

ProLiteracy Policy Update

A publication of ProLiteracy Worldwide

February 2005

Initiative Opposes Proposed Fiscal 2006 Budget

ProLiteracy Worldwide has joined other members of the National Coalition for Literacy in supporting the State Directors of Adult Education initiative to oppose the President's Fiscal 2006 budget proposal. The proposal calls for a reduction in funding for state grants for adult basic education and literacy programs of nearly \$300 million, or 64%, and reduces funding for Even Start to zero.

Nearly three million adult literacy students are served by the federal and state funded adult basic education and literacy system in the United States. More than 52% of ProLiteracy America's 1,200 local literacy program affiliates receive some federal and/or state funding under this program. Approximately 77% of ProLiteracy's affiliates report significant waiting lists.

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) estimates that nearly half a million people—at least 470,000—would be denied literacy, adult basic education, GED, and English-as-a-second-language services due to the President's proposed budget cuts. Because states must use 25% of their own monies in order to receive federal adult education funds, states may cut back on their own investment in proportion to the federal cut, resulting in even more students being turned away.

For more information and analysis of the President's proposed budget implications for low-income families, visit the Center for Law and Social Policy Web site at http://www.clasp.org/publications/adult_ed_budget_cuts.pdf.

According to the U.S. Department of Education Web site, the Administration's justification for reducing funding for state grants for adult basic education and literacy programs by almost \$300 million is a 2001 report from the Office of Management and Budget:

“This request is consistent with the Administration's goal of decreasing funding for programs with limited impact or for which there is little or no evidence of effectiveness... The program was found to have a modest impact on adult literacy, skill attainment, and job placement, but data quality problems and the lack of a national evaluation made it difficult to assess the program's effectiveness.”

According to the Council of State Directors of Adult Education, however, the report was completed in the program year 2001, prior to the full implementation of the Department of Education's accountability system, the National Reporting System. The State Directors' Web site states that:

“In fact in 1998 Congress set performance indicators for adult education programs; each year the U.S. Department of Education has negotiated performance levels on these indicators with the states and each year a vast majority of the states have met or exceeded these levels. The Office of Budget and Management (OMB) rated programs based on measures that adult education does not use. OMB established common measures for

workforce programs, then applied them to adult education programs. Adult education programs do not have the legislative authority to collect data on some of the common measures established by OMB. The result is that adult education programs are determined to have ‘little or no evidence of effectiveness’ on measures about which they have no authority to collect data.”

According to the Department of Education in 1992, between 40 and 44 million adults in the United States lack sufficient literacy skills to be successful in their daily lives. The State Directors estimate that the overall effect of the proposed budget cut would be that the system would no longer be able to serve half of the three million currently enrolled adults. In some communities, this would mean that no adult literacy instruction would be available at all. The proposed reduction in funding would not affect each state equally because the funds are allocated on a formulaic basis. For state-specific information, click here:

http://www.ncsdae.org/myweb/109th_Congress/WEB%20State%20Program%20Tables%202006.pdf and retrieve page 51.

For further information and analysis of the President’s proposed budget cuts for adult basic education and literacy, visit the Council of State Directors of Adult Education Web site at:

http://www.ncsdae.org/myweb/PresidentsBudget_and_Appropriations.html.

The William F. Goodling Institute for Research in Family Literacy has issued a response to the Administration’s Proposed Elimination of Even Start funding in the Fiscal 2006 budget.

According to the Goodling Institute, the President’s statement relies on out-of-date statistical data to justify the cut. According to the Goodling Institute’s Web site:

“The cited evaluations are based upon findings that occurred prior to the implementation of new legal requirements for stronger state accountability systems and a mandated increased emphasis on higher quality, research-based instruction to be implemented by the U.S. Department of Education.”

Through Even Start funding, 50,000 of the nation’s poorest and most at-risk families are receiving literacy services and support. In 1997, 41% of Even Start families had household incomes of less than \$6,000. More than 42% of ProLiteracy America local affiliates provide family literacy services.

According to the Goodling Institute Web site, outcomes from Even Start programs include the following:

- Parents read more to their children, have more books at home, and take their children to the library more often than before participating.
- Parents are more informed about children’s development and age appropriate expectations.
- Parents are more active in their children’s classroom, volunteer more, and talk more with teachers.
- Parents take better care of their children’s medical and dental health.
- Parents have registered to vote or voted for the first time.
- Many parents obtained a driver’s license.
- Parents are more active in their community.

For further information and analysis of the President’s proposed budget cuts for Even Start, visit the Goodling Institute Web site at http://www.ed.psu.edu/goodlinginstitute/goal_3.asp.