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Issue Brief

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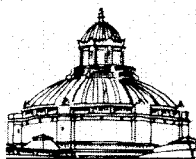
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EDUCATION: FEDERAL CONCERNS

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by

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EDUCATION: FEDERAL CONCERNS

SUMMARY

At issue for the Congress is how, and the extent to which, the Federal Government can help the country's educational system respond to that system's current challenges.

This issue brief analyzes six areas in which Federal policies to address the educational system's current needs are being fashioned -- (1) services for disadvantaged youth, (2) the financing of postsecondary education, (3) the level of Federal appropriations for education, (4) responses to adult illiteracy, (5) international economic competitiveness, and (6) the role of vocational education.

Traditionally, Federal education activities have been focused primarily on three areas -- (1) equal opportunity, (2) advancement of knowledge, and (3) capacity building. The Federal Government has acted to promote equal opportunity in education for racial and ethnic minorities, women, and individuals disadvantaged by socioeconomic and handicapping conditions. Efforts include enactment and enforcement of civil rights statutes, support for compensatory education programs, and provision of financial aid to needy postsecondary students. In advancing knowledge, institutions of higher education undertake a significant portion of the Nation's research and development. Federal spending also supports research and development on the processes of learning and ways to educate our population. Activities to build up the financial and instructional capacities of educational institutions include construction and maintenance of educational facilities, teacher training, and curriculum development. Federal efforts to build capacities have often been undertaken at times of perceived national crises and in educational areas deemed especially important to the Nation's interests, for example the recent initiation and expansion of Federal programs in science, mathematics, and technology advancement.

The current debate on education focuses on national imperatives such as raising the achievement of disadvantaged students and improving the Nation's economically competitive position through education. This session a conference committee reached agreement on legislation reauthorizing elementary and secondary education programs and authorizing a number of new programs (H.R. 5). A conference committee is considering H.R. 3, establishing a variety of educational programs to improve international competitiveness. Congress also began to examine alternative means of financing postsecondary education and ways to decrease the current rate of defaults on the Guaranteed Student Loan (GSL) program. The FY89 budget request for the Department of Education (ED) of \$21.2 billion would increase overall funding for education programs by 4.2% above the FY88 appropriation. The Congress is currently considering the FY89 request -- the first concurrent resolution on the budget has been passed by the House and both the House and Senate have begun hearings on the FY89 appropriations for ED.

ISSUE DEFINITION

The debate on education focuses on national imperatives such as securing the achievement of disadvantaged students and improving the Nation's economically competitive position through education. A House and Senate conference committee agreed to legislation reauthorizing elementary and secondary education programs and initiating education reform programs (H.R. 5). A conference committee is considering H.R. 3, establishing a variety of educational programs to improve international competitiveness. Congress also began to examine alternative means of financing postsecondary education and ways to decrease the current rate of defaults on the Guaranteed Student Loan (GSL) program. The Congress is currently considering the first concurrent resolution on the budget and appropriations for FY89 for most Federal programs.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

Overview

At issue for the Congress is how, and the extent to which, the Federal Government can help the country's educational system respond to that system's current challenges.

Recently, the American educational system has come under intense scrutiny, prompted by concern about the Nation's capacity to maintain its position in the world economy and to respond to changing demands in its industrial and technological sectors. Reports of widespread illiteracy among adults, and diminished academic performance among youth, suggest to many that our schools may be failing to help meet the country's economic needs and exacerbating them as well. Compounding the difficulties that schools face are changes in students' characteristics; students increasingly come from minority racial or ethnic backgrounds, experience poverty, live with a single parent, or speak a native language other than English. Historically, our schools have had least success with such children and youth. These children and youth make up, however, a large proportion of those served through Federal education programs.

