



## Federal Update – March 21, 2008

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- Economics of Pre-K Featured in House Appropriations Hearing
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Questions?

Contact: Matt Smith  
Federal Policy Fellow  
[msmith@preknow.org](mailto:msmith@preknow.org)

### Congress Considers Budget Resolution

Before adjourning for a two-week spring recess, the House and Senate finalized their respective versions of the budget resolution for fiscal years 2009-13. While not a binding measure, the budget resolution sets overall spending targets for the appropriations committees that can be enforced by points of order on the floor of both chambers.

As was the case in the FY08 budget cycle, both the House and Senate exceeded the president's request for domestic discretionary spending, which includes education, workforce training, and child health and development programs. The House set overall discretionary spending for education, training, employment, and social service programs at \$85.3 billion for FY09 – \$4.1 billion over the president's request – while the Senate went over the president's budget request by slightly less than \$3 billion.

The president has vowed to oppose any legislation that lifts domestic spending above the levels requested in his budget; however, unlike last year, Congress can avoid confronting the president by delaying action beyond the start of the fiscal year and waiting to pass its final spending legislation until his term expires in January 2009.

Both the House and the Senate appear eager to compensate for the cuts and flat-funding for Head Start and the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) that resulted from last year's budget battles. The Senate specifically designates \$2.5 billion in funding for CCDBG, \$441 million above the president's request and \$406 million above the FY08 level, and reportedly assumes an increase of \$300 million for Head Start in its projections for FY09. The House does not assign a dollar figure to either of these programs, but indicates that appropriators should prioritize funding for Head Start and CCDBG this year.

While the Senate's projected increase in funding for Head Start is encouraging, it nevertheless falls short of the \$772 million increase that Education and Labor Committee Chairman Ted Kennedy requested to fund the new initiatives and mandates in the Head Start reauthorization law passed last year.

The Senate and House proposals await review by a conference committee after Congress reconvenes in April, when the final budget resolution will be subject to approval by both chambers.

### **Economics of Pre-K Featured in House Appropriations Hearing**

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies highlighted the importance of pre-k as a workforce investment in a hearing held on February 26, entitled "Opportunities Lost and Costs to Society: The Social and Economic Burden of Inadequate Education, Training and Workforce Development." Dr. Robert Lynch, chairman of the Department of Economics at Washington College and author of a major study for the Economic Policy Institute on the economic benefits of investing in pre-k, shared his analysis with members of the committee.

The Labor-HHS-Education subcommittee will determine the amount of funding available to Head Start this year and, prospectively, for any federal pre-k incentive program that Congress authorizes. Although the hearing was frequently interrupted by floor activity, Lynch's testimony attracted the interest of several key appropriators, notably Appropriations Committee Chairman Dave Obey (D-WI) and subcommittee Ranking Member James Walsh (R-NY).

### **National Mathematics Advisory Panel Report**

On Thursday, March 13, Education Secretary Margaret Spellings held a press conference to announce the release of the final report of the National Mathematics Advisory Panel (NMAP). The panel was created, in 2006, by President Bush with instructions to review the factors that support student's success in mathematics and make recommendations on how math education can be improved.

In recognizing the importance of early learning in forming the basis of children's math aptitude, the Department press release said, "The panel also found that the earlier children learn math, the better their chances of success." The official findings of the report note the importance of early childhood education in this specific area, and the final recommendations include providing enhanced training in early math education for Head Start and teachers in "other programs" serving young children from low-income backgrounds.

The panel also established new benchmarks for elementary school students' progress in math, with key indicators in grades three through seven. The report's non-binding recommendations provide yet another rationale for the importance of investing in pre-k and Head Start so that these new benchmarks can be met.

[Click here](#) for a copy of the NMAP report and to view the press release from the Department of Education.

### **Invitation to Join Pre-K Now's Federal Working Group**

In order to coordinate Pre-K Now's work on Capitol Hill with state advocates' perspectives on federal issues and relationships with members of Congress, the federal policy team at Pre-K Now invites all state advocates to participate in a very informal monthly conference call series.

The calls will provide an opportunity for advocates to share their agenda for federal policy with Pre-K Now's federal team. They will also promote collaboration between federal and state activities in order to apply as much leverage as possible on federal and state policymakers.

If you or a member of your organization would be interested in receiving information about these calls, please contact Kathy Patterson at [kpatterson@preknow.org](mailto:kpatterson@preknow.org). We anticipate including information on upcoming federal calls in each issue of Federal Update.