



Federal Update – September 6, 2007

This update covers:

- Student Loan Relief for Pre-K Teachers Included in Higher Education Act Reconciliation
- House Advances on No Child Left Behind, Considers Pre-K Component
- Professional Development Grant Program Passes Senate
- Pre-Conference Negotiations Continue on *Head Start*
- Congress Prepares for Conference on Children's Health Insurance

Questions?
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Congress returned from its month-long recess on Tuesday to begin work on a busy legislative schedule. In the Senate, Majority Leader Harry Reid has laid out an ambitious agenda, while twelve appropriations bills, including one for federal education programs, await approval by a conference committee. Here's a brief overview of what to expect on important issues this month.

Pre-K Teachers Receive New Student Loan Relief in Higher Education Bill

A conference of the House and Senate reported a reconciliation bill of the Higher Education Act, [H.R. 2669](#), on Thursday, September 6. The conference report includes provisions to forgive 10 percent of student loans for early childhood educators annually for up to ten years. Although draft versions of the bill sparked a veto threat from President Bush, legislators expect that the new bill will receive his signature due to changes that were made in conference.

If signed into law, H.R. 2669 would authorize a special loan forgiveness program for pre-k teachers. While the conference report eliminated a House proposal to provide an additional \$5,000 in loan relief to students who become early childhood educators, Congress has clearly recognized the need to provide additional support to attract talented teachers in pre-k classrooms. [View the conference report](#) for H.R. 2669.

The House is expected to offer a full reauthorization of the Higher Education Act later this year. The Senate passed its reauthorization, the Higher Education Amendments of 2007 ([S. 1642](#)), which would provide extensive federal support for partnerships between higher education institutions and pre-k providers to train and recruit teachers. The Senate also acted to allow forgiveness of 15 percent of Federal Perkins loans each year for pre-k teachers who work in low-income school districts. Pre-K Now will encourage the House to include these programs in its reauthorization as a minimum commitment to supporting the education of pre-k teachers.

House Advances on No Child Left Behind Reauthorization

House Education and Labor Committee Chairman George Miller (D-CA) and Ranking Member Howard McKeon (R-CA) released their discussion draft of Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act on August 27. The Committee is expected to release its version of the remaining eight titles on Friday, September 7.

A pre-k incentive bill introduced by Rep. Mazie Hirono (D-HI) has gained the support of Chairman Miller and may be incorporated as an amendment to the bill during the markup process. The markup is scheduled to take place before the end of the month. After the committee holds its markup, the bill will be scheduled for a floor vote and the Senate will undertake its own reauthorization, possibly including a pre-k bill sponsored by Sens. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) and Kit Bond (R-MO). The timeframe for a House floor vote and for Senate action is still unclear.

View a [side-by-side comparison](#) of pre-k legislation introduced so far this session.

Professional Development for Pre-K Teachers Passes Senate

A bill introduced in the spring by Sens. Sherrod Borwn (D-OH) and George Voinovich (R-OH) to support professional development for pre-k teachers passed the Senate as part of S. 1642, the Higher Education Amendments of 2007. The bill authorizes grants to help states create professional development and career systems for early childhood educators. Pre-K Now is working with Hill staffers to identify a potential House sponsor to include the bill as part of that chamber's reauthorization. [View the original Brown-Voinovich bill](#), which was added without amendment to the Senate Higher Education Act reauthorization.

Head Start Review

Behind-the-scenes negotiations continue on the reauthorization of *Head Start* as the House prepares for conference. Legislation in both the House and Senate includes provisions to create state early learning councils that will coordinate services to young children, and both bills call for more *Head Start* teachers to hold a bachelor's degree within five years. The bills differ as to whether the early learning councils should be requirements or allowable activities by states that receive funding, and the House and Senate disagree on measuring the number of teachers with a bachelor's degree nationally or within each state. [View the NHSA's side-by-side comparison](#) of the two bills.

As pre-conference discussions move ahead on the *Head Start* reauthorization, the FY08 appropriation for *Head Start* has yet to be determined. House Appropriations Committee Chairman Dave Obey (D-WI) and Senate Committee Chairman Robert Byrd (D-WV) have reported bills that would provide \$75 million and \$200 million in increased funding, respectively, thereby ending a four-year lull in new appropriations. NHSA has requested a \$750 million increase for the program, arguing that a larger increase is needed to compensate for the years of flat-funding. [Track the progress of Senate and House appropriations bills for FY08.](#)

CHIP Update

The Children's Health Insurance Program, a landmark federal-state partnership to provide health coverage to children living close to poverty, will expire on September 30 and has become the subject of heated debate between both chambers and the White House. Both the House and Senate have passed reauthorizing legislation that would increase funding to enroll more of the estimated 5.4 million children who are eligible for CHIP or Medicaid but are not currently receiving coverage. The House increases funding for CHIP by providing \$50 billion in annual installments over five years to reach approximately 4.9 million children who would otherwise be uninsured; the Senate increases funding by \$35 billion annually for five years, enrolling an additional 4.1 million children. For more information on the CHIP debate, visit [Families USA](#) or view the [Kaiser Commission's memo and side-by-side](#).