

Council for American Private Education

CAPE outlook

Voice of America's private schools

Deficit Reduction Bill Includes Private School Provisions

President Bush last month signed the *Deficit Reduction Act*, which, as the name suggests, trims spending in a variety of government programs. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that the legislation will result in a reduction in federal spending of about \$39 billion between 2006 and 2010. But while its net effect is a decrease in expenditures, the legislation also contains various provisions that would either increase or minimally impact government costs. Two of those programs relate to education, and both may have an effect on private education.

Academic Competitiveness Grants

The new law provides \$790 million in 2006 and \$4.5 billion over the next five years for Academic Competitiveness Grants (ACG) and for National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent

(SMART) Grants. These grants for full-time college students would be available to U.S. citizens who are already eligible for Pell Grants. For students who complete "a rigorous secondary school program of study established by a state or local educational agency and recognized as such by the secretary [of education]," the ACG program provides an additional \$750 in grants to first-year students and \$1,300 to second-year students who maintain a 3.0 grade point average. The SMART grants would take effect in the third and fourth year of college, offering \$4,000 to students who maintain a 3.0 GPA and who pursue a degree in physical, life, or computer science, mathematics, technology, engineering, or a foreign language deemed critical to national security. The CBO estimates that nearly 400,000 students would qualify for the Academic Competitiveness Grants

and 110,000 for the SMART Grants.

Shortly after the bill's provisions became known, concern arose among some educators about how a "rigorous" high school curriculum would be defined and about the new role given the secretary of education to recognize such a curriculum. Addressing those concerns, Holly Kuzmich, the U.S. Department of Education's deputy assistant secretary for policy, told *Education Week* that the department plans to be "as flexible as possible" regarding that provision. And in a letter dated February 1 to Education Secretary Margaret Spellings, Senator Michael Enzi (R-WY) and Representative John Boehner (R-OH), chairmen of the Senate and House committees that deal with education (Boehner no longer holds that position, having been elected House majority leader), clarified

continued on page 2

State CAPEs Energetically Promote Private Education

Annual reports submitted to CAPE last month by its state affiliates across the country provide evidence of wide-ranging state-level activity in support of CAPE's mission to promote educational pluralism, school choice, and the vital role of private schools in American education. State CAPE projects range from large-scale, center-stage campaigns aimed at changing public policy to less visible, though no less effective, efforts to advance the private school community's goals. What follows is a sampling of activities found in the reports.

Officials from the New York State Coalition for Independent and Religious Schools report that over 5,000 people participated in a rally in Albany on February 14 to support education tax credits. Governor George Pataki has proposed a credit

for educational expenses of up to \$500 for students in public, private, charter, or home schools. Families with incomes



Parents and students support education tax credits in Albany, NY, on February 14. (Photo by Donald W. Elliott.)

of \$70,000 or less would qualify for the credit to cover eligible expenses such as

tutoring, supplementary instruction, and tuition. So far, New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer and, indeed, all of the state's gubernatorial candidates have supported the measure, as have New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg, the NYS Business Council, the Retail Council of NYS, and several unions. The measure's fate may be determined within the next few weeks.

The report from the California Association of Private School Organizations (CAPSO) notes that more than 2,200 private school educators attended CAPSO's triennial convention last November in Long Beach. The two-day event offered over 250 workshops on topics ranging from childhood obesity to how the brain does math. More recently, CAPSO co-

continued on page 3



CAPE member organizations:

- Agudath Israel of America
- American Montessori Society
- Association Montessori International—USA
- Association of Christian Schools International
- Association of Waldorf Schools of N.A.
- Christian Schools International
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- Friends Council on Education
- Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
- National Association of Episcopal Schools
- National Association of Independent Schools
- National Catholic Educational Association
- National Christian School Association
- Oral Roberts University Educational Fellowship
- Seventh-day Adventist Board of Education
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- 28 Affiliated State Organizations

a coalition of national associations serving private schools K-12
Executive Director: Joe McTighe

Outlook is published monthly (September to June) by CAPE using an Apple Power Mac G4. An annual subscription is \$20. ISSN 0271-1451

13017 Wisteria Drive #457
Germantown, MD 20874
(tel) 301-916-8460
(fax) 301-916-8485
(email) cape@capenet.org

www.capenet.org



Deficit Reduction Act continued from page 1

the intent of Congress this way: “Some concern has arisen that this initiative will allow the Secretary to become involved in establishing high school curriculum. We want to be very clear this was neither the intention nor the effect of the language in this bill.”

