

## Issue #7, March 16, 2010

Each issue of the E-News reports on CAAL's programs and publications, including follow-up activities related to the National Commission on Adult Literacy. Occasional feature articles are offered, along with news about complementary work by other groups.

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### NEW CAAL PRIMER ON CONGRESSIONAL PROCESS

Many people find the legislative process mystifying--that is, how laws are made and funded by the U.S. Congress. A new 4-page CAAL publication, [MAKING & FUNDING LAWS: A PRIMER](#) by Gene Sofer and Gail Spangenberg, attempts to demystify two aspects of the process, Authorizations and Appropriations. The document begins:

*Congress uses the "Authorization" process to create or modify laws that require authorizing discretionary spending for a particular purpose, like Adult Education or Job Training. The "Appropriations" process is used to allocate real dollars to each program. Examples of Authorizing Committees are the House Education and Labor Committee and the Senate HELP (Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions) Committee, which have specific areas of jurisdiction. The House and Senate both have an Appropriations Committee--and both operate with 12 subcommittees, each of which has responsibility for a particular portfolio of programs.*

*There are several opportunities in the legislative process for advocates at the national, state, and*

local level to affect legislation by working with elected officials, but the further along the process gets, the more difficult this becomes. Thinking of the process as a pyramid, the higher you climb the steeper it gets.

### **How the Authorization Process Works**

1. A bill is drafted with input from advocates and constituency groups. The actual drafting is done by attorneys with substantive experience. These "Legislative Counsels" work for the House and Senate and do not interact directly with the public. Bills are usually developed through a back-and-forth process in which Congressional staff and the Legislative Counsel trade drafts until the staff (the Legislative Aides on behalf of the representatives and senators for whom they work) are satisfied with the result. **This is the FIRST opportunity to affect the content of a bill.**

2. After the bill has been drafted, the author of the bill (a senator or representative) formally "introduces" or "drops" it, and it becomes a matter of public record. Supporters of the bill, called original co-sponsors, may join the author. The bill is given a number. Based on its subject matter, the Parliamentarian then refers it to a particular Committee (which can refer it to an appropriate subcommittee) for further action. If the subject matter crosses issue areas, each affected Committee gets a chance to shape the part of the bill over which it has jurisdiction. [[More...](#)]



### **IN THE STATES**

▶ Last May, [Reach Higher. America's](#) study director, Cheryl King (now president of Kentucky Wesleyan College), joined an expert advisory panel--as part of CAAL's follow-up program on behalf of the National Commission on Adult Literacy--to help develop a strategic adult education plan for the state of California. On March 5th, 2010, Dr. King attended a second strategic planning session, which was held at contractor West Ed's office in San Francisco. West Ed is using input from this and other advisory panels to develop recommendations for the California Department of Education. Their report is expected to go to the Department by fall.

▶ On March 2nd, Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley called for more training in the state to prepare the workforce there to meet an unexpected surge in jobs requiring certification beyond a high school diploma but less than a bachelor's degree. The initiative is called Skills2Compete-Maryland. A target of the workforce training efforts, officials said, will be some 730,000 adult residents lacking a high school diploma and/or fluency in English. They said that adult education and GED programs will intensify their efforts to fill gaps in basic skills, such as math and reading, to meet the challenge. The state aims to increase workforce skills by 20 percent within two years, and to make sure that all working adults have access to at least two years of education or training past high school. Maryland joins 10 other states in this initiative, which is aligned with a campaign of the National Skill's Coalition (formerly The Workforce Alliance). A new publication released on the occasion of Governor O'Malley's announcement (*Maryland's Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs*) is available at the [Skills2Compete-Maryland](#) website.



## WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT

- ▶ At the February 24th Senate HELP Committee hearing on Reauthorizing the Workforce Investment Act, Senator Tom Harkin emphasized the urgency for American workers to get the skills necessary to compete in the 21st century global job market. He said that most decisions about how best to meet people's needs should be made at the state and local levels--and that as we modernize WIA, we must ensure flexibility for local workforce systems to tailor their services to specific local and regional labor needs. He also stressed that WIA and job creation are about more than just "growing" the economy; they are also about providing a ladder of opportunity so that all Americans have a fair chance to get ahead by entering and advancing in 21st century careers. Senator Michael Enzi stressed the importance of passing a bipartisan bill to reauthorize WIA as soon as possible. He noted that some 12 million workers don't have a high school diploma and that 51 million have no college degree. He also said that about 60 percent of businesses today are having trouble finding skilled workers. Five witnesses testified at the hearing: Joseph Carbone (President and CEO, The WorkPlace, Inc., Southwestern Connecticut's Workforce Development Board), Anthony Carnevale (Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce), Cheryl Feldman (District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund, Philadelphia), Paul Stalknecht (Air Conditioning Contractors of Lamerica, Arlington, VA), and Robert Templin (President, Virginia Community College in Annandale). A Q&A period followed the witness presentations, with attention to the problem of silos, sector programs, using WIA funds for apprenticeship programs, the important role of community colleges, and the need for integrated programs. Click [HERE](#) to view the full hearing.
  
- ▶ Recently, the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW) convened the Workforce Innovators Network (WIN), an experienced group of local Workforce Investment Board executive directors from around the country. The group reflected on a decade of experiences under WIA, and in a new CSW publication (January 2010) issued recommendations from their perspective on ways to achieve best policies, practices, and programs. Click here for a copy of [Critical and Emerging Role of Workforce Investment Boards: How Federal Policy Can Incite Workforce Innovation](#).
  
