



National Coalition For Literacy

NCL Update **May 2009**

President's Budget Topic of NCL May Membership Meeting

The President's budget, including the proposed elimination of the Even Start Family Literacy program and the National Institute for Literacy, was the prevailing topic of policy discussions at the May membership meeting. See the Public Policy Corner below for NCL's response to the budget. Dan Miller, Interim Director of NIFL, gave an update on NIFL activities and shared the message that the administration is committed to literacy. Funding for NIFL will be transferred to the Department of Education for adult education research and training.

Pang Houa Moua of the Asian American Justice Center (AAJC), a national civil rights organization, talked about their English language learning integration program and AAJC's advocacy efforts. When advocating for ELL, they speak about the importance of English for maintaining a skilled workforce, enabling parents to help children and improving education at all levels. AAJC has outlined its policy priorities in *Adult Literacy Education in Immigrant Communities: Identifying Policy and Program Priorities for Helping Newcomers Learn English*, available at

http://www.advancingequality.org/files/AAJC_Adult_Literacy_Education_report.pdf

Next, members heard from Rachel Gragg of The Workforce Alliance, a coalition dedicated to increasing access to education and training for all workers. The group works on wage policies, higher education act, food stamps, TANF, WIA, any legislation where people would benefit from access to training and education. The Alliance advocates for a two-year post-secondary education guarantee, because 50% of job growth is in middle skill jobs that require two-year degrees. For more about middle-skill jobs, visit the Alliance website at

http://www.workforcealliance.org/site/c.ciJNK1PJJtH/b.1192031/k.AE16/TWA_Reports.htm.

Mark your calendars:

Literacy Leadership Awards – September 16th
Next Quarterly Membership Meeting – September 17th

Successful Dollar General Meeting Held in Mississippi



Dr. Phil Pepper, Mississippi State Economist, made a strong case for education at the Dollar General Presentation Series meeting in Jackson, MS on May 19th. In chart after chart, Dr. Pepper showed that individuals with less than a high school diploma have lower earnings and are more likely to be incarcerated, unemployed, and on Medicaid than individuals with a high school diploma, GED or further education. He said that “education is the most important economic development tool in the state” and that

Mississippi consistently ranks at the bottom economically and the low levels of educational attainment are driving the economy down. His comments built on the case made by Dr. Eric Clark, Executive Director of the Mississippi State Board for Community and Junior Colleges, who noted that there are 400,000 high school dropouts in Mississippi. This population consistently ranks lower in terms of perception of health status, civic participation and other quality of life measures. Jean Stephens represented the NCL Board of Directors, welcoming speakers and talking about the need for grassroots support and a united voice in Washington. Lynn Selmsler shared her experience on the Hill and provided tips on how and when to contact your legislators. Jackie Taylor challenged the group to identify their advocacy goals and walk away committed to taking action.



New Resource from CLASP

CLASP recently launched a new website (www.shifting-gears.org) designed to help states increase the number of low-income working adults who have the skills and credentials they need to compete for jobs in demand. Shifting Gears is a Joyce Foundation-sponsored initiative that aims to promote regional economic growth by aligning adult education, workforce development and postsecondary education in five states – Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin. The website is intended to provide information about state policies that work across the nation and to highlight innovative approaches in these states. A section of the site is dedicated to state basic skills policies that promote success in college and careers. Please share this news with your state and local partners.

Member Events

July 9-15: ALA, Annual Conference, Chicago, IL
July 19-22: CEA, Annual Conference, Madison, WI
Nov. 1-6: AAACE, Annual Conference, Cleveland, OH

Members, to list your events, please send announcements to Jennifer Maloney at jennifer.maloney@ncldc.net by the 5th of the month.

Public Policy Corner

On May 5, the Committee on Education and Labor, Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Competitiveness held a hearing focused on adult education and family literacy. A witness list and archived webcast can be found at <http://edlabor.house.gov/hearings/higher-education/>

Gretchen Wilson, Grammy winning recording artist and GED graduate and Marty Finsterbusch, Executive Director of VALUE, provided testimony on how participation in adult education programs changed their lives and mentioned the need to provide access to adult education programs for everyone seeking services. Other witnesses discussed a variety of topics from family literacy, adult education's value to business, English as a Second Language, and career pathways. The hearing was very well attended, spilling over into another hearing room where viewers could watch the proceedings.

The National Coalition for Literacy did not have an official witness but submitted testimony for the hearing record. After the hearing, a copy of the testimony was provided to each Subcommittee member to ensure the voice of the Coalition was taken into consideration as Members prepare to reauthorize the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. A copy of the NCL testimony is attached.

On May 7, the President released his 2010 Budget proposal. Although there was a proposed increase in adult education from \$554.1 million to \$628.2 million for state grants, the disappointing news was the proposed elimination of the Even Start Family Literacy Program and the National Institute for Literacy. As you know, NIFL was created to provide resources to the adult education and family literacy field. In recent years, much of the work has focused on K-12 education. We had hoped to see the new Administration renew its focus on adult education and to create a new research center on adult education and family literacy.

The requested increase in state grants included \$67 million to compensate certain states for errors in calculating formula grant awards between fiscal years 2003 and 2008 plus a \$7.1 million increase for the English Literacy/Civics Education State Grants set-aside. Although the increase in state grant funds is to compensate states for an error, it is the intent of the Administration to use the total amount for state grants as a starting point in determining funding for the following fiscal year.

Although we know that the release of the Budget is but a first step in a long process and that both the Institute and Even Start could be spared, we are concerned about the future of NIFL and Even Start. In response to the Budget proposal, the Coalition did send a letter to the President (see attachment), with copies to the Secretary of Education, Glenn Cummings, key individuals at OVAE and Members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, the House Committee on Education and Labor Committee, and the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions. NCL is grateful to ProLiteracy for its help in distributing copies of this letter to the Members of Congress.

Additionally, Congressman Patrick Kennedy's (D-RI) has drafted and will soon introduce a bill amending and reauthorizing WIA. This is a member bill and does not represent the final bill of the House Education and Labor Committee, although it will

undoubtedly influence the final bill. The Coalition recently received a rough draft of the legislation, prepared comments on various provisions and forwarded their comments to the offices of Congressmen Kennedy and Chairman Ruben Hinojosa (D-TX). We were pleased to see that many of the Coalition's recommendations were included in this draft bill. Prior to Memorial Day, Lennox McLendon, John Segota and I met with staff from the offices of Congressmen Kennedy and Hinojosa to review the Coalition's response and to discuss some of our concerns. It was a good meeting, with an open dialogue regarding our issues.

Finally, the Senate hearing scheduled for May 19 has been rescheduled for June 18. The Coalition is currently considering a list of witnesses for the hearing to send to those individuals on the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions responsible for the hearing.

Lynn Selmser

Visit the National Coalition for Literacy's website for more information.
<http://www.national-coalition-literacy.org/>