The chairmen’s letter went on to assert that federal law prohibits the secretary “from establishing any curriculum in any school, public or private.” To support that claim they cited section 438 of the *General Education Provisions Act*: “No provision of any applicable program shall be construed to authorize any department, agency, officer, or employee of the United States to exercise any direction, supervision, or control over the curriculum, program of instruction, administration, or personnel of any educational institution, school, or school system, or over the selection of library resources, textbooks, or other printed or published instructional materials by any educational institution or school system, or to require the assignment or transportation of students or teachers in order to overcome racial imbalance.”

The Boehner/Enzi letter also directly addressed concerns within the private school community about the eligibility of students in private schools for the Academic Competitiveness Grants: “We have heard some additional concerns that this initiative may exclude students attending private schools, charter schools and home schools. We again want to be perfectly clear that the intent of this language is to offer competitiveness grants to those students who qualify by completing a rigorous course of study, regardless of the school they attend. Simply put, all students from public, charter, private and home schools are eligible as long as the coursework they study meets the rigorous standards es-

State CAPEs continued from page 3

students with special needs up to \$10,000 to attend a qualifying school of their choice, and another bill that seemed to combine the purposes of the first two by offering a tax credit to cover contributions to a fund earmarked to schools serving students with disabilities.

The Washington Federation of Independent Schools (WFIS) is working closely with the state education department on developing criteria for private school involvement with the state’s new early-learning guidelines and on developing several opportunities for private school teachers relating to state certification and professional development. In February, WFIS sponsored a successful day of workshops capped by an awards dinner honoring individuals who have made outstanding contributions to private education in the state.

tablished by the state, local educational agency or school.” And at another point in the letter, the chairmen punctuate the point: “The Secretary’s only role in this process is to recognize that states or local educational agencies or other schools, including private, charter and home schools, have, in fact, established what they consider to be a rigorous coursework requirement.”

Teacher Loan Forgiveness

The *Deficit Reduction Act* also makes an important change to the college loan forgiveness program for teachers. The federal Stafford FFEL (Federal Family Education Loan) and Direct Loan programs provide college loan cancellation of up to \$17,500 for eligible teachers in public or private schools serving low-income students. (Such schools are listed in the U.S. Department of Education’s directory of designated low-income schools.) New borrowers and those who, by virtue of teaching particular subject areas and grade levels, qualify for the recently authorized levels of \$17,500 must be “highly qualified teachers,” as that term is defined in the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

A problem arises in that the NCLB requires a “highly qualified” public school teacher to be certified or licensed by the state. But some states neither license nor certify private school teachers, and many private schools do not consider state certification as a reliable indicator of quality. The *Deficit Reduction Act* clarifies that private school teachers may participate in federal loan forgiveness programs without having to be certified or licensed. Those who elect to participate, however, must demonstrate subject-matter competence by taking and passing applicable standardized teacher competency tests (for example, the Praxis tests) that are recognized by five or more states.

Milwaukee Program Expands

In Wisconsin, the Council of Religious and Independent Schools (WCRIS) “promotes understanding of educational issues, and supports students and the schools their parents choose.” The WCRIS board of directors recently identified the organization’s core values, namely, educational integrity, freedom for independent school missions to thrive, equitable opportunity for children, and equitable educational policy. Governor Jim Doyle is expected to sign legislation [passed by the Senate and Assembly in early March] that would expand Milwaukee’s voucher program, now in its 16th year. The bill allows the program to expand to 22,500 students, up from the current cap of 15,000, and imposes additional accountability standards on participating schools that involve standardized tests and accreditation.