- ▶ At the February 4th state ABE directors meeting, Brenda Dann-Messier, Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education, reported on the Department of Education's "WIA Community Conversations," a series of discussions held by OVAE around the country on reauthorization of WIA. To date, OVAE has sponsored 19 community conversations in 7 ED regions and 8 states plus the District of Columbia, involving over 500 participants. The activity has reportedly produced 20 position papers from national, state, and local organizations and reached more than 9,000 practitioners via NIFL Listserv Discussion Lists. It is not clear how this community feedback will be used, but the [power point presentation](#) given at the state ABE meeting is available from the Department's website.
  
- ▶ WIA was a major topic of discussion at the March 8th conference of the National Association of Workforce Boards in Washington, D.C. The conference drew some 1500 participants, the largest gathering ever of WIBs and related professionals. One of several sessions covered by CAAL

included a panel of Senate legislative aides chaired by Ray Uhalde of Jobs for the Future. The Uhalde panel included Beth Buehlmann (Senator Enzi), Scott Cheney (Senator Murray), Kevin McDermott (Rep. Tierney), and Allison Dembeck (Republican staff, House Committee on Education and Labor). The panel reported that the Senate is working actively on a WIA reauthorization bill and that the Senate has been getting many recommendations from the field. The Senate gives WIA reauthorization high priority and a bill is expected soon, they said. [Separate CAAL intelligence suggests that this will occur by April or May.] Ray Uhalde noted the importance of making Titles I and II mutually reinforcing. A luncheon talk featuring Brenda Dann-Messier made it clear that OVAE is working closely with the Department of Labor on services for low-skilled adults. OVAE is also providing technical assistance to Senate staff. Ms. Dann-Messier said: "We see WIA reauthorization as a once-in-a-lifetime chance." She also called for aligning Titles I and II, and longitudinal data systems involving postsecondary education. Pamela Passman (Microsoft), also a luncheon speaker, said that only 10 percent of eligible adults are enrolled in any kind of workforce education or training at the present time. She reported that Microsoft's [Elevate America](#) initiative works with 12 states to reach adults who are mostly unemployed, some 40 percent of whom are aged 40-51. She offered two policy recommendations: to develop a network of "virtual one-stops" and to provide more services to veterans and their spouses. Ms. Passman is passionate about the role of technology in workforce education and training, as the Elevate America website makes evident. [Note: If the Microsoft link doesn't navigate properly, please google "Elevate America" and enter one of their sites that way.] Other sessions covered by CAAL were a discussion of the [Michigan Works](#) program (at which CAAL urged reference to the Adult Education and Economic Growth Act in future presentations) and a "Dialogue with DOL about WIA Performance Accountability." Among the concerns expressed at the DOL session was the fact that currently Titles I, II, III, and IV of WIA have different performance measures.



## ALSO WORTHY OF NOTE



A tribute recognizing Harold W. McGraw, Jr. for a lifetime of support to adult literacy and other education and social causes was introduced by Senator Christopher Dodd in the Congressional Record on February 22nd. Mr. McGraw has championed the cause of adult literacy for years with generous personal contributions to many national organizations and projects, including the National Commission on Adult Literacy. He also helped develop and enact important federal legislation (the National Literacy Act and National Institute for Literacy) two decades ago and has worked tirelessly to raise public and private sector funds for literacy. He has also supported many other worthy projects in his home state of Connecticut and across the country. Click [HERE](#) for a copy of the full

Tribute.



On March 5th, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan released a draft of the [Department's National Education-Technology Plan](#), inviting public comment. While the plan tends to focus heavily on the schools, it aims to transform American education at all levels. Various materials, including the [full draft plan and an executive summary](#) are available from the Department of Education website. Adult education and workforce skills organizations may find CAAL's recent publication,

[The Power of Technology to Transform Adult Learning](#) (Mary L. McCain), a useful resource as they consider the Department's proposals in light of their own needs and visions. [Note: *The Power of Technology to Transform Adult Learning* generated 11,000 hits on the CAAL website between 10/21/09 and 3/1/10.]

▶ The November 2009 issue of the MDRC Practitioner Brief, by Kay Sherwood, deals with *Helping Low-Wage Workers Access Work Supports*. The issue is available from the [Policy Briefs Archive](#) of the MDRC website, along with many other excellent publications. [Note: MDRC was originally founded as the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation but is now known and registered as MDRC.]

▶ On March 11th, the [Center for American Progress](#) presented a program of panelists to discuss "*A New National Approach to Career Navigation for Working Learners*." A paper by that name was released and is available at the CAP website. This special CAP program was summarized as follows: "*The United States has no coherent, planned career navigation system. Such a system was unnecessary when the primary prerequisites for many middle-class jobs were physical strength and endurance, and the labor market was dominated by large firms with internal career ladders. Today, however, ongoing economic volatility combined with the rising demand for highly skilled employees make it more difficult for workers to reach wise career decisions or succeed on their own. Work and learning choices impact how much Americans pay for education, how much we earn over our lifetime, and even access to health and retirement benefits. In this way, career guidance is as essential as education and training to ensuring economic opportunity....[CAP] seeks to open a national dialogue about how to leverage emerging models of career guidance from the public, nonprofit, union, education, and private sectors to develop a national vision and approach to career development.*"

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## PLEASE SUPPORT CAAL'S WORK

If you value the work CAAL does, please consider making a contribution on our website at [www.caalusa.org](http://www.caalusa.org).

In the 10 years since we began, with a small budget and staff we have published more than three dozen reports, sponsored over a dozen task force and Roundtable meetings (on ESL, community college transitions, workforce readiness, and other topics), and spearheaded the National Commission on Adult Literacy. We remain dedicated to ensuring that the recommendations in *Reach Higher, America* translate into legislation, new thinking, and innovative projects across the country. Like all nonprofits we depend solely on grants and donations, and we are affected by the same tight funding as everyone else.

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