

PAFPC Legislative Update

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Summer 2009

July 23, 2009

1. House Committee Changes – Rep. John P. Kline (MN) became the ranking Republican on the House Education and Labor Committee over several members on the Committee who were thought to ascend to the position. He is the first Republican leader on the Committee who did not vote for NCLB in 2002 (He wasn't in Congress at the time). He wants to roll back the federal mandates on testing and give maximum flexibility to states. When he was first elected in 2002 he was willing to give NCLB a chance but the number and persistent complaints from his constituents changed his philosophy to “Let's back the federal government out of dictating to schools how they're going to do their business.” He also said, “I'm not looking to tweak No Child Left Behind. As far as I am concerned, we ought to go in and look at the whole thing”

2. Secretary Duncan's Agenda – The Secretary has four tenets of education reform: changing low performing schools (and expanding charter schools), improving teacher quality, strengthening state data systems, and enacting common academic standards. Secretary Duncan wants to transform about 5000 of the lowest performing schools with new policies that will have an impact immediately (12% percent of the nations schools account for more than 50% of the dropouts). He suggests implementing: a.

“Zero based” model that children stay and adults leave; b. Turn over staff and leadership to charter or for profit management organizations; c. keep most of the staff and change the culture; and d. close poorly performing schools and turn the students over to better schools.

The Secretary also has a 4.3 billion dollar discretionary fund called “Race to the Top” to influence states and schools districts to implement the policies of this administration. And he has proposed changing the Title I formula by directing a significant amount of the Title I Part A Basic Funds to be targeted for specific schools and purposes. (This would be harmful to approximately 1/3 of Pennsylvania school districts). The Secretary recently visited with Minority Leader Kline on Capital Hill and reported he and Kline feel the same urgency that we must get dramatically better and that Kline seemed to agree that we need higher standards and that schools must have more flexibility to achieve those standards.

3. Stimulus Funding - Funding has been released for Title I and Special Education to states. Most states, not Pennsylvania, have approval for the stabilization funds. Because of a stalemate over the state budget between the Governor’s office, the Republican Senate, and the Democratic House, the use of state stabilization funds remain in limbo.

4. Title I Allocations 2010 – The House Appropriations Committee rejected Obama’s proposal to shift 1.5 billion from Title I part A basic funds to school improvement and

early childhood programs. Appropriations Committee Chairman Obey said that he would not support cutting Title I funds for a significant number of House Members. Sen. Tom Harkin, Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee agreed with Congressman Obey so it appears that Congress will likely sustain funding for Title I Part A basic grants for FY 2010 at \$14.5 billion.

5. NCLB – Limited specific information pertaining to the reauthorization of NCLB has been presented by the Obama administration. Congressional staffers report that work may begin mid year. It seems that anything that is a priority of USDE to change in NCLB is being altered through waivers. The first noticeable change that was made was that Districts identified for School Improvement may become SES providers and several key issues became waivers under the stimulus act: Title I reservations requirements, carryover limitations, and maintenance of effort. Chairman Kline thinks that the 2014 proficiency deadline will change or be abolished in the reauthorization of NCLB. Carmel Martin, Assistant Secretary, USDE, hopes that reauthorization will be complete by the end of this Congress. Does anyone know?

6. Part D - USDE has reported that USDE will focus on better data collection for institutions as well as refocusing the monitoring.