Traditionally, Federal education activities have been focused primarily on three areas -- (1) equal opportunity, (2) advancement of knowledge, and (3) capacity building. The Federal Government has acted to ensure equal opportunity in education for racial and ethnic minorities, women, and individuals disadvantaged by socioeconomic and handicapping conditions. Efforts include enactment and enforcement of civil rights statutes and provision of financial aid to needy postsecondary students. In advancing knowledge, institutions of higher education undertake a significant portion of the Nation's research and development. Federal spending also supports research and development on the processes of learning and ways to educate our population. Activities to build up the financial and instructional capacities of educational institutions include construction and maintenance of educational facilities, teacher training, and curriculum development. Federal efforts to build capacities have

often been undertaken at times of perceived national crises and in educational areas deemed especially important to the Nation's interests, for example, the recent expansion of Federal programs in science, mathematics, and technology advancement.

The educational system with which the Federal Government interacts is large and diverse, having over 45 million elementary and secondary students in public and private schools, 2.5 million elementary and secondary teachers, more than 12 million postsecondary students in public and private institutions, and 700 thousand postsecondary faculty members. The general financing and operating of the country's educational institutions are primarily the responsibility of State and local governments, and private organizations and persons. Of the total 1986-87 level of expenditures by all levels of education (\$289.5 billion), 39.2% came from the State sources, 25.1% from local sources, 8.6% from the Federal Government, and 27% from all other sources according to the U.S. Department of Education (ED).

This issue brief analyzes six areas in which Federal policies to address the educational system's current needs are being fashioned: (1) services for disadvantaged youth, (2) the financing of postsecondary education, (3) the level of Federal appropriations for education, (4) responses to adult illiteracy, (5) international economic competitiveness, and (6) the role of vocational education.

Disadvantaged Youth

Background

Since the enactment of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965, through the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA) of 1981, most Federal aid to elementary and secondary education has been focused on disadvantaged youth -- including those who are handicapped, limited-English proficient (LEP), actual or potential high school dropouts, or otherwise educationally or economically disadvantaged. The Congress has been consistently concerned that Federal aid be provided to meet the special educational needs of these youth because those needs were often especially severe, inadequately met by State and local educational agencies, and concentrated in States and localities that had insufficient financial resources to provide the necessary educational services.

Issues

At issue is whether to increase the current level of Federal aid for the education of disadvantaged youth, whether to do this through an expansion of current programs or the development of new ones, whether additional services should be focused on a specific age/grade level (such as high school or pre-kindergarten students), and whether to address the educational problems of these youth through conventional education programs or a more comprehensive approach.

Interest in current and prospective Federal education programs for the disadvantaged has been stimulated by recent demographic projections indicating that increasing proportions of American youth are likely to be in poor or LEP families, or otherwise have characteristics traditionally associated with relatively low academic achievement and high dropout rates. In the context of current Federal programs, many have argued that the ECIA Chapter 1 program of education for disadvantaged children should be amended to better focus aid on the pupils and localities with greatest need, improve parental involvement in their children's education, more effectively serve pupils attending non-public schools, serve a higher proportion of pupils who could benefit from the program, and increase incentives for improved achievement by participating pupils. Analysts have also argued that more compensatory education services should be provided to secondary school pupils, including high school dropout prevention/re-entry programs. For LEP pupils, some have concluded that Bilingual Education Act (BEA) grantees should have greater flexibility to use funds not primarily for transitional bilingual education services -- with instruction in both the pupils' native language and English for a limited period -- but also for alternative instructional approaches (e.g., English-only "immersion" programs).

More broadly, many analysts have argued that the Congress should adopt a more comprehensive and ambitious approach to meeting the needs of disadvantaged youth. The Congress is currently acting on legislation to extend current, and adopt similar new, education programs for the disadvantaged (see below). While programs such as ECIA Chapter 1 have had a significant impact on the basic academic achievement of most participants, these programs have not served all those who need such assistance, they tend to have least success with the most disadvantaged pupils, and they have not comprehensively addressed the wide range of problems and needs of disadvantaged youth -- not only in education but in health, housing, income maintenance, employment, and other areas. Many believe that the needs of disadvantaged youth will be substantially ameliorated only when addressed in such a comprehensive manner, and with a large increase in or redirection of Federal funding. In contrast, others argue that the problems of disadvantaged youth cannot be met through increased or more comprehensive Federal aid, but through such actions as removal of "barriers to employment" of the disadvantaged (e.g., the minimum wage), increased inculcation of "traditional" moral values (e.g., avoidance of divorce or teenage pregnancy), or radical changes in the provision of educational services (e.g., vouchers as a means of introducing competition among public and private schools).