State CAPEs continued from page 1

sponsored, with the California Department of Education and the Los Angeles County Office of Education, four workshops in February on IDEA services to private school students with special needs. Over 500 people attended the workshops, which featured Pamela Allen of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Non-Public Education, CAPSO's Executive Director Ron Reynolds, and officials from various public agencies.

Advocacy Day in Georgia

The Georgia Private Education Council (GPEC) co-sponsored with the Georgia Independent School Association (GISA) a job fair on February 12 in Atlanta to recruit independent school teachers. Thirty-six schools and about 450 teacher candidates participated. This was the fair's eighth year of success in attracting high-quality applicants. GISA also sponsored an advocacy day at the state capitol this year, which included a meeting with Governor Sonny Perdue, sessions with House and Senate education committee chairs, and a luncheon for school leaders and state legislators.

The state CAPE in Kansas is now in its 36th year of serving the state's private school community. Almost 37,000 students are enrolled in the 156 schools that belong to the Kansas Association of Independent and Religious Schools (KAIRS). Officials estimate that those students save the state's taxpayers about \$176 million annually. On the legislative front, the KAIRS report offers this interesting development: Bob Corkins, the state's new commissioner of education, has asked the state board of education to endorse vouchers for students transferring to private schools.

Energy Program

Perhaps the most unusual service offered by a state CAPE is the energy program coordinated by the Michigan Association of Non-public Schools (MANS). MANS helps its member schools cut costs for natural gas and electricity through conservation, the exploration of alternative energy sources, and large-scale purchasing programs. Another MANS service is its marketing program, which helps member schools develop a marketing plan designed to address particular needs. A new component of the marketing program will focus on parents.

Four Pillars

Schools belonging to the Minnesota Independent School Forum have identified four values that serve as pillars for MISF's new mission: independence, whole-student development, high quality education, and association. One of

the core goals of the group's strategic plan is to strengthen its focus on public policy and advocacy. Recent legislative accomplishments include improving services for students in private schools with special needs and expanding education tax credits. MISF also continues to be successful in raising funds for member schools.

School Choice Heating Up

Word from the New Jersey CAPE is that "the school choice debate is heating up to intense proportions" in the state. Bipartisan legislation has been introduced in the state legislature to provide tax credits for contributions to organizations that fund innovative public school programs or that provide tuition scholarships to children residing in Camden, Newark, Orange, or Trenton. The bill language requires that participating private schools not discriminate in admission policies or practices "on the basis of intellectual or athletic ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, status as a handicapped person, proficiency in the English language, or any other basis that would be illegal if used by a public school district."

Private School Appreciation Day

The Oregon Federation of Independent Schools (OFIS) served as impetus for a proclamation by Governor Ted Kulongoski of February 2, 2006, as Oregon Private Schools Appreciation Day. According to its annual report to CAPE, OFIS "works to ensure that Oregon private schools are able to operate with a minimum of government influence or control so parents can choose from a wide range of educational options for their children." Its main goal this year is "to maintain good communication with all state agencies and officials that relate to or work with private schools, teachers and administrators."

More Proactive

The Texas Association of Non-Public Schools (TANS) reports that it has become much more proactive regarding legislation. One pressing issue this year was the tight timeframe that schools faced for reporting information about students displaced by Hurricanes Katrina or Rita. To help resolve issues relating to hurricane assistance, TANS invited a representative of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Non-Public Education and hosted a meeting for state staffers and private school administrators.

Private school leaders at the Virginia Council for Private Education were busy this year dealing with several pieces of legislation. The hopper included a tax credit bill to encourage corporations and individuals to make contributions to education foundations, a scholarship bill to provide

continued on page 2

Crisis-Planning Resources

Crisis. The word is short and chilling. And within a school setting, it is especially unsettling. It can involve a single student or an entire community. It can be an accident, an incident of violence, a natural disaster, or an act of terrorism. But whatever its form, a crisis is something for which school officials, especially in this day and age, must be ready. Fortunately, the U.S. Department of Education has assembled a range of resources to help plan for a crisis.

