



# StraightA's

Public Education Policy And Progress



## **HOUSE PASSES FY 2011 SPENDING BILL: Bill Cuts U.S. Department of Education Funding by \$5 Billion; Title I, School Improvement Grants, Striving Readers, and Other Programs Facing Funding Cuts**

At 4:40 a.m. on February 19, after days of contentious debate and hundreds of amendments, the House of Representatives passed a comprehensive spending bill that would keep the government running through Fiscal Year (FY) 2011, which ends September 30. The bill makes more than \$60 billion in cuts, including a \$5 billion cut to the U.S. Department of Education. The bill passed on a [party-line vote of 235–189](#), with three Republicans joining 186 Democrats who voted unanimously against the bill.

According to an [analysis](#) prepared by **House Appropriations Committee Chairman Hal Rogers (R-KY)**, more than fifty education programs would be cut under the House-passed bill. Specifically, the bill would cut Title I by nearly \$700 million (4.8 percent); School Improvement Grants by \$336.6 million; TRIO by \$25 million; Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) by \$19.8 million; and completely eliminate funding for Striving Readers (\$250 million, in addition to a rescission of \$189 million in previously appropriated funds), Small Learning Communities (\$88 million), High School Graduation Initiative (\$50 million), and Statewide Data Systems (\$58.3 million). The bill would also reduce the maximum Pell Grant award from \$4,860 to \$4,015.

“This week, for the first time in many years, the People’s House was allowed to work its will—and the result was one of the largest spending cuts in American history,” said **House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH)**. “Cutting federal spending is critical to reducing economic uncertainty, encouraging private-sector investment, and creating a better environment for job creation in our country. We will not stop here in our efforts to cut spending, not when we’re broke and Washington’s spending binge is making it harder to create jobs.”

Prior to the House’s passage of the bill, the Obama administration issued a [statement](#) strongly opposing the bill. “The administration does not support deep cuts that will undermine our ability to out-educate, out-build, and out-innovate the rest of the world,” the statement read. “The bill proposes cuts that would sharply undermine core government functions and investments key to economic growth and job creation, and would reduce funding for the Department of Defense to a level that would leave the department without the resources and flexibility needed to meet vital military requirements.”

The Senate is currently in recess but is expected to take up its version of the spending bill during the first week of March. Senate Democrats have also made clear their opposition to the bill, preferring to keep spending at FY 2010 levels for the remainder of FY 2011. That puts their spending target roughly \$60 billion apart from that of Republicans in the House. The current continuing resolution (CR) is funding the government and due to expire on March 4. With that deadline looming, something will have to happen fast. One possible answer is another short-term CR that will keep the government running until House Republicans and Senate Democrats come to an agreement on a long-term solution. The other answer is to shut down the federal government.

At a news conference on February 17, Boehner appeared to be drawing a line in the sand. “I am not going to move any kind of short-term CR at current levels,” he said. “When we say we’re going to cut spending, read my lips: We’re going to cut spending.”

Appearing on CBS’s “Face the Nation” on February 20, **House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan (R-WI)** suggested that one option would be to enact a short-term extension with spending cuts that would allow the two parties to negotiate a solution. “We don’t want to accept these extremely high elevated levels and so we’re going to have to start negotiating on these things not just with the Senate but also with the president,” Ryan said. “We’re not looking for a government shutdown. And I think we’ll have some negotiations with short-term extensions with spending cuts in the interim.” (Watch video from the program by clicking on the image below).

Also on “Face the Nation,”

**Representative Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), the top Democrat on the House Budget Committee**, acknowledged the need to get the deficit under control, but he warned against the deep spending cuts contained in the House bill. “The question we’ve posed is, are you going to be reckless about this, or you are going to be responsible about this?” Van Hollen said. “The bipartisan commission on fiscal responsibility specifically warned against deep, immediate cuts in the year 2011. Why? Because it would hurt a fragile economy and put people out of work.”



## **OBAMA RELEASES FY 2012 BUDGET: U.S. Department of Education Slated to Receive 4.6 Percent Increase in Funding**

Released on February 14, President Obama’s Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 budget proposes spending \$48.8 billion in discretionary funds for the U.S. Department of Education, a 4.6 percent increase over FY 2010.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Congressional negotiations on the FY 2011 budget are ongoing.

