
Washington Update

September 2004

Reauthorization

The 108th Congress returned last week after the long summer recess which began the last week in July. Adjournment is scheduled for early October to allow members to return to their home districts to campaign for the November 2, 2004 federal election. This year the President, the entire House of Representatives and the 1/3 of the Senate is up for election. Following the election, there is a chance that the Congress could return in a "Lame Duck" session to complete work they do not complete in the next couple of weeks.

While there is no "official" announcement that IDEA will not be completed this Congress, there is almost no chance now that there will be action on the reauthorization until the 109th Congress which convenes in January 2005. The four leading Congressional members in the IDEA effort, Reps. John Boehner, (R-OH), George Miller (D-CA), Senators Judd Gregg (R-NH) and Edward Kennedy (D-MA) met before the summer recess. Reports from that meeting indicate that the members agreed to keep IDEA on the table in September.

Conferees have not yet been appointed to resolve differences between the House and Senate versions of the IDEA legislation. The stalemate is between Senate Democrats who want to have some agreements reached prior to appointing conferees and the Republicans who do not. On July 15th Reps John Boehner (R-OH) and Mike Castle (R-DE) issued a statement which "expressed profound disappointment that Senate Democrat leaders have declined to allow a House-Senate conference that would enable Congress to send President Bush legislation to reauthorize the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) this year".

Head Start

Congress is also not expected to finish Head Start reauthorization in the 108th Congress. But, the Congress must act on the Child Care and Development Block Grant/Temporary Assistance to Needy Families legislation before September 30, 2004. Congress did pass another in a series of extensions - this time a three month extension of the legislation until September 30, 2004. The program was set to expire June 30, 2004.

Medicaid

Senators Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) and Gordon Smith (R-OR) introduced S. 2671 "The State Fiscal Relief Act of 2004" that would provide \$6 billion in fiscal relief to states, including a \$4.8 billion increase over 15 months in the federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) which determines the federal share of Medicaid funds available to individual states. Last year, the Congress gave an additional \$10 billion in emergency Medicaid support for states. Those additional funds expired June 30, 2004.

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Medicaid, continued

According to the Children’s Defense Fund 36 states lost at least \$100 million in federal Medicaid funding. According to CDF, the estimate is from \$10 million in Wyoming to \$1 billion in California and New York. Reps Peter King and Sherrod Brown also introduced a similar bill in the House that provides an FMAP increase for 15 months at 1.6%.

In addition, Senator Max Baucus (D-MT) introduced S. 2222, the “Medicaid and CHIP Safety Net Preservation Act of 2004.” According to advocates for the bill, the legislation would protect the entitlement of Medicaid and define the public input process in federal law.

Appropriations

The full House is working this week to pass its version of the FY’05 Appropriations Bill for Labor, Education, Health and Human Services. The Senate has yet to mark up its version of the bill and may do so next week. It is expected that FY’05 funding will be combined with other legislation as an omnibus package. It is likely that a Continuing Resolution (CR) will have to be passed to continue funding the government after the September 30 deadline. Fiscal year 2005 begins October 1, 2004.

ITCA has an objective in its Strategic Plan to “Advocate for 15% increase in Part C funding for each fiscal year for FY’02-’06.” The following chart includes a funding history of part C in recent years.

Fiscal Year	ITCA Request	Final Appropriation
2001		\$383.57 million
2002	\$428 million	\$417 million
2003	\$493 million	\$434.16 million
2004	\$567 million	\$444.36 million
2005	\$590 million	Not determined yet

Other funding requests contained in the House Appropriations Committee request include:

- Title I of NCLB - \$1 billion increase
- Part B of IDEA – \$1 billion increase
- Reading First - \$101 million increase
- Early Reading First - \$37.5 million increase
- CCBDG - \$2.099 an increase of \$12.419 million
- Head Start - \$6.898 billion, an increase of \$123.732 million
- Eliminate the Early Learning Opportunities grants
- Freeze Even Start, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Bilingual Education, the Early Childhood Educator Professional Development program, and the Title XX the social Services Block Grant