

CCSESA FOCUS

An Update to County Superintendents of Schools

Thursday, August 6, 2015

Urge Members of Congress to Enact ESEA Reauthorization Legislation This Year

During the month of August (through September 7), members of Congress are on recess and most of them will be in their home districts meeting with constituents. During this period, we are urging county superintendents to make it a priority to talk to the members of Congress who represent their counties and urge them to make sure legislation is enacted this year to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

The House of Representatives has passed their version of ESEA reauthorization (HR 5) by a partisan vote of 218-213. The Senate passed their version (the Every Child Achieves Act, SB 1177) by a bi-partisan vote of 81-17. It is encouraging that both houses have now passed reauthorization bills. It is critically important that members of Congress not allow differences between the Senate and House versions to result in impasse and a continuation of existing law.

Under current law, ESEA is commonly referred to as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, and it is no longer working for California. As you know, NCLB requires an accountability system that is not aligned with the LCFF/LCAP model being implemented in California and sets a standard of 100% student proficiency, with the result that almost all schools receiving Title I funding are identified as failing schools. Current law also requires most districts to set aside 20% of their Title I funding for transportation and supplemental educational services that are widely viewed as ineffective or low priority. In short, California educators need Congress to replace the current law.

The major differences between the Senate and House versions concern the specificity of the accountability requirements and a proposal concerning the allocation of Title I funds that is referred to as "portability". CCSESA's Federal Advocacy Task Force is monitoring these issues. As a generalization, CCSESA is supporting provisions to allow flexibility for states to establish accountability systems (so that we don't end up with two systems, as we did with NCLB). CCSESA is opposed to new provisions (like portability) that would limit local school district authority to focus Title I funds on the schools with the greatest needs. However, the overriding message now needs to be that California schools cannot afford to have partisan disagreements over these issues delay ESEA reauthorization from taking place THIS YEAR.

It is expected that the two versions of ESEA reauthorization will go to a Conference Committee in early September to resolve the differences in the two proposals. For that reason it is important that members of Congress be contacted in August to urge that Congress use the Conference Committee process to reach an acceptable agreement and enact a badly needed reauthorization of ESEA.

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