

## Issue #2 July 17, 2009



### News In Brief...

- On May 19th, Commission Study Director Cheryl King, now president of Kentucky Wesleyan College in Owensboro, joined the expert advisory panel established to help develop a strategic adult education plan for California. West Ed has contracted with the California Department of Education to create this new plan. *Reach Higher, America* was referenced often at the all-day meeting. A second planning meeting is slated for later this year.
- On June 12th, Commission Chairman David Perdue gave the keynote speech at a conference of Virginia's New River/Mount Rogers Workforce Investment Board. The conference theme was *Reaching Higher in Southwest Virginia - Bridging the Gap Between Employer Needs and Adult Education*.
- On June 23rd, CAAL Research/Policy Associate James Parker joined a panel on Workforce Development, Transitions, and Collaboration Models at the 29th Annual CASAS Summer Institute in San Diego, CA. He spoke about *Reach Higher, America's* major recommendations, the status of the federal Adult Education and Economic Growth Act (AEEGA), state initiatives that exemplify good workforce skills provisions, and implications for program collaboration, assessment/outcomes, and service to entry level and incumbent workers.
- On June 24th, CAAL Vice President Forrest Chisman was a panelist at the 6th Annual Immigration Law and Policy Conference sponsored by the Migration Policy Institute and the Catholic Legal Immigration Network in Washington, DC. The audience consisted of some 150 immigration lawyers. The panel's topic was "Immigrant Integration: A Full Policy Agenda." Dr. Chisman spoke about the Workforce Investment Act in terms of its structure, relevance for immigrants, problems, and issues of reauthorization.



Commissioner Mark Musick and Study Director Cheryl King have been appointed to the GED Testing Service Advisory Committee.

**Expanding Horizons.** On June 26th, CAAL published *Expanding Horizons: Pacesetters in Adult Education for Work*. The publication, written by Forrest Chisman, is based on the "Adult Readiness Roundtable" Project co-sponsored by CAAL and the National Center on Education and the Economy on April 6-7, 2009. It reports on a two-day discussion meeting among a group of exemplary adult-education-for-work programs from around the country. It aims to stimulate thinking and action at the state and local levels, especially among provider groups that recognize the need for new approaches to service provision. The paper is available as item NC-CAAL9 from the Publications page of [the CAAL website](#). One participant of that meeting, Brenda Dann-Messier, was recently nominated assistant secretary of vocational and adult education in the U.S. Department of Education.

**CAAL Project on NIFL.** President Obama recently proposed to eliminate the National Institute for Literacy. On June 30, CAAL convened an advisory group of national leaders, including several commissioners, to discuss the future of NIFL in terms of the continuing need for this free-standing entity as well as a revised governance and structure arrangement to strengthen its independence, authority, program range and focus, and leadership capacity so that it can effectively address the needs of adult education and workforce skills in the coming years. CAAL expects to put out a short report with recommendations in late July or early August and will post the document on its website. In the meantime, several members of the National Commission have written to leaders of the House and Senate Appropriations and Education Committees to help save NIFL as an independent, free-standing, adult-focused leadership institute so that this resource is preserved while we work to strengthen it.

**Green Job Training Grants.** Certain adult education programs may be eligible to compete for some of the Department of Labor grants for "green jobs training" as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. [The ETA Section](#) of the Department of Labor website provides program summaries, eligibility criteria, and application guidelines.

**Shifting Gears Website Launched.** The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) has launched a new website to bring national attention to the regional "Shifting Gears" initiative of the Joyce Foundation, [www.shifting-gears.org](http://www.shifting-gears.org). Joyce launched Shifting Gears in 2006 to help five Midwest states--Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin--re-engineer adult education, workforce development, and postsecondary education policies to support economic growth and expand job opportunities for low-

skilled workers. The site provides numerous resources for other states that wish to follow Joyce's lead.

**New Guide for Community Literacy Coalitions.** The National Institute for Literacy recently released "Guide to Performance Management for Community Literacy Coalitions." Written by Harry Harty and Elaine Morley of the Urban Institute, the 72-page guide addresses "how community literacy coalitions and their partner organizations can track the progress they are making to improve literacy in their communities, then use this information to improve their activities and the effectiveness of their work." The report may be downloaded from the Publications page of [www.nifl.gov](http://www.nifl.gov) (scroll to the bottom of the page).