One document that schools should not be without is *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*. The guide provides useful advice on how to develop and carry out crisis management plans through four stages: mitigation and prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. By walking readers through specific action steps—such as connecting with community emergency responders and developing procedures for communicating with staff, students, families, and the media—the guide helps officials develop a comprehensive approach to crisis planning. Downloading the document is simply a matter of visiting the crisis planning Web site established by the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools: www.ed.gov/emergencyplan.

Another valuable resource is the Emergency Response and Crisis Management (ERCM) Technical Assistance Center. The center serves as a source of both general and customized information. One of its most important and practical services is to respond to particular questions and requests for information. Private school officials, for example, can ask the experts to track down sample crisis plans for private schools or to suggest strategies for addressing a unique factor in the community. To access the ERCM center, visit www.ercm.org.

Return service requested

CAPE notes

★ Fast Facts About Private Schools: In what kinds of professional development activities do private school teachers participate? A report recently released by the National Center for Education Statistics shows that 95.8 percent of private school teachers in 1999-2000 participated in one or more of the following activities: workshops, conferences or training (87.2 percent); regularly scheduled collaboration with other teachers (60.1 percent); individual or collaborative research on a topic of interest (44.6 percent); mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching (40.9 percent); observational visits to other schools (34.6 percent); university courses for recertification or advanced certification (21.4 percent); networks of teachers (22.1 percent); university courses in the main assignment field (18.0 percent); workshops, conferences, or training as a presenter (15.3 percent). Source: Table 16, *Teacher Professional Development in 1999-2000: What Teachers, Principals, and District Staff Report*. The report is available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2006/2006305.pdf>.

★ Challenge 20/20, sponsored by the National Association of Independent Schools, connects two schools—one in the United States and one in another country—to work creatively and cooperatively to come up with a solution to a global problem. This unique and exciting program, based on Jean Francois Rischard's book *High Noon: 20 Global Problems, 20 Years to Solve Them* is open to all private

and public elementary and secondary schools. For more information, visit <http://www.nais.org/go/challenge2020>. The registration deadline is April 15.

★ Various members of the Maryland CAPE have formed the Maryland Non-public Schools Legislative Coalition to provide the state's private school community a united voice to communicate needs and interests to elected officials. A major legislative objective this year is the BOAST (Building Opportunities for All Students and Teachers) tax credit, which would provide corporations with a 75 percent state tax credit for donations to 501(c)(3) organizations that support elementary and secondary school students and teachers. According to the coalition, the program would provide public and private schools in the state "a means of leveraging significantly increased investment from their local business communities." A maximum of \$25 million in tax credits could be taken each year by the state's business community, including \$15 million in credits for donations to scholarship organizations serving private school students and teachers and \$10 million in credits for donations to organizations serving public school students and teachers. The coalition has scheduled an event in Annapolis on March 8 to support the bill and other issues.

★ Another new study on the voucher program in the District of Columbia—this one conducted by Jay P. Greene and Mar-

cus A. Winters, both affiliated with the University of Arkansas and the Manhattan Institute—has found that voucher students are more likely to attend schools with higher rates of racial integration than students in D.C.'s public schools. Specifically, the study found that 85.4 percent of students in the city's public schools attend schools that are 90 percent or more racially homogeneous, compared to 47.3 percent of students in the private schools that took part in the voucher program. "Our study suggests that the scholarship program will likely lead to low-income students leaving more segregated public schools for better integrated private schools," said Dr. Greene.

The report is available at http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/ewp_10.htm.

★ The Healthy School Environments Assessment Tool (HealthySEAT) is now available for download at <http://www.epa.gov/schools/healthyseat/>. HealthySEAT brings together all of EPA's regulatory and voluntary programs for schools into a single, free software tool that public and private school systems can use to establish and manage comprehensive school facility assessment programs. HealthySEAT is designed to be customized by school systems to reflect their own priorities and needs. The software will make it easier for school systems to access and implement EPA programs as well as track the status of facility conditions across all of their schools.