



Fall 2007

The ASTD Policy Brief is a quarterly report on Congressional activity and other public policy news that impacts the workplace learning and performance (WLP) profession.

Legislative Update – 110th Congress

A slow summer gave way to a fast fall, as Congress moved forward with a number of bills of interest to the workplace learning and performance profession.

Education Laws

Congress began the session with great optimism on the two primary federal education laws: the Higher Education Act (HEA), and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which was most recently reauthorized by the 2002 No Child Left Behind law (NCLB). Neither chamber has managed to pass legislation on NCLB so far, but it appears there are prospects for progress on HEA.

The Senate unanimously passed reauthorizing language for HEA this summer. House Education and Labor Committee Chairman George Miller indicated that he wanted to complete NCLB reauthorization before addressing higher education, but it appears that he will delay consideration of a bill until 2008. The House may consider Miller's recently introduced HEA reauthorization by the end of the year, and it is likely that the House and Senate will be able to agree on a final bill.

Trade Adjustment Assistance

On October 31, the House of Representatives passed legislation to reauthorize the federal Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program, which provides job training and other assistance to U.S. workers dislocated by foreign trade. The new bill, called the Trade and Globalization Adjustment Assistance Act (H.R.3920), expands eligibility to service and government sector workers, where current law generally provides benefits only to manufacturing workers. The bill also permits the Department of Labor to certify eligibility for workers across an entire industry; under current law, worker eligibility is determined on a company-by-company basis.

The Bush administration has expressed opposition to the House bill over concerns that the proposed changes would make the program too expensive. The Senate has yet to pass a reauthorizing bill, although it may take up similar legislation introduced by Senator Max Baucus (D-MT), chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. The TAA program is currently operating under an extension, and will expire at the end of the year.

Appropriations Update

As expected, President Bush vetoed the Fiscal Year 2008 appropriations bill (H.R.3043) funding the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, noting that the legislation exceeded his budget request by nearly \$10 billion. The House failed to override the veto, and Congressional leaders must now decide how to move forward with this and other appropriations measures. The federal government is currently funded under a continuing resolution, but this will expire on December 14th.

Also unknown is whether a significant cut for training programs under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) will be a part of the final legislation. The bill rescinds \$245 million in previously allocated funds from adult, dislocated worker, and youth training programs. The House bill had originally called for a \$335 rescission, in line with the administration's request, while the original Senate bill did not include the cut. States have objected to the rescission, arguing that the funds have already been committed for future training services.

Neither chamber has passed, nor introduced, reauthorizing legislation for WIA, which expired in 2003.

ASTD Releases New Data in its 2007 *State of the Industry* Report

ASTD estimates that U.S. organizations spend \$129.6 billion on employee learning and development annually, according to the just-released 2007 *State of the Industry* report. The annual report demonstrates that efforts to develop the knowledge, skills, and capabilities of each employee to maximize organizational impact are accelerating.

For the first time, the ASTD 2007 *State of the Industry* report includes data collected through ASTD's Workplace Learning and Performance Scorecard, as well as from exemplary organizations in the ASTD Benchmarking Forum and BEST Award winners. This enhanced data collection method provides a more sophisticated assessment of the value of learning to organizations.

The report includes training data tracked through metrics such as expenditure per employee, expenditure as a percentage of the organization's payroll, learning hours per employee, and the cost per learning hour. Indicators can also be compared by industry and organization size, and learning content area.

A free executive summary of the report is available at www.astd.org.

Employee Learning Week December 3-7, 2007

Employee Learning Week is fast approaching, and this is a great year to showcase the important connection between building a highly skilled workforce and achieving organizational results. To learn how you can celebrate workplace learning and performance in your organization or ASTD chapter, please visit www.employeelearningweek.org.

New Policy Tools from ASTD

ASTD released its new chapter advocacy guide at the ASTD Leader's Conference in late October. This short, downloadable guide provides an overview of the legislative process, tips on how to communicate effectively with policymakers, and sample documents and tools to get started. The packet also includes basic guidelines on lobbying for not-for-profit organizations. To view the ASTD chapter advocacy guide, please visit the resources section for chapters at www.astd.org.

In addition, ASTD has launched a new public policy and workplace training blog. The purpose of the blog is to educate and inform WLP professionals on federal and state policies that impact job training and learning, and to provide a forum for WLP professionals and the general public to discuss the intersection between workplace learning and public policy within the context of workforce competitiveness. To visit the blog, please go to www.learningpolicy.org.