Congressional Action

On Mar. 31, 1988, a conference committee completed consideration of H.R. 5, a bill that extends the ECIA and most other current Federal elementary and secondary education programs through FY93, while authorizing several new programs. The conference version of H.R. 5 contains Chapter 1 amendments: requiring that substantial shares of program funds be allocated as concentration grants to areas with high proportions or numbers of poor children, authorizing grants specifically for dropout prevention/re-entry and secondary school basic skills improvement, providing enhanced incentives for pupil and school

achievement gains, authorizing grants to help meet the additional costs of serving pupils attending private schools, supporting increased involvement of parents in the education of disadvantaged children, and stating congressional intent that sufficient funds should be provided to serve all eligible educationally disadvantaged children. H.R. 5 also authorizes increased flexibility in making BEA grants for the education of LEP children; and authorizes a new program, Even Start, for the joint education of preschool children and their disadvantaged parents. The conference bill also extends the Emergency Immigrant Education Act, and the Senate version authorizes a number of other demonstration programs (e.g., a Comprehensive Child Development program) to support innovative approaches to the education of disadvantaged youth. (See CRS Issue Brief 87055, Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Programs: Reauthorization Issues, and 87070, Education for Disadvantaged Children: Reauthorization Issues.)

Other legislation addressing the educational needs of disadvantaged youth includes the following: the Senate-passed version of H.R. 3, omnibus trade legislation that includes dropout prevention and secondary school basic skills programs similar to those in H.R. 5 (see CRS Issue Brief 87108, Education Proposals in Trade Competitiveness Legislation); H.R. 1720, welfare reform passed by the House that requires States to provide education and training services to welfare recipients aged 16 years and above (see CRS Issue Brief 87007, Welfare); and S. 514, job training legislation passed by the Senate that provides basic and remedial education for youth aged 16-21 years who are welfare recipients (see CRS Issue Brief 87039, Job Training: FY88 Budget and Legislative Issues).

Financing Postsecondary Education

Background

The Federal commitment to ensure that all students, regardless of their income, can, if they choose, attain a postsecondary education was initiated in the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 and has been sustained throughout subsequent changes to the HEA. The HEA supports four types of student financial aid through which the majority of ED funds for student aid are distributed. These are federally guaranteed and subsidized loans, for which the students or their parents must repay the principal and interest on the loan (GSL, PLUS, Supplemental Loans for Students (SLS), and Perkins Loans); grants, which subsidize tuition and other costs (Pell Grants and Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG)); work-study programs, which partially subsidize earnings that students receive for work they perform on or off campus; and fellowships, which provide aid for both undergraduate and graduate study in particular subject areas. Most of ED's student aid programs require recipients to pass a relatively strict financial need test that currently assesses both income and assets to determine a student's and his/her family's ability to pay. In academic year 1986-87 the ED provided over \$8.2 billion in student aid to help over 12 million students meet the increasing costs of college.

Issues

In the past, ED funding for student aid programs was relatively balanced between loans and grants. Recently, however, there has been a shift in funding and participation away from the grant programs to the loan programs. What was initially a loan of convenience for the middle-income students, i.e. GSL, has become a foundation aid program for relatively low-income high risk students. This shift to loans, coupled with rising costs of attending postsecondary educational institutions has resulted in a more critical look at the role Federal student aid plays and should play in financing postsecondary education, and has generated congressional and ED concerns over the problem of relatively high default rates associated with the GSL program

