

# ELS Field Guide to Capitol Hill

*AEP/NSSEA Edition*

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## **HOUSE PASSES CONTINUING RESOLUTION (CR) TO KEEP THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OPEN AND OPERATING AFTER THE FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2009 ENDS ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2009**

On Friday, September 25, 2009, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) to keep the federal government open and operating after the federal fiscal Year 2009 ends on September 30, 2009. A CR is necessary because the House and Senate have completed only one of a total of 12 federal appropriations bills, for federal Fiscal Year 2010, which begins on October 1, 2009.

Without additional Congressionally approved funds to run federal programs after September 30, 2009, the government would have to shut down. The CR is attached to the FY 2010 Legislative Branch Appropriations Conference Report, which was passed in the House on a vote of 217-190, primarily along party lines. The Senate still must pass the CR and the Legislative Branch funding bill by Wednesday.

The CR, as passed by the House, will continue most discretionary funding through the end of October, 2009, essentially at the same levels provided during federal Fiscal Year 2009. However, the House added approximately 10% more for the Veteran's Health Administration, and doubled funding for the U.S. Census Bureau, to conduct the upcoming decennial census of 2010.

The Senate's FY 2010 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education Appropriations bill has not yet been passed on the Senate floor, and the House and Senate have not reconciled the two respective versions of the bill into final legislation.

## **NGA-CCSSO COMMON CORE STANDARDS INITIATIVE NAMES VALIDATION COMMITTEE**

The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) last week released its revised version of voluntary State-led Common Core Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics for College and Career Readiness. NGA-CCSSO have requested public comments on their latest common core standards by October 21, 2009. NGA-CCSSO experts will draft grade-by-grade common core standards in the same subjects next.

First, however, NGA-CCSSO have just named members of the Validation Committee for the Common Core Standards Initiative. The Validation Committee will immediately begin to review and verify "the standards' development process and the resulting evidence-based college- and career-readiness standards. The standards are intended to be research and evidence-based, aligned with college and work force training program expectations, reflective of rigorous content and skills, and internationally benchmarked," says NGA-CCSSO leadership.

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### Validation Committee Tasks

According to NGA-CCSSO, for college- and career-readiness standards, the Validation Committee is expected to do the following:

1. “Review the process used to develop the college- and career-readiness standards and recommend improvements in that process. These recommendations will be used to inform the K-12 development process.”
2. “Validate the sufficiency of the evidence supporting each college- and career-readiness standard. Each member is asked to determine whether each standard has sufficient evidence to warrant its inclusion.”
3. “Add any standard that is not now included in the common core state standards that they feel should be included and provide the following evidence to support its inclusion: 1) evidence that the standard is essential to college and career success; and 2) evidence that the standard is internationally comparable.”

After validation by this Committee, of the college- and career-readiness process and standards, NGA-CCSSO will develop the grade-by-grade K-12 standards.

### Validation Committee Members

The 25 members of the Validation Committee primarily come from U.S. research and university communities. However, several international representatives will serve on the Validation Committee, including

- **Dylan Williams**, Deputy Director, Institution of Education, University of London;
- **Barry McGaw**, Professor and Director, Melbourne Education Research Institute, University of Melbourne, Australia; and Director for Education, OECD;
- **Andreas Schleicher**, Head, Indicators and Analysis Division of the OECD Directorate for Education;
- **Feng-Jui Hsieh**, Associate Professor of the Mathematics Department, National Taiwan Normal University.

Two of the 25 Validation Committee members are employed by local school districts in the U.S. They are:

- **Sarah Baird**, 2009 Arizona Teacher of the Year, and K-5 Mathematics Specialist/Coach/Teacher; Kyrene Elementary School District, Tempe/Phoenix, AZ
- **Christopher Steinhauer**, Superintendent of Schools, Long Beach Unified School District, CA, the third largest school district in California

The names of some researchers selected for the Validation Committee may be somewhat more familiar than others, such as

- **Lauren Resnick**, Distinguished University Professor and Director of the Institute for Learning, University of Pittsburgh
- **William Schmidt**, University Distinguished Professor and Co-Director of Education Policy Center, Michigan State University
- **Linda Darling-Hammond**, Charles Ducommun Professor of Education and Co-Director of School Redesign Network, Stanford University

- **Kenji Hakuta**, Lee L. Jacks, Professor of Education, Stanford University
- **Dorothy Strickland**, Samuel DeWitt Proctor Professor of Education, Emerita, Distinguished Research Fellow, National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Validation Committee members “were nominated by States and national organizations.” Six Governors and six Chief State School Officers selected the final 25 Validation Committee members. The Governors were from Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Vermont, and West Virginia. The Chief State School Officers or State Superintendents of Public Instruction were from Maine, Michigan, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and West Virginia.

