

AAG Washington Monitor

Miller and McKeon Release Draft of NCLB Bill

A draft version of the long-awaited No Child Left Behind (NCLB) reauthorization bill was released on August 27 by Chairman George Miller (D-CA) and Ranking Member Howard "Buck" McKeon (R-CA) of the House Education and Labor Committee. The bill includes many significant portions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and most importantly to the geographic community, a section which focuses on core curriculum development.

Current law identifies geography as a core curriculum subject but fails to provide both implementing programs and associated funding. The AAG has urged Congress to correct this problem in partnership with our allies in the geographic community.

Miller's draft legislation includes a new program to provide funds to low-income districts in support of high-quality instruction in many subjects, including geography. Funds would support expanding the amount of instructional time in subjects such as geography, music and arts, foreign languages, economics, and government, and is intended to develop curricula while providing essential materials and textbooks.

Specifically, the bill allows the Secretary of Education "to award grants to local educational agencies to promote and strengthen one or more of the subjects listed above as an integral part of the elementary school and secondary school curriculum." Thus, the agencies would be eligible to apply for a grant focused on curriculum development in geography. Specific allowable uses for the grants specified in the legislation include:

1. Expanding the amount of instructional time on these subjects;

2. Providing for curriculum development that is aligned with State standards as appropriate;
3. Providing essential materials and textbooks that are aligned with State standards as appropriate;
4. Partnering with Federal, State, and community-based organizations and institutions to increase student learning in these subjects;
5. Providing professional development to ensure curricula are implemented effectively; and
6. Creating and using formative assessments where appropriate to advance student achievement and improve instruction.

Each grant will be awarded for a five-year period, but the draft bill does not specify the total amount to be devoted to these grants. This key detail is still being negotiated and will be released in a later draft. Grant awards will favor agencies that support a greater number of students from families below the poverty line.

We urge the AAG membership to continue to support the inclusion of funding programs in NCLB that promote the teaching and learning of geography. Comments can be sent to Miller and McKeon at esea.comments@mail.house.gov. We will continue to keep you up-to-date as any developments occur on Capitol Hill related to the NCLB reauthorization process.

Nussle OMB Confirmation Sets Stage for Fall Budget Battle

After a lengthy debate on federal spending priorities, the U.S. Senate recently confirmed the President's nomination of

Jim Nussle to serve as Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) by a vote of 69-24. Many Democrats, including the presidential candidates serving in the Senate, voted against the nomination as a protest of the Bush Administration's tax cuts and other actions that they asserted have benefited corporate America and the wealthiest citizens at the expense of the poor and the middle class.

The confirmation sets the stage for the fall budget debate, as none of the 12 annual federal appropriations bills have been passed by both Houses of Congress and signed into law. The President has threatened to veto any appropriations bill that exceeds the spending limit set by his FY 2008 budget. However, Congressional Democrats, back in power for the first time since 1994, seem eager to promote their own priorities regardless of the President's constraints.

Funding for programs crucial to supporting federal research and science education efforts will be impacted by the debate, including some of the \$43 billion authorized for NSF and other Federal research programs as part of the bipartisan America COMPETES Act, which was signed into law on August 9. (See last month's Washington Monitor for additional details). Most political observers feel that a compromise will be reached by the two parties by the end of the calendar year, but some experts have noted that we could again see a government shutdown, as occurred in 1995. ■

John Wertman
Jwertman@aag.org

Background, resources, and additional information on No Child Left Behind are available at www.aag.org/nclb.