According to the College Board (an independent research association representing postsecondary institutions), college tuition has risen faster than consumer prices for each of the last 7 years. The national average cost of attendance at 4-year public and private colleges and universities has more than doubled in a decade. For example, in 1976-77 the total cost of a 4-year public institutions was \$2,790 as compared to \$5,604 in 1986-87. According to the National Institute of Independent Colleges and Universities, tuition paid by students cover only a portion of total costs to the institution for providing postsecondary education. What effect, if any, Federal student aid has in the complex process of establishing tuition and fees levels is unclear. Some have argued that college costs have increased, in part, because the availability of student aid has enabled students and their families to meet increased tuition and fees. Others contend that the increase in college tuition and fees is partially due to the absence of, or decreases in Federal student aid. They argue that this has forced postsecondary institutions to provide their own institutionally-funded student aid and to assume a greater role in helping students pay for their education and as a result, the institution needs to replace those funds and often does so by increasing college tuition for those not receiving institutional assistance. Recent congressional oversight hearings seem to conclude that there is no single factor causing increased college cost.

Another concern of Congress is the relatively high level of default on student loans. It is estimated that over 60% of the FY88 GSL program dollars will be used to pay default claims (\$1.6 billion.) The Secretary of Education, William Bennett, has proposed some changes in the GSL program that would place sanctions on those institutions with high default rates and prevent them from participating in the GSL program. Extensive hearings have focused on the default problem and a task force composed of representative lenders, guaranty agencies, institutions, students, financial aid officers, secondary markets, and the Department of Education (known as the Belmont Task Force) met at the request of Congress and provided recommendations for dealing with the default problem.

Congressional Action

The 100th Congress enacted P.L.100-50, the Higher Education Technical Amendments of 1987 that corrected and clarified congressional intent of the major provisions of the Higher Education Amendments of 1986 and

reemphasized the Federal commitment to provide access for all types of students to postsecondary education. Although some of the new major provisions of the Higher Education Act have yet to be tested, there is continuing concern about the balance between grants and loans; interest in the effects of new and higher loan limits on GSLs; the effects of procedures for decreasing loan defaults and improving collections; and concern about changes in student aid eligibility. H.R. 3600, the Student Aid Readjustment Act has been introduced and has as its purpose "to restore a more reasonable balance in student assistance between grants and loans." This bill would allow grant assistance for students in their first two academic years of study but would eliminate loan eligibility for those students.

In response to the growing default rates on Guaranteed Student Loans Secretary of Education William Bennett announced that new administrative sanctions would be initiated against colleges where default rates were excessive, and that institutions with GSL default rates exceeding 20% may be ultimately eliminated from participation in all Federal student aid programs. Both the House Committee on Education and Labor and the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee held hearings on the default problem and the Belmont Task Force met and issued recommendations. Several congressional proposals were introduced including H.R. 3781, H.R. 3876, H.R. 3878, the "Student Loan Default Reduction Act", S. 1879, and S. 1931, the "Student Loan Default Prevention and Debt Collection Act of 1987" that attempt to improve debt collection. (See CRS Issue Brief 88050, Guaranteed Student Loans: Defaults)

Prompted in part by recent congressional hearings on the escalating costs of college, several bills were introduced that would encourage individual saving initiatives for college through education savings accounts, college savings trusts, and college savings bonds. Some examples are H.R. 3873, to create a tuition savings plan, H.R. 2509, the National Postsecondary Education Trust bill, introduced by Rep. Williams, and S. 1572, introduced by Sens. Pell, Kennedy, and Stafford which would establish a National Education Savings Trust, whereby family education trust funds would be set up to help families save for college. Tax deductible payments not to exceed \$2,000 per year would be made to an advance payment fund. The trust would be administered by a Board of Trustees and money from the trust would go directly to the institution chosen when the child reaches college age. Another approach to save for college is S. 1817. This bill would exempt all interest earned on U. S. Savings Bonds, if the bonds were used to pay postsecondary education expenses.

Federal Appropriations

Background

Congress annually considers the funding levels for all programs administered by the ED and the major education programs funded through the National Science Foundation (NSF). These funding levels result from the executive and congressional budget and appropriations processes. The processes begin formally with the submission of the President's budget

request to the Congress, continue through congressional consideration of the concurrent budget resolution (establishing broad assumptions and recommendations on revenues and expenditures that would result in a budget deficit meeting the statutory targets), and end with the enactment of appropriations acts or continuing appropriations resolutions (establishing specific funding levels for each ED program and NSF education programs).