**Focus On...**

### **The Adult Education and Economic Growth Act**

The Adult Education and Economic Growth Act (AEEGA, AEEG Act) was formally introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives late yesterday, July 16th, by Congressmen Patrick Kennedy (RI) and Ruben Hinojosa (TX). A companion bill of the same name (S.1468) was also introduced by Senators Jim Webb (VA) and Sherrod Brown (OH). Both bills have been in development for the past year. They will be posted next week at [www.thomas.gov](http://www.thomas.gov) (search by keyword, bill number, or author). The House bill is available as L-1 from the Links page of the [CAAL website](http://www.caal.org), under the Legislative heading at the top. The sponsors' lay-language summary of the Bill's key provisions and intent are incorporated. L-2 and L-3 are the news releases issued by the House and Senate sponsors respectively. L-4 is the Senate version of the Act.

The AEEGA is based significantly on the recommendations of [Reach Higher, America](http://www.reachhigher.org), the National Commission on Adult Literacy's final report. If enacted, the AEEGA will put the nation firmly on the path to the kind of coherent, connected system of adult education and workforce skills essential for meeting America's 21st Century needs. The National Commission is pleased to support the AEEG Act, which represents extraordinary leadership on the part of these Congressional leaders. In the coming months, as the Commission's agent, CAAL will continue working to strengthen the Act and help move it to passage.

In introducing the AEEGA, Congressman Kennedy, a member of the House Appropriations Committee, observes that "the road to economic recovery requires our nation's workforce be prepared for a global economy. Unfortunately 80 to 90 million adults in this country have deficiencies in basic education. In my district, over 23% of the

adult population does not have a diploma. We must ensure that adult education and workforce training programs have the tools and resources they need to prepare our workers for the next generation of jobs..."

Congressman Hinojosa, chairman of the Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness, noted that "we are facing the greatest world economic crisis since the Great Depression. We need to re-tool our economy and that starts with investing in our people..."

Senator Webb, who serves on the Foreign Relations, Joint Economic, and Veterans Affairs Committees, observes that "we want to build 'on ramps' for American workers who need new skills and a better education in order to improve their lives. Just as importantly, we want to protect and reward employers for helping them....Modest funding will invigorate state and local adult education programs to better align with workplace needs. This investment will have an affirmative ripple effect on our communities. And, it advances my longstanding goal of promoting basic economic fairness in our society."

The AEEG Act states its four broad purposes as follows:

*(1) To increase access substantially to adult education, literacy, and workplace skills services for adults who have limited basic skills, lack a high school diploma or its equivalent, or are limited English proficient.*

*(2) To create seamless pathways from adult education and occupational skills development to postsecondary education or training and workforce development programs and services that help adult learners persist throughout the pipeline from the lowest levels of basic literacy or English language proficiency to the achievement of a level of proficiency that will enable the adult learner to successfully transition to family-sustaining jobs in careers with the promise of advancement.*

*(3) To develop an adult education, literacy, and work skills system that coordinates and integrates adult education, literacy, and workforce skills services with workforce development and postsecondary education and training opportunities across agencies and programs.*

*(4) To greatly improve outcomes for adults receiving adult education, literacy, and workplace skills services in terms of learning gains, acquisition of basic workforce skills, accelerated learning, acquisition of a high school diploma or its equivalent, or successful transition to postsecondary education or training or to family-sustaining jobs in the workplace.*

The AEEG Act substantially reforms WIA Titles I and II, including preservation of the National Institute for Literacy as an adult-focused, independent entity. It also provides for a new technology title (Title III, 21st Century Technology and Skills for Adult Learners), a

national research and development center through the National Center for Education Research, and incentives to encourage the more active involvement of employers.

Many groups across the country have told CAAL they want to support the AEEG Act when the timing is right. This is the time. CAAL encourages education and workforce skills stakeholders, especially national organizations representing major constituencies, to quickly show their support for the AEEGA. Letters may be sent to Congressmen Patrick Kennedy and Ruben Hinojosa through their Legislative Assistants Rachel Bisi ([Rachel.bisi@mail.house.gov](mailto:Rachel.bisi@mail.house.gov)) and Rosa Garcia ([rosa.garcia@mail.house.gov](mailto:rosa.garcia@mail.house.gov)), and to Senators Jim Webb and Sherrod Brown through Legislative Assistants Maribel Ramos ([Maribel\\_ramos@webb.senate.gov](mailto:Maribel_ramos@webb.senate.gov)) and Moira Lenehan ([moira\\_lenehan@brown.senate.gov](mailto:moira_lenehan@brown.senate.gov)). CAAL will welcome copies of messages people want to share.

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