

PAFPC LEGISLATIVE UPDATE
JIM M. SHEFFER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
March 26, 2007

1. Pat Detterbeck, Randy Ireson, and I completed our meetings with the education staff for Pennsylvania's Congressmen serving on the House Education and Labor Committee. Our Congressman and their respective education staff are: Congressman Sestak – Clarence Tong; Congressman Altmire – Bennett Reed; and Congressman Platts – Becky Braunstein. In addition, Pat and I met with staff from the Health Education Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee of the Senate. In each meeting, we briefed them on the positions which our Legislative Committee, chaired by Jack Clark, is developing. Each took notes and reported this information would be shared with the Congressmen and then with staffers from the Committees. We will have input.
2. On Tuesday, March 27, 2007, the Title I allocations are to be released with the increased funding in the targeted grants and the school improvement set aside. One would expect that most LEAs will receive increases since only 35 of Pennsylvania's LEAs had a decrease in the number of Census poor which is a significant factor used in determining allocations. However, 76 of our LEAs that received an increase in census poor will not benefit from the increases in targeted grants because they are eligible for only the basic grant which has not received an increase since the implementation of NCLB.
3. Senator Kennedy, Chair of the HELP Committee, has conducted meetings on NCLB and has established a time line of June for the write up. Congressman Miller, Chair of the Education and Labor Committee, has conducted his first hearing on NCLB, but has not established a timeline. Staffers are generally positive and are giving reauthorization a 50/50 chance of being completed prior to 2008 (an election year).
4. On the one hand, ten Democratic Senators sent a letter to members of the HELP committee criticizing the rigidity of NCLB's accountability system. Shortly thereafter, the Forum on Education Accountability which includes the NEA and NSBA among other prominent members, released their proposal suggesting major changes are necessary with the accountability system. It certainly appears there are differences of opinion and it is going to be a difficult task for the House Education and Labor Committee, and the Senate HELP Committee, to find compromises.
5. On the other hand, More than 50 GOP members of the House and Senate introduced legislation that would not require states to implement NCLB's testing mandates. It is interesting to note that this number of GOP members is greater than number of House Republicans and Democrats who voted against the original NCLB legislation.
6. As stated in the first Legislative Update, the Democratic controlled Congress has something to work with and something to change. And it will change as more positions are presented and more constituents become engaged in the reauthorization process.