

CAPE Council for American Private Education outlook

"Voice of the Nation's Private Schools"

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CAPE Holds Second Legislative Conference

In its second year of bringing together diverse private school leaders, CAPE sponsored a legislative conference March 17 and 18 against the backdrop of political wrangling over education issues. In a White House briefing and visits to Members of Congress, conference participants found that education reform has achieved high status on the national agenda, as well as new partisan attention.

An 'Imperative for Private Education'

Plans for the 2nd Annual CAPE Legislative Conference began after the success of the 1991 event. Despite the recessionary environment and tighter than usual school budgets, the '92 event was larger than last year's meeting. That first legislative conference, held during the same week of the year, was planned to help celebrate the 20th anni-

versary of CAPE.

In early December, letters went out to hundreds of private school educators from Joyce McCray, CAPE executive director, inviting them to participate in the conference. "There is an increasing intensity surrounding the national debate on education reform and choice" making it "imperative for private education to be a visible force on Capitol Hill," McCray said in the letter. She went on to explain that the event was a great "opportunity to bring together the rich diversity of the CAPE organization members to support common interests on the Hill and with members of the Administration." Representatives from eleven of CAPE's fourteen organizations participated in the two days of activities.

The conference was called to order by CAPE board president Sister Catherine McNamee, who greeted the 90 luncheon guests and conference participants. The luncheon crowd was addressed by U.S. Senator David L. Boren (D-Oklahoma) who discussed rapid changes in the face of world events and the need for educators to reflect and be mindful of change as well.

Senator Boren challenged the conferees to interject themselves in the important education policy debates in Congress with an illustration of the need for involvement.



CAPE board members, Kay Edstene and Ann Gordon, prepare to enter the Old Executive Office Building for the White House briefing on March 17. (This photo and those appearing on pages 2 and 4 are by Joyce McCray.)

continued from front

Boren, who chairs the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, related a recent meeting he had with a South African leader, Chief Buthelezi of the Zulu tribe. Describing the challenges and opportunities of that country and its people, Buthelezi told Boren that "we are at a crossroads." Buthelezi went on to relate to Boren that "those who wait around in the crossroads often do so at their own peril." Boren urged those preparing to visit their representatives in Congress to freely share their ideas and to forcefully participate in the debate as this country is also at a "crossroads" in education reform.

Choice and Charitable Gifts

Following the luncheon speech, legislative information and briefings on issues of importance to private schools were given by McCray, Greg Kubiak, assistant executive director of CAPE; Pat Canan, assistant director of the office of government liaison with the United States Catholic Conference; Jack Sanders, vice president of the National Association of Independent Schools; and Ed DeForest, chairman of the government relations committee of the National Association of Private Schools for Exceptional Children.

In addition to indepth reports of an array of legislation affecting private education, conference participants were asked to primarily focus on two issues: educational

choice and tax deductibility of charitable gifts of appreciated property. In addition to the October 1990 CAPE Board statement of educational choice, a two page position paper was also provided to conference participants describing the recent actions on the issue and how it can serve as a "tool to forge lasting, meaningful, systemic reform."

Also covered in the briefing was a discussion of the deductibility of charitable gifts of appreciated property. As the session was held, Congressional leaders were meeting to work out House and Senate differences in a tax bill that was to be presented to the President by his March 20 deadline for a tax/economic stimulus package. Legislators did include a provision providing for the full deductibility of such gifts for one year. (See **Legislative Update** for more information.)

Education Secretary Briefs CAPE

Later that afternoon, participants were bused to the Old Executive Office Building for a briefing by White House and Department of Education officials. The session was moderated by Charles E.M. Kolb, Deputy Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy, who welcomed the conferees to the historic building and its Indian Treaty Room.

Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander

took part in the briefing and opened his comments by thanking CAPE for its contribution to the choice debate involved with the "America 2000" education strategy and "for lending us your advice." He noted that in the 11 months since the strategy's unveiling, 39 states have focused on the needs of education in declaring themselves "America 2000" states. He stressed that state-level initiatives, from "outside of Washington, [where] it's a very bi-partisan effort", will do the most to forward education reform.