[AEP ED NOTE: Go to <http://www.corestandards.org/Files/CoreValidationCommitteeBios.pdf> for biographical information about the Validation Committee Members.]

## **NEW FEDERAL EDUCATION STATISTICS PROJECTIONS RELEASED**

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) recently released a new report entitled “Projections of Education Statistics to 2018.” This report of U.S. education data has been issued since 1964. According to the new report:

- Total U.S. public and private elementary and secondary school enrollment as of Fall, 2006, reached a record high level of 56 million students.
- This total represents enrollment growth of 12%, between Fall, 1993, and Fall, 2006, in U.S. elementary and secondary schools.
- NCES projects that from 2006 to 2018 there will be an 8% rise in U.S. elementary and secondary schools enrollment, but enrollment in public schools will rise while in private schools serving these grades, enrollment will decline.
- Estimates are that the numbers of teachers in elementary and secondary schools will increase in public and in private schools, with decreases expected in student:teacher ratios, both in public and private schools. Numbers of new teachers hired each year in public and in private schools are projected to increase between 2006-2018.

To access the new NCES report, please visit:

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009062.pdf>

## **U.S. EDUCATION SECRETARY DUNCAN ANNOUNCES THAT THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IS READY TO BEGIN TO GATHER IDEAS FOR ITS ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT (ESEA) REAUTHORIZATION LEGISLATION**

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was scheduled for reauthorization, or revision and modernization, in 2007. Congress passed the bill called No Child Left Behind, late in 2001, but President George W. Bush did not sign it into law until January 8, 2002. House and Senate education committees

mounted efforts to reauthorize the ESEA (NCLB) several years ago. However, these attempts were derailed, due to the types, levels and intensity of disagreements among educators, Congress, and national organizations, on key issues and proposed directions for reform of K-12 U.S. public education.

### *Secretary Duncan Leads The Way*

This year, Education Secretary Arne Duncan has engaged in a “Listening and Learning Tour,” related to the ESEA reauthorization, traveling to 30 states so far. On Thursday, September 24, 2009, a meeting was held at the U.S. Department of Education headquarters in Washington, D.C., which attracted several hundred education stakeholders. It focused on plans for the upcoming ESEA reauthorization, and invited ideas from a broad range of interested parties, including educators, community groups and parents from diverse regions.

Led by U.S. Department of Education Assistant Secretary for Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, Carmel Martin; and Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education Thelma Melendez; a series of meetings will be held during the Fall, 2009, in Washington, D.C. to gather input for the ESEA reauthorization bill that the Department plans to develop. Dates, times and topics are still being finalized. The Secretary’s Listening and Learning Tour will continue. The Department’s ESEA reauthorization legislation would be in addition to the ESEA reauthorization bills that the House and Senate education committees will prepare.

Secretary Duncan has reiterated his earlier views, expressed in speeches and testimony before Congress, that he intends to have “tight goals” but provide “loose” means to achieve the goals. He has designated four assurances that States must align with, in order to be considered for Race to the Top funds for educational reform and improvement, under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) economic stimulus legislation. These issues likely will guide the Department’s ESEA reauthorization effort as well.

The Secretary has emphasized repeatedly the importance of common and rigorous standards and assessments, equitable distribution of teachers, state data systems that permit student and teacher data to be linked, and turning around low-performing schools - especially the lowest five percent. The Secretary also has supported merit or performance pay for educators, especially in shortage areas. However, though the Secretary has not released an outline or framework specifically for his Department’s ESEA reauthorization blueprint, there is a sense of urgency underlying this ESEA reauthorization effort.

### *Assistant Secretaries Melendez and Martin Comment*

Dr. Melendez shared her own education story, growing up in California, as the daughter of Mexican immigrants whose first language was Spanish. She narrated the benefits she received from caring and competent educators, other students and their families, who helped turn what could have been barriers into opportunities for her success and achievement. She revisited her high school experience. A guidance counselor advised her against applying to attend the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). “She didn’t even look at the file on her desk with my SAT scores and my grades. She only saw my last name,” Dr. Melendez noted, and “assumed I wanted to attend a community college, which is a fine place to go, but I had a dream... to go to UCLA.” Assistant Secretary Melendez did become a UCLA graduate, and earned her Ph.D. from the University of Southern California, eventually serving as Superintendent of Schools in Pomona, California.

