

# ProLiteracy Policy Update



A publication of ProLiteracy Worldwide

July 2004

## Congress Leaves Education Bills Behind

By Alice Johnson Cain

Congress recently departed for its summer recess, leaving several important pieces of education legislation—including the **Workforce Investment Act** reauthorization—unfinished. Congress is scheduled to return to work on September 7, and is expected to remain in session until early October when it will adjourn for the year. Some of the unfinished legislation may be completed by October, but as Election Day looms, it becomes more likely that these bills will be postponed until next year.

Legislation likely to be postponed until next year includes the **Workforce Investment Act**, **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)**, and the **Higher Education Act**. While both the Senate and House of Representatives are now controlled by Republicans, if Democrats regain control of either chamber on Election Day, these and other bills are likely to change considerably before they become law.

### Adult Literacy Funding

Next year's funding levels for adult literacy and other education programs have not been finalized. President Bush originally proposed eliminating funding for three literacy programs, including **Even Start**; maintaining the current level of funding for **Adult Basic and Literacy Education State Grants**; and increasing funding for the **Reading First** children's literacy program. The House education appropriations committee then passed a bill that restored \$247 million for **Even Start**. The next steps are for the full House of Representatives to vote on the bill and for the Senate to complete action on its own funding bill so the bills can be merged, finalized, and signed into law. The chart below shows the amount of funding proposed by the President for literacy programs next year as compared to the amount approved by the House committee and the amounts these programs received in recent years.

<b>Proposed Funding for Selected Federal Literacy Programs</b>				
<b>Literacy Program</b>	<b>President's Proposal FY05</b>	<b>House Committee Approved FY05</b>	<b>Actual Funding FY04</b>	<b>Actual Funding FY03</b>
		<i>(in millions of dollars)</i>		
Reading First	1,125	1,125	1,024	994
Adult Literacy State Grants	574	574	574	571
Early Reading First	132	132	94	75
Library Literacy	20	20	20	12
National Leadership	9	9	9	9
NIFL	7	7	7	7
Even Start	0	247	247	250
Prison Literacy	0	0	5	5
Dropout Prevention	0	0	5	5

**Adult Literacy State Grants** are likely to receive the same level of funding next year as they received this year, \$574.4 million. The state grant program, which is administered by the Department of Education's Office of Adult and Vocational Education (OVAE), helps fund local adult education and literacy programs across the country through grants distributed by state education agencies.

Overall, Congress will allocate approximately \$60 billion to education programs next year, a slight increase over last year. For a more detailed analysis of education appropriations, see [www.house.gov/appropriations\\_democrats/report\\_040213budget.pdf](http://www.house.gov/appropriations_democrats/report_040213budget.pdf).

## Workforce Investment Act Reauthorization

Both the House and Senate passed bills to reauthorize the **Workforce Investment Act** (WIA). Title II of this bill, the **Adult and Family Literacy Act**, governs most federal adult education and family literacy policies, determines how federal funding to literacy is allocated, and sets accountability goals for these programs.

The next step is for both chambers to meet to negotiate differences in their bills, working out a single bill to send to the President. It is highly unlikely that the negotiations will occur this year, so Congress will need to start over with this legislation next year. Recommendations from the literacy field to Congress for WIA are available at [http://naepdc.org/About\\_NCSDAE/bottomlines.html](http://naepdc.org/About_NCSDAE/bottomlines.html).

## Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

Congress in 1996 enacted major changes in welfare law through the **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families** (TANF) legislation. TANF established time limits, work requirements, and flat federal funding for state welfare programs. TANF was initially authorized through October 2002, but that deadline has been temporarily extended while Congress reauthorizes the program.

On February 13, the House of Representatives passed its version of the TANF reauthorization bill, the **Personal Responsibility, Work, and Family Promotion Act of 2003** (H.R.4) by a vote of 230 to 192, with Republicans generally voting for the bill and Democrats generally voting against it. It is similar to President Bush's welfare proposal—imposing new work requirements on parents without investing in the work supports that help low-income families get and keep jobs. The next step is for the Senate to pass its own new version of TANF. After that, both chambers will meet to work out a single version to take to send to the President to either sign or veto. For more information on welfare policy, see [http://www.clasp.org/Pubs/Pubs\\_Welfare\\_Policy](http://www.clasp.org/Pubs/Pubs_Welfare_Policy).

## Graduation for All

Rep. Ruben Hinojosa (D-TX) and Susan Davis (D-CA) introduced a bill, **Graduation for All** (H.R. 3085), that would provide grants to promote adolescent literacy and prevent students from dropping out through activities that include hiring literacy coaches in high schools, strengthening reading and writing curricula, and providing reading assessments for middle and high school students. Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) has introduced a similar bill, **Pathways for All Students to Succeed Act** (S. 1154), in the Senate. For more information, see <http://hinojosa.house.gov/legislation/legislation.cfm?id=419>.

*For more information on education policy, see [www.house.gov/georgemiller/education.html](http://www.house.gov/georgemiller/education.html).*

---

This report was prepared by Alice Johnson Cain. Ms. Cain is a senior education aide to Rep. George Miller of California. Her prior policy work includes The Children's Defense Fund, the Clinton and Gore Administration, Sen. Paul Simon, and the National Institute for Literacy. Ms. Cain has also served as a volunteer literacy tutor at the local level and as a volunteer consultant at the national level. ProLiteracy is grateful for her support in producing the Policy Update.