In the recent past, budget requests have recommended decreases in the overall funding for ED. These decreases would be achieved through rescission of already-enacted appropriations, changes in education statutes resulting in program cost savings, elimination of funding for selected major programs, and the reduction in funding for virtually every program account within ED's budget. Congress has consistently provided increased appropriations for ED, has not eliminated funding for any major ED program, and generally has not enacted changes to authorizing statutes through appropriations acts or continuing appropriations resolutions.

For the past 25 years, the NSF support of education programs, (specifically science and engineering education) has varied from being 46% of the total NSF budget in FY59 to 2% in FY82. Perceptions of program focus, effectiveness, and financial exigency contributed to significant reduction in support in later years. Language is included in the current appropriations emphasizing increased support for the major education programs in NSF. While the NSF has generally focused on graduate level education, increased emphasis is now being assigned to pre-college education. Targeted for increases in the FY89 budget request for NSF are activities supporting kindergarten through 12th grade programs -- a 21% increase, from \$90 million to \$108 million; and activities supporting undergraduate programs -- a 63% increase, from \$40 million to \$65 million. In addition, programs aimed at improving the participation of minorities, women, and the disabled would increase approximately 30% (to \$49 million in FY89).

Issues

The recurrent debate in the budget and appropriations processes will continue to be influenced by concern over anticipated budget deficits. The principal issues involved in the funding debate are -- should Federal spending priorities among the various programs in education be different than they are now; are some current programs duplicative of other Federal programs; are some changes in Federal education laws necessary to affect funding reductions; and should Federal support for some programs be eliminated and absorbed by State, local or private efforts?

The President's overall FY89 budget request for the U.S. Department of Education is \$21.2 billion, which is 4.2% above the amount appropriated by Congress for FY88.

Despite some individual programs reductions, the FY89 budget increases funding for most major elementary, secondary and higher education programs. The largest increases (above the FY88 appropriation) are recommended for the Pell Grant Program (\$750.6 million), the Guaranteed Student Loan Program (\$170.6 million), Chapter 1 (\$238.1 million), Chapter 2 (\$66.6 million), and the Magnet School Program (\$43.2

million). Funding would be eliminated for "3b" payments under the impact aid program (payments based on children whose parents live or work on Federal property), new capital contributions under the Perkins Loan Program, State Student Incentive Grants, vocational education's consumer and homemaking education, the non-historically black colleges portion of the developing institution program, the LEAD Program, the Star Schools Program, and several relatively small discretionary grant programs like the Women's Educational Equity Program, education programs for the homeless, and migrant education. Unlike the Administration's past requests, appropriations are recommended for the vocational education and teacher training programs.

Some of the most significant changes recommended for current law involve student aid reforms, such as simplifying the need analysis system used to determine eligibility for student aid, restricting eligibility for a Pell Grant to students who have a high school diploma or its equivalent, and instituting legislative and regulatory changes to the GSL Program.

The House passed and the Senate Committee on the Budget reported versions of the First Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for FY89 (H. Con. Res. 268 and S. Con. Res. 113). Each version would increase ED funding above the FY88 appropriation, particularly for those programs that serve disadvantaged students. (See CRS Issue Brief 88036, Education Funding Issues).

The NSF is currently focusing on the Administration's announced intention to propose doubling the NSF's budget over the next 5 years. The more central and immediate issues for the NSF are what implications its policies and major educational programs have for the productivity of colleges and universities and for the advancement of technologically skilled workforce. An additional, and equally important, issue focuses on underrepresentation of minorities, women, and the disabled in science and engineering activities.

