

# **IRC Legislative Update**

## **By Mike Ellerman**

### **April 25, 2011**

#### **Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) Act**

**Research demonstrates that a high-quality, literacy-rich environment is an important prerequisite for academic success. To be successful, students must develop oral language, reading, and writing abilities. The Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) Act will ensure that all students receive high quality literacy instruction beginning in early childhood and continuing through high school graduation. The LEARN Act responds to the clear need for literacy instruction and high quality support for students at all age, development, and grade levels.**

**The LEARN Act provides for a strong federal investment in high quality literacy instruction that will help states improve programs to strengthen the literacy skills of all students. The Act supports comprehensive state and local literacy programs to ensure that children from birth to grade twelve have the reading and writing skills necessary for success in school and beyond. Specifically, the bill would:**

#### **I. Provide federal support for literacy programs by:**

- a) authorizing \$2.35 billion for comprehensive literacy programs, providing funds for both existing and new high-quality state and local school-based literacy programs that span birth to grade twelve through the use of a state formula grant;**
- b) allocating not less than 10 percent of the \$2.35 billion for children from birth to age five, not less than 40 percent for students in kindergarten to grade three, and not less than 40 percent for students grades four through twelve; and**
- c) requiring a rigorous national evaluation of the programs that includes stringent conflict of interest restrictions for the programs' peer review process.**

#### **II. Enhance each state's role in improving literacy instruction by:**

- a) supporting the formation of a state literacy leadership team made up of literacy experts and relevant stakeholders;**
- b) supporting the development of a comprehensive state literacy plan, including a needs assessment and an implementation plan to ensure high-quality instruction in reading and writing from early childhood education through grade twelve;**
- c) requiring each state to provide competitive subgrants to local educational agencies;**

- d) targeting funding to schools with the greatest need (as defined by poverty or low student literacy achievement);
- e) requiring each state to provide technical assistance to local educational agencies on how to implement high-quality professional development programs for literacy instruction;
- f) requiring each state to review pre-service course work as well as state licensure and certification requirements, and make recommendations to improve training in high-quality literacy instruction; and
- g) allowing states with effective literacy instruction programs to keep their existing program structure.

### **III. Support the creation of local high-quality literacy programs in schools by:**

- a) providing high-quality professional development for instructional staff that is job-embedded, ongoing, and research-based, providing teachers in all content areas with expertise in literacy instruction, analyzing data to improve student learning, and supporting effective implementation of literacy instruction strategies;
- b) providing students with explicit, systematic, and developmentally appropriate instruction in reading and writing;
- c) utilizing diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments to inform and improve instruction and student learning at all age levels; and
- d) supporting schoolwide literacy programs and additional literacy supports to address the specific learning needs of struggling readers and writers, including English language learners and students with disabilities.

## **Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) Act (111th)**

**Senate Bill Number:** S. 2740 <<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d111:S2740>>

**Date of Introduction:** November 5, 2009

**Sponsor(s):** Murray (D-WA)

**Co-Sponsor(s):** Begich (D-AK), Brown (D-OH), Dodd (D-CT), Franken (D-MN), Sanders (I-VT)

**House Bill Number:** H.R. 4037 <<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d111:HR4037>>

**Date of Introduction:** November 6, 2009

**Sponsor(s):** Yarmuth (D-KY)

**Co-Sponsor(s):** Berkley (D-NV), Berman (D-CA), Boucher (D-VA), Brady (D-PA), Carnahan (D-MO), Clay (D-MO), Cohen (D-TN), Connolly (D-VA), Conyers (D-MI), Courtney (D-CT), Ellison (D-MN), Eshoo (D-CA), Etheridge (D-NC), Fattah (D-PA), Fudge (D-OH), Grijalva (D-AZ), Gutierrez (D-IL), Hare (D-IL), Herseth-Sandlin (D-SD), Hirono (D-HI), Loeb sack (D-IA), Markey (D-CO), Miller (D-CA), Norton (D-DC), Pingree (D-ME), Polis (D-CO), Rahall (D-WV), Richardson (D-CA), Rothman (D-NJ), Sablan (D-MP), Schauer (D-MI), Sestak (D-PA), Shea-Porter (D-NH)

The Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) Act is a comprehensive literacy bill that would authorize \$2.35 billion to support state and local programs to ensure that children from birth through grade twelve have the reading and writing skills necessary for success in school and beyond. The grants would provide dedicated funds for early childhood, elementary, and adolescent literacy programs. The LEARN Act would also: provide funds for high-quality professional development that would improve teachers' literacy instruction; analyze data to improve student learning; use diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments to inform instruction; and effectively implement literacy intervention strategies.

More information on the LEARN Act is available in the bill summary <<http://www.all4ed.org/files/LEARNActSummary.pdf>> .

Support for the LEARN Act: Since being introduced, the LEARN Act has garnered support from members of the education community. Read the U.S. Senate letter of support <<http://www.all4ed.org/files/LEARNActSupportLetter.pdf>> and the U.S. House of Representatives letter of support <[http://www.all4ed.org/files/LEARN\\_HouseLetterofSupport.pdf](http://www.all4ed.org/files/LEARN_HouseLetterofSupport.pdf)> .

Read a statement from Senator Patty Murray and Representatives John Yarmuth, Jared Polis, and George Miller on the LEARN Act.

Read a statement on the LEARN Act from Bob Wise <[http://www.all4ed.org/press\\_room/press\\_releases/11052009](http://www.all4ed.org/press_room/press_releases/11052009)> , president of the Alliance for Excellent Education and former governor of West Virginia.