

Fourth District PTA Advocacy Communicator



FOURTH DISTRICT PTA ADVOCACY TEAM

MARCH 2015

Bills to reauthorize ESEA/NCLB are introduced in House and Senate

The long-awaited reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) moved closer to reality in February when new versions of the law were introduced in the Senate and the House. The two bills, which are largely the same, were introduced by Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Congressman John Kline (R-MN).

The original ESEA was enacted in 1965. Until recently, it was revised and renamed about every five years. The current law, titled No Child Left Behind (NCLB), was due for reauthorization in 2007.

Both the House and Senate versions of the reauthorization bill would limit the legal and regulatory authority of the federal Secretary of Education and bar the Secretary from imposing new requirements on states. The House bill prohibits the Secretary from requiring states to adopt the Common Core State Standards and directs the Secretary to reduce staff at the U.S. Department of Education.

The House version would cut \$7 billion over six years from federal Title I funding, which goes to school districts based on their numbers of low-income students. California would lose \$877 million in Title I funding, according to a White House report. (Overall, federal funding accounts for about 14 percent of California's state education budget.)

The House bill also eliminates the "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) provision of NCLB and allows states to design their own accountability systems, although states would still be required to create separate reports on the academic progress of students from low income and minority backgrounds.

The Senate version would eliminate 67 federal education programs and would allow federal Title I funding for disadvantaged students to follow them to the public school of their choice, a process known as "portability."

Portability is one of the areas of concern for National PTA, which is closely tracking the progress of the two bills. According to a letter signed by PTA and 40 other organizations, portability would undermine Title I's fundamental purpose of assisting public schools with high concentrations of poverty and high-need students. The current weighted formula for distributing Title I money ensures that poorer, smaller, under-resourced districts re-

ceive a greater share of Title I funds than large, highly affluent district, the letter states.

PTA also objects to the elimination of funding for state and school district Parent Information Resource Centers, which help facilitate parent involvement, and for the federal Arts in Education program, which has supported more than 200 model arts education programs in the past 10 years.

PTA's top priorities for ESEA-NCLB include:

- Adequate authorization levels to support critically important programs.
- Providing access to well-rounded education curricula for all students.
- Safeguarding and improving equity protections and dedicated funding streams for disadvantaged populations.
- Developing ambitious, yet appropriate, state-driven accountability systems with growth and performance goals to replace Adequate Yearly Progress.
- Guaranteeing that all students receive quality instruction from well-prepared teachers and pupil support personnel.
- Improving state longitudinal data systems and sharing of student data.
- The inclusion of language to support and strengthen family engagement.

Get ready for Sacramento Safari!

Registered participants should attend

Safari Orientation

Friday, March 6 9:15 a.m. to 11 a.m.

You will receive important information and materials. If you have any questions, contact

Kim Anderson at

Sac-safari@fourthdistrictpta.org

**New standards!
New standardized state tests!
New testing techniques!**

How our children are tested in school is changing. Find out what it all means from a panel of experts from the Orange County Department of Education

Advocacy Roundtable

Friday, April 24 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Fountain Valley School District
10055 Slater Avenue, Fountain Valley

Full funding for IDEA this year?

For decades, PTA has been asking the federal government to fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This year that might actually happen.

IDEA ensures that students with disabilities receive free, appropriate public education and the related services and support they need to achieve. When it was first enacted in 1975 as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, lawmakers said the federal government would ultimately pay 40 percent of the average per pupil expenditure for special education students. The actual amount of the federal contribution varies from year to year but has never exceeded 18.5 percent. The current \$11.5 billion federal contribution to special education counts for about 16 percent of the total cost of educating students with disabilities nationwide.

In January, Senator David Vitter (R-LA) introduced the IDEA Full Funding Act in the Senate. A bipartisan group of Congressmen introduced a similar bill in the House. Congressman John Kline (R-MN), chairman of the House Education and Workforce Committee, is a longtime advocate for full IDEA funding and has said that more money for special education is a priority for him.

“Full funding” means the federal government would pay for 40 percent of the “excess costs” of students with disabilities. Excess costs are the additional expenses beyond what is spent for every student.

California spends more than \$8 billion a year to provide special education services to about 702,000 students with disabilities, according to a 2013 report by the Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO). Federal funding provides about 18 percent of the excess costs, and the state contributes 43 percent, leaving school districts to pay about 39 percent from their general funds.

“We estimate that California would receive roughly \$2 billion more annually if the federal government were to ‘fully fund’ the intended level articulated in the IDEA,” the LAO said.

SB 172 would suspend high school exit exam and look for alternatives

The California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) would be put on hold under a bill introduced in February by Senator Carol Liu, chair of the Senate Education Committee.

SB 172 would suspend the exam and eliminate it as a graduation requirement for the next three school years. It would also require the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to convene an advisory panel to study whether to continue the exit exam and, if not, what should replace it. The panel would include school administrators, teachers, parents, and testing experts.

Since 2006, all California high school students have been required to pass the exit exam, which tests knowledge in English and math, in order to graduate. However, Liu says that with the advent of Common Core State Standards, the CAHSEE is no longer relevant, since it is tied to the old state standards.

How to track PTA-supported bills

Where can you go to find information about legislative bills supported by National and State PTA?

For news from Capitol Hill about legislative issues affecting families, schools, and communities, go to the National PTA website: **www.pta.org/takesaction**. You can sign up to receive action alerts on national public policy issues important to PTA.

For complete legislative information on the U.S. Congress, go to the Library of Congress legislative website: **<http://beta.congress.gov>**. The site includes schedules of activities, bill searches, information about the legislative process, a roster of members, and more.

Legislative news from Sacramento is available at **www.fourthdistrictpta.org** under Advocacy. Sign up to receive legislative updates through LegLinks.

For additional resources and to find out the status of current legislation being followed by California State PTA, go to **www.capta.org**. Sign up for Legislative Alerts and for the Sacramento Update newsletter.

You can also track state bills through the official state legislative information website, **www.leginfo.ca.gov**.

Keep in mind that a bill must pass both houses of the legislature (the House of Representatives and the Senate in Congress or the Assembly and Senate in California) before it can be signed into law by either the President or the Governor.