

**AAG Newsletter**  
of the  
**Association of American Geographers**

Douglas Richardson, Publisher  
and Managing Editor

Jim Ketchum,  
Editor

AAG Voice 202-234-1450

AAG Fax 202-234-2744

newsletter@aag.org

www.aag.org

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## Educating Congress on Geography Education

In 2001, as George W. Bush was settling into the White House, he made the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) an early focus of his Administration. The result was No Child Left Behind (NCLB), a reauthorization of the ESEA signed into law in early 2002. The No Child legislation focused on school performance and accountability in an effort to boost lagging schools and troubled school districts. While NCLB was passed on a bipartisan basis and supported by a wide range of traditional liberals as well as conservatives, the law has faced severe criticism in the intervening years from a mix of groups and for a variety of reasons.

The primary and most wide-spread attacks on NCLB have centered on the failure of the Federal Government to adequately fund the law and on misguided curriculum and testing requirements. In addition, there have been concerns that the near exclusive emphasis on math and reading test scores has diverted teaching away from the social sciences and interdisciplinary education, including geography.

We in the geography community have also long been concerned with NCLB because geography is the only "core academic subject" identified within the law that does not receive a specific funding allocation or implementing programs to further teaching of the subject on the K-12 level (see Richardson, "Federal Funding for Geography Education," *AAG Newsletter*, June 2003, page 2). The AAG and our colleagues in GENIP (the Geography Education National Implementation Project) have been working to encourage Congress to change this over the last several years, but the reauthorization of No Child set for this year is our clearest and best opportunity to date.

### Call to Action: How You Can Help

Earlier this year, the AAG helped coordinate the development of a letter from the GENIP organizations to key Congressional Education Committee Chairmen Sen. Ted

Kennedy (D-MA) and Rep. George Miller (D-CA) urging them "to give strong support to the teaching of geography in any proposal for the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind." As the Committees continue their hearings on NCLB, they are continuing to craft their reauthorization bills behind the scenes. While there

is no guarantee that the process will conclude this year, we want to take advantage of this opportunity to make our case for the importance of geography in elementary and secondary school teaching and the need for associated funding.

To this end, we encourage you to begin now to educate your Senators and Congressmen about the importance of including geography funding

in the proposals for NCLB reauthorization. The following points from our recent GENIP letter may help you as you craft a message to your representatives:

- **Funding geography in NCLB is critical:** Geography is the only core-curriculum subject identified in the ESEA without associated funding. This must change if students are to make the necessary strides in geographic understanding.
- **Implementing programs for geography are also needed:** Geography also lacks any specified implementing programs in NCLB. These programs should help implement more widespread teaching of geography in elementary and secondary schools.
- **Geography is essential to a well-rounded K-12 education:** Geographic understanding is important to every American – it is critical to the informed exercise of each citizen's civic responsibility. Geography helps us understand the connections between peoples and places – and with the natural environment. Geography education is key to achieving international understanding and economic development, and also provides essential



Richardson

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## AAG Receives Award for Excellence in Nonprofit Management

The AAG was recently recognized as one of five organizations awarded an honorable mention for The Washington Post 2007 Award for Excellence in Nonprofit Management. The honor was presented by the Center for Nonprofit Advancement during a June 20, 2007 awards presentation held at *The Washington Post*. The AAG also received a \$2,500 grant as part of the award.

"We are honored to be acknowledged by *The Washington Post* for our efforts to strengthen the AAG and expand its influence and prestige," said Doug Richardson, AAG's executive director. He summarized many facets of the AAG's recent transformation in a formal presentation entitled, "Organizational Renewal: Managing for Change," to the Award panel. The presentation noted that "the AAG has achieved dramatic and measurable improvement throughout the organization. This management success is

even more striking when considering that most peer associations have experienced declining or flat growth during the same time period."

The Washington Post Award selection committee, comprised of 19 experts in the field of nonprofit management, evaluated the AAG in the areas of fiscal management, information and communication, organizational development, people development, planning, resource development, risk management, and use of technology. The selection committee honored the AAG for many of its activities, citing the following best management practices:

- Systematic, integrated approach to organizational renewal and growth
- Well-developed strategy for increasing membership and maintaining relevance in the field
- Thoughtful and effective approach to building partnerships with other organizations

- Integrated workflow redesign and implementation of matrix management strategies
- Delivery of innovative programs and services
- Maintaining an ethic of inclusiveness, and responsiveness to changing demographics

During the selection process, the AAG advanced through two rounds of pre-determined assessment questions and, in the third and final round, hosted a site visit at the AAG offices to meet with the full selection committee. The committee selected five organizations as awardees.

The award program is sponsored by The Washington Post Company, with additional support from the Center for Nonprofit Advancement and Georgetown University's Center for Public and Nonprofit Leadership. ■

## Honorary Geographer Nominations

Every year the AAG designates an individual as that year's AAG Honorary Geographer as a way of recognizing excellence in research, teaching, or writing on geographic topics by non-geographers. Nominations for the 2008 AAG Honorary Geographer are now being solicited.

Nominations should include the complete name and address of the nominee and a concise (500 words maximum) yet specific description of the accomplishments that warrant the nominee's selection as an Honorary Geographer. Biographical and bibliographical information not included

in the statement should not exceed six additional pages of text.

Nominations are due no later than **September 15, 2007**. Digital submissions to [http://www.Grantsawards/honoraary\\_geographer.cfm](http://www.Grantsawards/honoraary_geographer.cfm) are preferred. ■

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workforce skills needed to maintain U.S. competitiveness. The study of geography enables students to access the explanatory power of maps and increasingly ubiquitous geospatial technologies – such as geographic information systems (GIS), global positioning systems (GPS), and internet mapping. Geography helps us to understand and enhance our own communities as American citizens – and informs our understanding of the challenges facing the United States in an uncertain world.

You may wish to encourage your Congressional representatives to keep these and related thoughts in mind as Congress deliberates on the challenges facing American students in the months and years to come. Without a geographic frame of reference, tomorrow's leaders will be lacking one of the central perspectives they need to formulate sound public policy in areas ranging from environmental conservation and transportation to national security and international trade. Your input to and education

of Congress on this matter will be a valuable addition to the debate at this time, regardless of whether a reauthorization of NCLB occurs during this year, or continues to a future year.

Additional information on NCLB and geography, including regular NCLB status updates, is available on the AAG website at [www.aag.org/nclb](http://www.aag.org/nclb). ■

Doug Richardson  
drichardson@aag.org