



ASTD POLICY BRIEF

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Legislative Update – Summer 2008

Higher Education Act

On August 6 Congress sent H.R. 4137, the College Opportunity and Affordability Act of 2008, to President Bush to sign into law. The landmark legislation, which overhauls and reauthorizes the Higher Education Act of 1965 for the first time since 1998, outlines governing principles and policies and authorizes funding levels for programs related to higher education. The bill revises and reauthorizes Title IV student assistance programs, including the Pell Grant and Perkins loan programs; establishes a new workforce training grant program for institutions of higher education; and creates programs to enhance teacher quality.

The primary issue dividing the two chambers, which was resolved during the House-Senate Conference, was a House provision requiring states to maintain their level of investment in higher education in order to qualify for certain forms of federal assistance. States had expressed opposition to the provision as an intrusion into state budgeting decisions.

Bill Providing More Education Funding for Veterans Now Law

Congress last month passed legislation for continuing funding for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, which also included legislation providing a new education and training benefit for veterans. President Bush on June 30th subsequently signed the bill into law. The bill greatly expands the original GI Bill passed after World War II. The new GI bill will provide those serving three years or more funds for college tuition and a living stipend in their state. Veterans have 15 years to use the educational benefit, and it is transferable to family members.

Lifelong Learning Accounts Legislation Introduced in House

A Capitol Hill briefing in June highlighted newly-introduced lifelong learning accounts (LiLA) legislation, providing a tax credit to both employee and employer to establish and set aside up to \$2500 in an interest-bearing account for the employee's education and training expenses. Employees establish their portable LiLA account through their employer and can claim a 50 percent tax credit for the first \$500 saved; thereafter, they are eligible for a 25 percent tax credit up to \$2500. Employers who match the employees' contributions receive the same amount of tax credit.

SECTOR Bill Introduced in the Senate



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On July 30th Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Olympia Snowe (R-ME) introduced S. 3368, the Selecting Employment Clusters to Organize Regional Success (SECTORS) Act of 2008. The bill would amend the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to provide for a grants program to encourage regional collaboration within industry clusters or sectors, with the goal of encouraging stakeholders to invest in the training and development of workers within the targeted industry clusters.

ASTD 2008 International Conference & Exposition

ASTD Government Relations organized nine educational sessions at the ASTD 2008 International Conference & Exposition: four targeted to practitioners interested in public policy and five developed for learning professionals working in the public sector. Highlights included a session on multigenerational employee development considerations (“A Federal Family Portrait: Boomers Pass the Torch to Gen X/Y,”) and a presentation on workforce preparedness. The Government Networking Room, sponsored by the Graduate School, USDA, provided a meeting place for conference attendees working in the public sector and those interested in public policies affecting workplace learning and performance.

Workforce Innovations 2008

For the fourth year, ASTD worked with the Department of Labor/Employment and Training Administration to co-host the Workforce Innovations 2008 conference, which took place July 15-17 in New Orleans, LA. Workforce Innovations is an annual conference bringing together more than 3,000 national, state, and local workforce leaders from industry, education, and economic development to share ideas and discuss the critical talent development challenges facing the U.S.