (June 21/22) legislative workshop, members of IRA went to the hill to ask for support for LEARN. It continues to be thought that it will be included in a written ESEA. When that measure may be rewritten is still subject to continued speculation. IRA has submitted recommendations that emphasize the need for support for literacy leadership in schools around the nation.

### Survey

The IRA 2010 Government Relations Committee has created a survey that we are asking IRA members interested in government policy to take. This survey will help guide the committee as it makes recommendation for action to the IRA board of directors. Please take a few minutes to log on and take this simple survey monkey. Please complete this survey by July 15th (Thursday).

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/X9RSFH5>

#### Miscellaneous

1. The National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) will close its doors on September 30th. It was created in 1991 to serve as a coordinating body for information and policy around adult basic literacy. Its mission expanded in 2001 with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act to include disseminating information on K-12 education.
2. The Senate will be voting in mid-June on the Defense Authorization bill that is rumored to include a voucher measure to create a program titled: Pilot Program on Scholarships for Military Dependent Children with Special Education Needs.
3. Action on the Workforce Investment Act is still pending - this measure includes language on adult basic education.

#### Upcoming IRA webinars

On July 20th at 8 PM EASTERN (tentative) please join IRA President Patricia Edwards who will be at the US Department of Education's meeting in Anaheim California. The webinar will focus on the ideas and possible initiatives impacting early childhood literacy development (ages 0 - 8) being discussed at the conference. To register for this webinar: [irawash@reading.org](mailto:irawash@reading.org)<<mailto:irawash@reading.org>>.

On July 14th at NOON EASTERN join Rich Long of IRA to discuss the current information on the Core Standards and the implementation of the state literacy teams. To register: [irawash@reading.org](mailto:irawash@reading.org)<<mailto:irawash@reading.org>>

Look for an international webinar to mark International Literacy Day in early September!

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