Congressional Action

The House passed its version of the first concurrent resolution on the budget for FY89, H.J. Res. 268. For education programs the resolution assumes that all education programs would receive funding increases that are at least equal to the Congressional Budget Office's current policy baseline for FY89, i.e., the FY88 appropriation plus a 3.9% increase due to inflation. In addition, particular education programs (generally programs for the low-income or disadvantaged) would receive funding above the baseline estimates; this additional funding would require an additional \$950 million in new FY89 budget authority. The Senate Committee on the Budget reported its version of the budget resolution, S. Con. Res. 113, which assumes that new budget authority for ED would grow by \$1.2 billion above the FY88 level.

Adult Literacy

Background

Federal interest in adult literacy problems, especially functional illiteracy, is often considered by many to have begun with the inability of many World War II recruits to comprehend written military instructions. The first Federal civilian programs began with the 1960s poverty programs, when many participants were found to need training in basic educational skills before they could benefit from job training programs. The Adult Education Act, P.L. 89-750, as amended (AEA), provides grants to the States for programs to enable adults to acquire basic literacy skills, to enable those who so desire to complete a secondary education, and to make available to adults the means to become more employable, productive, and responsible citizens.

Issues

The number of functionally illiterate adults, and the severity and consequences of the illiteracy problem, are at issue. Because there is no general agreement on a precise definition of the concept, and comparable data on functional illiteracy are not regularly collected, there are no statistics to indicate whether the illiteracy problem is growing. Estimates of illiteracy include less than 1 million American adults who cannot read or write their own name; 38 million who have not completed 12 years of education; more than 100 million who are less than competent in the complex skills needed to function effectively in a technological society. The ED currently estimates that between 17 and 21 million (13%) of American adults are functionally illiterate. In general, however, these figures cannot be used to determine whether illiteracy is increasing or decreasing, nor can they be used to compare the United States with other nations.

The consequences of functional illiteracy for the individual include difficulty in obtaining employment, relatively low wages and job status, lack of self-esteem, and, for parents, the transmission of illiteracy to the next generation. The consequences to society include large costs to employers and the Nation through low productivity, accidents, employee errors, and extra training programs. High illiteracy rates are often reported among those on public assistance and in criminal institutions. Illiteracy impinges on our military services and national security. An estimated two-thirds of the Nation's colleges find it necessary to provide remedial reading and writing courses. Some estimate the indirect costs of illiteracy to be over \$200 billion.

Congressional Action

The extension of the AEA authorization through FY93 is being considered as part of H.R. 5, the comprehensive elementary and secondary education reauthorization act; amendments to the AEA are included in both H.R. 5 and H.R. 3, the omnibus trade bill. Amendments to the AEA include proposals for workplace literacy partnership grants, farm worker and immigrant education, literacy volunteer training, English literacy grants

for adults with limited English proficiency, technological literacy programs, and an "Even Start" program for literacy for parents and their children. Last year, the Joint Economic Committee has conducted a series of 8 oversight hearings (September-December 1987) on illiteracy, the American worker, and trade competitiveness. (See CRS Issue Brief 85167, Adult Literacy Issues, Programs, and Options.)

International Trade Competitiveness

Background

Education's role in improving the Nation's relative competitive position in international trade has become an integral part of many of the trade initiatives in the 100th Congress. Concerns include the role of education in productivity growth, educational achievement of American school children compared to that of their peers in other nations, the educational needs of illiterate adults, the role of building and maintaining a capable scientific and technologically skilled workforce through education, and the physical condition of America's research universities, their labs, equipment, and the expertise of the research professorate.

Issues

The contribution of education to the productivity of the workforce, the comparative strength of the American educational system with the educational systems of major international trade competitors, and the types of Federal actions with regard to education that might most effectively improve the Nation's competitive position, are at issue.

Virtually all studies of economic productivity have concluded that, other factors being equal, increases in the quantity or quality of education result in increased productivity, which in turn increases the trade competitiveness of the Nation's industry and commerce. Educational institutions foster improved productivity both by enhancing the capabilities of the workforce, and by conducting research that leads to improved production processes. However, analysts' conclusions differ regarding the relative effects of specific types and levels of education on economic productivity, and the extent to which the educational requirements for the American workforce are increasing.