The Secretary took a slap at the Congress, which has dealt continual set-backs for the education wish list of the White House, by making clear that he "will recommend the President veto" legislation that supports "business as usual" in education. He specifically referred to the bill to be reconsidered by the House Education and Labor Committee.

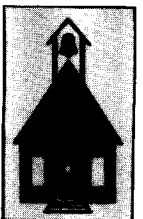
That panel, in an agreement last year with the Bush Administration, reported legislation to provide block grants to states for reform programs, including private schools choice. In light of a defeated Senate amendment to create a demonstration project to test public/private school choice, the House committee removed the private school choice option in a new version of its bill, H.R. 4323.

Alexander said that, to determine who is right on the way to reform our educational system, "we'll just have to let the people decide", referring to the upcoming Presidential election.

The Secretary also reported that the Administration would soon be focusing on new legislation to provide \$1,000 education scholarships to low- and middle-income families for use in the public or private school of their choice. Although the "Baby GI Bill" legislation has yet to be finalized, the Administration has requested \$500 million to fund the program in its budget request for fiscal year 1993.

Also addressing the conference participants in the briefing were Roger B. Porter, Assistant to the President for Economic and Domestic Policy and B. Robert Okun, Assistant Secretary of Education for Legislation and Congressional Affairs.

After five straight hours of briefings and speeches,



CAPE Conference participants prepare to board a bus bound for Capitol Hill.

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participants were able to unwind at a reception that evening. The gathering was sponsored by Apple Computer, Inc. through its private school representative, Dr. Martha Rolley. Apple has been a consistent supporter of CAPE events and activities. In addition to conference participants, several other private school officials and Department of Education officials attended the event. The reception and other events were held at the conference hotel, the Sheraton City Centre Hotel in downtown Washington.

Assault on the Hill

Beginning the next day with a continental breakfast, participants received a final briefing from McCray on the logistics of visiting Capitol Hill and the important legislative messages for Congress. From 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., participants went to Congressional offices to meet with House Members, Senators, and staff, supplied with position and background papers on the issues of choice and the tax treatment of charitable gifts.

Unlike last year, CAPE asked participants to coordinate their own appointments with Congressional offices. However, CAPE did assemble teams of 2 or 3 conference participants for those were unable to confirm appointments by the time of the conference. Teams were typically made up from various CAPE member organizations as a way of demonstrating the diversity of private education.

Conference participants had productive visits with Members and staff persons during that time, as they related in a luncheon/debriefing session that ran from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. in the Dirksen Senate Office Building. In one such meeting, a Member of the House indicated that he agreed with the CAPE view that choice could serve as an impetus to improvement in public schools, especially in urban school districts. Still, other meetings indicated the preconceptions and polarized opposition by some toward private schools.

However, one high ranking staff member told CAPE representatives that continued support of choice by the private school community would only jeopardize their inclusion and participation in other federal programs, reflecting the political strength and opposition of choice by some public

education groups.

Despite the busy schedule of the spring season, with school breaks and overlap of three other private school conferences within weeks of the CAPE event, the 2nd legislative conference has seemingly evolved from a tentative experiment into an annual event.

McCray stated that "this conference has proved to be a worthy use of time and resources for all involved. We can't be on the Hill enough."

Legislative Update

Radon Bill Passes

A Senate bill reauthorizing programs under the 1988 Indoor Radon Abatement Act was passed by a vote of 82 to 6. S. 792, approved on March 10, continues the federal policy that all school buildings in priority radon areas shall be tested for the toxic gas by January 1, 1996. Schools that have already tested for the gas, would not be required to retest. The legislation also authorizes funds for testing and remediation.

Health officials estimate that radon gas causes 16,000 lung cancer deaths each year - the second leading cause behind tobacco smoking.

