



Federal Update – December 20, 2007

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Questions?
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***Head Start* Bill Signed Into Law**

The president signed legislation to reauthorize *Head Start* on December 12. The bill calls for 50 percent of all *Head Start* teachers to have bachelor's degrees by 2013 and requires each state to designate a State Advisory Council on Early Education and Care to oversee early childhood education and health services. The bill also provides for up to \$10,000 in loan relief for students who obtain a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or in a related field and who teach for at least five years in a *Head Start* center.

The reauthorization moves *Head Start* in a new direction by serving children up to 130 percent of poverty and by emphasizing *Early Head Start's* role in supporting school readiness. Under the new law, *Early Head Start* providers will be eligible to receive funding for expansion on an equal basis with *Head Start* for the first time.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi was joined by the chairmen of the relevant committees from the House and Senate to enroll the bill, saluting the *Head Start* program as "one of America's most popular investments because it is one of our most effective." The president joined with Congressional leaders in signing the bill in the Oval Office, voicing general support but noting his disapproval that the bill cancels the controversial National Reporting System.

Funding for the program was caught in a protracted battle between Congress and the White House over spending for the Iraq war and domestic programs (see below). According to the Congressional Budget Office, the FY 2008 appropriation passed by the House and Senate falls short of the actual cost of fully implementing the program by over \$200 million. The funding shortfall would jeopardize federal support for the State Advisory Councils and other discretionary programs in the reauthorization bill.

Last week, Pre-K Now released a memo explaining the State Advisory Council provisions of the *Head Start* reauthorization. [[Click here to view the Pre-K Now Memorandum on State Advisory Councils for Early Education and Care](#)].

Congress Prepares Final FY 2008 Appropriations Agreement

After weeks of complex negotiations with the White House and among their own leadership, Congressional Democrats relented in their effort to include an additional \$23 billion in spending on domestic programs. The Democratic leadership signaled that they would meet the president's target spending level while preserving their priorities by focusing cuts on programs favored by the president. The "omnibus" spending package—which includes the 11 remaining appropriations bills that have not become law—provides a 10 percent increase (\$54.4 billion) in funding for programs under the departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education.

Appropriations for federal funding streams that support pre-k received significant reductions from the levels initially approved in conference on November 1 as part of H.R. 3043, which was vetoed by the president. With the exception of the Child Care and Development Block Grant, these funding streams are now marked below the amounts set by H.R. 3043 but exceed the president's budget request. Among other changes, *Even Start* survived the president's call for elimination in his budget but still suffered a 20 percent reduction in the final legislation. The table below compares the funding levels set by the president and Congress relative to the amounts made available in fiscal year 2007.

For more information on the 2008 omnibus spending package, visit the website of the Senate Committee on Appropriations: <http://www.appropriations.senate.gov/amendment.cfm>

	FY 07 Comparable	President's Budget	House	Senate	Conference (H.R. 3043)	Final (H.R. 2764)
Department of Education (Total)	\$60.378 B	\$59.098 B	\$64.959 B	\$62.982 B	\$62.819 B	\$62.318 B
NCLB Title I Grants	\$12.838 B	\$13.909 B	\$14.362 B	\$13.909 B	\$14.311 B	\$14.027 B
Child Care and Development Block Grant	\$2.062 B	\$2.062 B	\$2.137 B	\$2.067 B	\$2.094 B	\$2.095 B
<i>Head Start</i>	\$6.888 B	\$6.78 B	\$6.96 B	\$7.088 B	\$7.042 B	\$6.902 B
<i>Even Start</i>	\$82.283 M	\$0 M	\$99 M	\$0 M	\$62.636 M	\$66.454 M

House Committee Surpasses Senate on Supporting Pre-K through the Higher Ed Act

On November 15, the House Committee on Education and Labor reported a bill to reauthorize the Higher Education Act (H.R. 4137) that includes new provisions to support pre-k teacher training and professional development. The House measure matches the reforms proposed in the Senate bill that would authorize funds for pre-k to provide professional development for pre-k teachers and to improve the career opportunities for early childhood educators through special state-appointed task forces. Members of the House Committee outdid their Senate counterparts by providing up to \$10,000 in loan relief for pre-k teachers under the Family Education Loan Program, the nation's largest subsidized student loan program. The House's Higher Ed bill awaits a vote on the floor of the House, where it is likely to be approved and sent to conference with the Senate.

View the table below for a summary of policies that support pre-k teachers in the Senate and House versions of the Higher Education Act reauthorization. [[Click here for more information on H.R. 4137](#)]

Benefits to Pre-K Teachers in Higher Education Act Reauthorization Bills	House	Senate
\$10,000 Loan Relief through Federal Family Education Loan Program	YES	NO
15% of Perkins Loan Cancelled	YES	YES
Early Childhood Educator Professional Development and Careers Systems Task Forces	YES	YES
Professional Development Partnerships between Pre-K and Higher Ed	YES	YES

President Bush Issues Second SCHIP Veto

In spite of Congressional leaders' efforts to accommodate the White House, the president issued his second veto of the bill on December 12. The House attempted to address the president's concerns that too many families above 200 percent of poverty would be able to participate in the program, but the president rejected these changes and continued to block the bill. [[Click here to view the President's veto message](#)]

After the veto, the House leadership reaffirmed their commitment to passing an SCHIP reauthorization that insures 10 million children and vowed to continue negotiations to attract more Republican supporters in the next session. [[Click here to view the House's statement on the veto](#)]

Congressional Recess Schedule, December 2007 - January 2008

After finishing votes on appropriations, tax, and energy legislation earlier this week, Congress is on recess and the House is scheduled to return on January 15. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) has indicated that the Senate will resume in mid-January. Democratic Senators may call the Senate into "pro forma" sessions over the recess to prevent President Bush from making executive and judicial appointments while Congress is out of town.