Dr. Melendez reiterated the U.S. Department of Education's commitment to high standards and "helping children reach those high expectations." She emphasized that whether the issues are high schools that produce large percentages of the nation's dropouts, or availability and use of data that "help educators figure out where students need help and what they can do to keep them on track for graduation," "we need to feel a real sense of urgency... to fix these problems as soon as possible." Innovative classrooms, effective teachers and outstanding instruction, are essential for students who also "need clear signals about whether they are prepared for college and careers."

Secretary Duncan has talked about "the perfect storm for education reform," and Assistant Secretary Martin agreed. She cited the leadership that is available now in the Department, in the House and Senate Education Committees, and from the President, with "a shared vision," as they move forward with the ESEA reauthorization process and legislation, using a bipartisan approach, toward reform and innovation. She mentioned the importance of raising standards, fixing accountability, protecting vulnerable populations, serving diverse learners, recruiting, supporting, retaining high quality teachers and leaders.

**Comments of Note from U.S. Education Department Officials**

1. The ESEA reauthorization will carry forward the four ARRA Race to the Top pillars of education reform - the four "assurances" (standard/assessments, state/local data systems, teacher equity/quality, turn around lowest performing schools).
2. The Department will carry out its ESEA reauthorization planning and outreach despite the Pontiac v Spellings lawsuit still pending.
3. The Department is looking at how to carry through the relationships between research and development, competitiveness, performance and innovation, using more coherence. The Department will do embedded evaluations and evidence-based policy, using a continuous improvement feedback loop, to keep building the knowledge base, and move forward programs and policies based on research and informed evidence, to ensure their impact.
4. There will be working groups across the Department collaborating on the ESEA reauthorization.
5. The Department will be "tight on goals and loose on how we achieve them."
6. The Department has no exact timeline to complete an ESEA reauthorization proposal, but would like to do it quickly, well, in collaboration with Congress on a bipartisan basis. In the meanwhile, States and school districts may apply for several waivers available through the Department that provide some flexibility under the present NCLB statute.
7. The Department believes that there is no single metric to capture what really effective learning is. The full variety of different metrics should be captured, and balanced, so that transparency and reporting are not burdensome.

*Attendee Comments That Frame Specific ESEA Requests*

1. **Students With Disabilities** are general education students first. Their high school graduation rate should reflect high expectations. Focus on educational attainment, educational rights, alternate assessments, necessary supports, and universal design for learning for students with disabilities. Protect vulnerable populations.
2. **Early Childhood Education**. States are waiting for the Obama Administration to provide dedicated funds for pre-K education expansion (e.g. Early Learning Challenge Grants), and some would like to fold a pre-K bill into the ESEA basic education law during reauthorization.
3. **School District Relief**. Many school districts need relief from severe and costly sanctions. If the new ESEA adds requirements and responsibilities for educators/schools/districts, some current tasks should be eliminated. Local districts held to high accountability standards should be able to control and support achievement in their own districts. Changes and improvements are needed through the ESEA reauthorization including: a new assessments system, broader curriculum, time to produce student academic and systemic growth, creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, accountability, international standards, public reporting on a wide variety of student and school accomplishments. Educate the “whole” child. Pay attention to non-academic services, supports and needs. Professional development is important for academic and non-academic personnel, and needs improvement.
4. **Community Linkages**. The ESEA should encourage: schools/districts to develop partnerships with community-based organizations that have a positive track record of working with kids; connections with community services such as tutoring/mentoring that are available afterschool so latchkey youth have places to go with valuable services; leveraging of community resources for youth; involvement of youth in getting positive messages developed and distributed to their peers in the community about the importance of education and availability of community services for youth.
5. **Business Perspectives**. Provide high quality flexible environments to support every learner (Educational Facility Planners). Businesses are consumers of public education and are dissatisfied. Don't give up current assessments and accountability systems that are improving results for 4<sup>th</sup> graders and some 8<sup>th</sup> graders, before something else is in place. High standards, “real” oversight and accountability, are important (U.S. Chamber of Commerce). Listen to schools that have gotten their students to high academic proficiency levels, while maintaining art, music, PE, “Smart oversight” from the Department will be important. Race to the Top incentives are powerful to influence State changes. This may be a lesson for the ESEA reauthorization (National Business Roundtable).