Education Research Reauthorization

Both the House and Senate education committees have reviewed legislation to reauthorize the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI). The House Education and Labor Subcommittee on Select Education held a mark-up session on legislation to set up a new system of educational research and information dissemination.

The bill, H.R. 4014, would create comprehensive research institutes, along with a system of extension agents to help teachers apply research in the classroom. It is similar to the version by the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, S. 1275. That bill, unanimously reported from committee in mid-March, would authorize \$300 million to expand the office and create five "directorates" around which educational research would focus, such as early childhood education and curriculum.

The House panel, critical of OERI's job performance, would also put an indepen-

dent policy board in charge of the office's research agenda.

Manno Nominated

The President submitted the nomination of Bruno V. Manno to the Senate to be Assistant Secretary of Education for Policy and Planning. The nomination, delivered on March 24, has been placed on the Senate's Executive Calendar for consideration in the near future.

Manno has served in the other capacities at the Department, including acting assistant secretary for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, and had previously worked for the United States Catholic Conference.

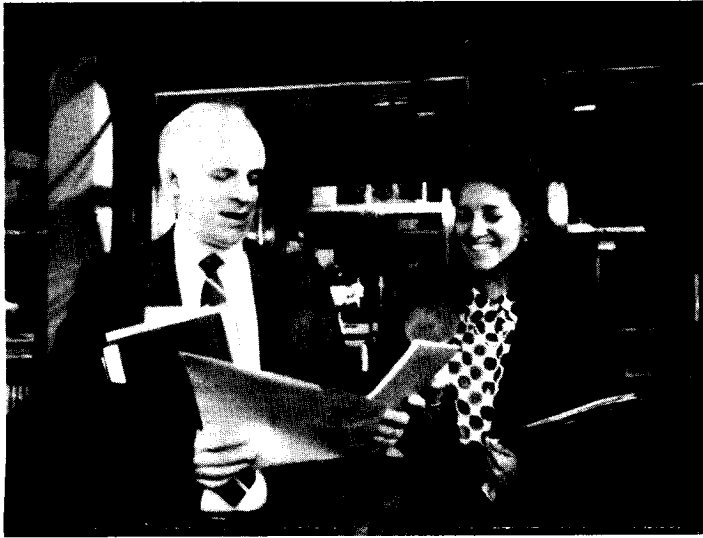
Budget Walls Stay Up

The Senate failed to garner the 60 votes needed to overcome a filibuster threat on a bill to bring more money to domestic spending out of international and military programs. The legislation, S. 2399, would have removed the categories of spending agreed to in the 1990 budget summit, freeing funds to be spent as part of the "peace dividend" on domestic programs such as education.

The budget rules established in the summit agreement between the Bush Administration and the Congress erected spending "walls" for fiscal 1991, 1992, and 1993 in three categories: domestic, international and defense. In addition to overall spending caps, money cannot be diverted from one budget category to another under the new rules.

However, in light of world changes which have seen the fall of Communism and a bi-partisan agreement on the ability to somewhat reduce military spending, the 50 to 48 Senate vote fell 10 short of the number needed to pass the bill. The House has also begun consideration of a similar version, H.R. 3732.

CAPE, as a part of the Committee on Education Funding, supported the legislation and urged Congress to consider the bill to "allow for a realistic realignment of our budget priorities for education." The letters, to both House and Senate Members, said such a measure "is an essential first step in bringing needed resources to our national efforts at education reform and improvement."



CAPE Conference (clockwise from bottom): Participants prepare to enter the Old Executive Office Building for the White House briefing. CAPE board member Carl Moser, CAPE board president Sr. Catherine McNamee, and Fred Brigham of NCEA pause outside the Sheraton City Centre Hotel. NAIS vice president Jack Sanders shares briefing materials with NAIS legislative assistant Beverly Frank after the Tuesday session.



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a coalition of 14 national associations serving private schools K-12

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