

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE 14
JIM M. SHEFFER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
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1. The reactions to Margaret Spelling's Proposed Regulations continue to draw strong responses. Civil Rights groups generally support a strong enforcement of the law while other organizations, schools, and teachers claim the regulations will only make it tougher to comply with the complex and burdensome current requirements of NCLB. Simply put, the USDE is using the regulatory process to create a "new law" without the approval of Congress. The expectation remains that the regulations will be released by November 1, 2008.
2. To provide expert assistance in the implementation of the new regulations, Margaret Spellings created and filled the National Technical Advisory Council to provide guidance on the specific regulations.
3. The draft Democratic Platform has taken the position to "fix the failure and broken promises of No Child Left Behind." Before Joseph Biden was the Vice Presidential Candidate, he took a strong position against the reauthorization of NCLB as it is. We will see how much his position changes.

The Democratic Platform also contains two different and competing positions. The Education Equality Project supports increased accountability, expansion of Charter Schools, innovative teacher pay, and other policies that would improve education. The other group, which includes the NEA, supports a "Broader, Bolder Approach to Education" which requires investments in health care, social services and extended learning time. These two education agendas will have to merge. Should Obama become President, we will see how he can bring the Democratic Congress together on NCLB. They are not together today, but maybe in January?

4. Senator Kennedy introduced S. 3431, The Time for Innovation Matters in Education Act which expands the school year for high poverty schools by at least 360 hours. Districts would have the flexibility to extend the school year, week, and or day. Some districts across the country went to a four day school week because of energy costs. Currently 100 school districts in 17 states have 4 day school weeks.
5. The Senate and House Budget Committees have countered with rejections to much of the President's 2009 budget. House and Senate eliminate Reading First and a give a small increase for Title I Targeted Funds. Both House and Senate rejected the President's Plan to convert 21st Century Community Learning Centers into an after school voucher program, eliminate Even Start, and cut funds for Safe and Drug Free Schools. The House did propose another 100 million dollar increase in the Title I Set Aside Improvement grants. It is not expected that final action will be taken until after the November elections.