The United States ranks high among nations in aggregate spending for education and in the average number of years of education received by individuals, although the length of a school year is much longer in some other countries, such as Japan, than in the United States. Studies of the educational achievement of pupils in the United States, compared to that of major trade competitors, such as Japan, have concluded the American achievement is relatively high in reading and literature, but relatively low in the sciences, mathematics, and foreign languages. Many have concluded that the achievement of American students is weakest in the subjects most directly relevant to economic productivity -- the sciences and mathematics.

Various Federal choices exist to improve education to enhance productivity and trade competitiveness. These include options regarding program participants (in-school youth, out-of-school underemployed or unemployed persons, gifted and talented youth, or illiterate adults); an emphasis on new initiatives or existing programs; the necessary level of funding; conflict between Federal priorities and State or local discretion; implications of cost-sharing requirements; and provision of research and development funds to established research universities, developing institutions, or all institutions.

Congressional Action

Different versions of H.R. 3, the omnibus trade bill, have been passed by the House (Apr. 30, 1987) and the Senate (July 21, 1987); agreement on a conference report has been reached for the education provisions, according to reports, but agreement on all provisions of the bill is yet to be reached. Both versions include a wide variety of education proposals, such as literacy training for adults; vocational training programs; improvement of instruction in mathematics, science, and foreign languages; replacement of obsolete laboratories and research facilities in higher education institutions; development of partnerships between educational institutions and private businesses; and increased use of educational technology. Some of the education provisions of H.R. 3 have been included in the Senate version of H.R. 5, the comprehensive elementary and secondary education reauthorization act. (See CRS Issue Brief 87108, Education Proposals in Trade Competitiveness Legislation.)

Vocational Education

Background

Federal aid for vocational education programs began with the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, and currently is authorized through FY89 by the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act, P.L. 98-524, as amended (Perkins Act). Funding is made available to schools and postsecondary institutions to operate educational programs related to paid or unpaid employment or careers requiring other than a baccalaureate or advanced degree.

Issues

Several recurrent issues have been addressed by the Congress with regard to vocational education programs, including the amount of Federal funding, services to special populations, maintenance versus program improvement, and effectiveness.

In the 1980s, budget requests for the Perkins Act have generally been for level or reduced funding (with termination of funding requested for FY88), but annual appropriations have been increased in most years during this time. Requirements for serving special populations (such as the disadvantaged or the handicapped) have been expanded, to the extent that 57% of the basic State grants available at the local level are now reserved for these activities. Requirements also have been increased for restricting the use of Federal funds for program improvement activities

rather than for the maintenance of existing programs; 43% of the basic State grant must be used at the local level for improvement activities. The effectiveness of vocational education programs continues to be an issue, in comparison with not only academically-oriented programs but also job training programs outside of the regular school system, including proprietary schools.

Congressional Action

Significant legislative activity for amending and extending the Perkins Act is not anticipated until the 101st Congress, although oversight hearings may begin earlier. National statistics on the Perkins Act programs may become available late in 1988, and the final report of a national assessment of vocational education is due Jan. 1, 1989. Currently, some amendments to the Perkins Act are being considered as part of H.R. 3, the omnibus trade bill, and H.R. 5, the comprehensive elementary and secondary education reauthorization act. (See CRS Issue Brief 87108, Education Proposals in Trade Competitiveness Legislation.)

LEGISLATION

P.L. 100-259, S. 557

Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987. Amends several civil rights statutes to clarify application of their provisions. S. 557 reported by Committee on Labor and Human Resources (S.Rept. 100-64) June 5, 1987. Passed the Senate amended on Jan. 28, 1988. Considered and passed the House without written report on Mar. 2, 1988. Vetoed by President Reagan on Mar. 16, 1988. House and Senate overrode the veto on Mar. 22, 1988.

H.R. 3 (House-passed version) (Gephardt et al.)

Trade and International Economic Policy Reform Act of 1987. Contains the Education and Training for American Competitiveness Act of 1987, as Title IV (similar to H.R. 90, as ordered reported on Apr. 1, 1987). Establishes education and training programs to improve the competitiveness of American workers in international trade. Passed House Apr. 30, 1987. Currently in conference.

H.R. 3 (Senate-passed version) (Byrd)

Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1987. Contains the Education for a Competitive America Act (S. 406). Amends and extends Title II of the Education for Economic Security Act through FY93, authorizes additional Federal education programs to strengthen the competitiveness of American industry and for other purposes. Passed Senate (in lieu of S. 1420) July 21, 1987. Currently in conference.

H.R. 5 (House-passed version) (Hawkins et al.)

School Improvement Act of 1987. Reauthorizes and amends most Federal elementary and secondary education programs, except those related to education of the handicapped and vocational education, and authorizes several new programs. Passed House May 21, 1987. Conference completed.

H.R. 5 (Senate-passed version) (Pell and Stafford)

Robert T. Stafford Elementary and Secondary Education Improvement Act of 1987. Reauthorizes and amends most Federal elementary and secondary education programs, except those related to education of the handicapped and vocational education, and authorizes several new programs. Passed Senate (in lieu of S. 373) Dec. 1, 1987. Conference completed.

H.J.Res. 268 (Gray)

First Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for FY89. Contains budget targets and funding assumptions for FY89. For education programs, assumes increases in FY89 at least equal to the FY88 appropriation plus inflation and additional funds would be provided for selected education programs. Reported by the Committee on the Budget, H. Rept. 100-523, Mar. 22, 1988. Passed the House unamended, Mar. 23, 1988.

S. Con. Res. 113 (Chiles)

First Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for FY89. For ED programs assumes that new FY89 budget authority would increase by \$1.2 billion above the FY88 appropriation. Reported by the Committee on the Budget, S. Rept. 100-311 on March 31, 1988.

CHRONOLOGY

- 03/23/88 --- House passed H. Con. Res. 268
- 03/22/88 --- Congress overrode President Reagan's veto of the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987.
- 12/23/87 --- President signed into law P.L.'s 100-202 (continuing appropriations) and 100-203 (omnibus budget reconciliation)
- 12/01/87 --- H.R. 5, comprehensive elementary and secondary education program reauthorization legislation, was passed by the Senate.
- 07/22/87 --- P.L. 100-77, Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, was signed into law.
- 07/21/87 --- H.R. 3, omnibus trade legislation, was passed by the Senate.
- 06/03/87 --- P.L. 100-50, Higher Education Act technical amendments, was signed into law.
- 05/21/87 --- H.R. 5, comprehensive elementary and secondary education program reauthorization legislation, was passed by the House.
- 04/30/87 --- H.R. 3, omnibus trade legislation, was passed by the House.

FOR ADDITIONAL READING

- U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Education and Labor. Federal assistance for elementary and secondary education: background information on selected programs likely to be considered for reauthorization by the 100th Congress. Jan. 27, 1987. Washington, U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1987. (100th Congress, 1st session. House. Committee Print)
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- U.S. Library of Congress. Congressional Research Service. Adult literacy issues, programs, and options [by] Paul M. Irwin. [Washington] 1985. (Updated regularly)
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- Bilingual Education Act: should a specific instructional approach be supported? [by] Ruby Ann Esquibel. [Washington] 1986. (Updated regularly)
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- Civil rights legislation: responses to Grove City College v. Bell [by] Bob Lyke. [Washington] 1987. (Updated regularly)
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- Early childhood education and development: federal policy issues. [by] Wayne Riddle. [Washington] 1988. (Updated regularly)
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- Education proposals in trade competitiveness legislation [by] Paul M. Irwin and Wayne Riddle. [Washington] 1987. (Updated regularly)
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- Education for disadvantaged children: reauthorization issues [by] Wayne Riddle. [Washington] 1987. (Updated regularly)
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- Education funding issues for FY89 [by] Angela Evans. [Washington] 1988. (Updated regularly)
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- Federal elementary and secondary education programs: reauthorization issues [by] Wayne Riddle. [Washington] 1987. (Updated regularly)
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----- High school dropouts [by] Bob Lyke. [Washington] 1986. (Updated
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----- Impact of legislative changes on major programs administered by the
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