The increase for the Department of Education represents a sharp contrast to the funding cuts that Obama proposes for many other federal agencies. For example, the U.S. Department of Labor would receive a 27.2 percent cut compared to FY 2010 in the president’s budget; the U.S. Departments of Housing and Urban Development and Commerce would also receive significant cuts in funding—15.5 percent and 13.9 percent respectively.

In a [speech](#) at Parkville Middle School and Center for Technology in Baltimore, Maryland, where he officially released his FY 2012 budget, Obama explained his rationale for increasing funding for education programs. (Click the image to the right to watch video from the speech).



“While it’s absolutely essential to live within our means, while we are absolutely committed to working with Democrats and Republicans to find further savings and to look at the whole range of budget issues, we can’t sacrifice our future in the process,” Obama said. “Even as we cut out things that we can afford to do without, we have a responsibility to invest in those areas that will have the biggest impact in our future—and that’s especially true when it comes to education.”

The budget includes a \$300 million increase for Title I and a \$250 million increase for special education. It also provides \$900 million for another round of Race to the Top grants. This year, however, only school districts, not states, would be eligible to participate in the competition.

Obama proposes \$300 million for additional Investing in Innovation (I3) grants, \$350 million for a new early education program, and \$100 million—an increase of \$41.7 million—for Statewide Data Systems. Most of the funding awarded under the Statewide Data Systems program would help states continue to expand and improve their data systems, including linkages between elementary, secondary, postsecondary, and workforce data systems.

For the School Turnaround Grants program, currently known as School Improvement Grants, Obama proposes \$600 million, an increase of \$54 million, or 10 percent. Under the proposal, states would make competitive grants to school districts to support rigorous turnaround efforts in the lowest-performing schools.

In a [statement](#), **Bob Wise, president of the Alliance for Excellent Education and former governor of West Virginia**, credited the president for recommending additional investments in education during a “tough budget climate,” but said these investments need to be paired with a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, currently known as No Child Left Behind. “These new investments must be targeted where they are most needed and will be most effective; this is best done by a reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act,” said Wise. “I ask President Obama and the U.S. Congress to work as fast as possible on an agreement to reauthorize the law. It’s the best step for our children and our economy.”

**House Education and Workforce Committee Chairman John Kline (R-MN)** noted that the nation has increased its investment in education for forty-five years, but it has not seen a return

on that investment in the form of improved student achievement. “Throwing more money at our nation’s broken education system ignores reality and does a disservice to students and taxpayers,” Kline said. “It is time we asked why increasing the federal government’s role in education has failed to improve student achievement. I look forward to charting a new course in education that ensures Washington doesn’t stand in the way of meaningful state and local reforms.”

Obama’s budget proposes to eliminate thirteen programs while consolidating an additional thirty-eight programs into eleven. “We are cutting where we can to invest where we must,” said **U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan**. “These are challenging times, but we can’t delay investments that will secure our future. We must educate our way to a better economy by investing responsibly, advancing reform, and demanding results.”

The thirteen programs slated for elimination received a combined \$146.8 million in FY 2010 and include Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnerships (LEAP) (\$63.9 million), Byrd Honors Scholarships (\$42 million), and Exchanges with Historic Whaling and Trading Partners (\$8.8 million).

Among the programs to be consolidated are the Striving Readers program, which received \$200 million in FY 2010, and the National Writing Project, which received \$25.6 million in FY 2010. These two programs would be consolidated under “Effective Teaching and Learning: Literacy,” which would receive \$383.3 million under the president’s proposal. This new program would also absorb programs such as Even Start (\$66.5 million in FY 2010), Literacy Through School Libraries (\$19.1 million), Reading is Fundamental (\$24.8 million), and Ready-to-Learn Television (\$27.3 million).

Other programs to be consolidated include the High School Graduation Initiative (\$50 million in FY 2010), Smaller Learning Communities program (\$88 million), and Teacher Incentive Fund (\$400 million).

The president also proposes to cut \$265 million, or 21 percent, from the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. “Career education is vitally important to America’s future, but we need to strengthen and reform our programs before expanding them,” Duncan said.

Additional information on the president’s budget proposal for the U.S. Department of Education, including funding totals for every program, is available at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget12/summary/12summary.pdf>.



**THE 7<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL AP<sup>®</sup> REPORT TO THE NATION: Minority Students Still Underrepresented in AP Classrooms and Success Stories**

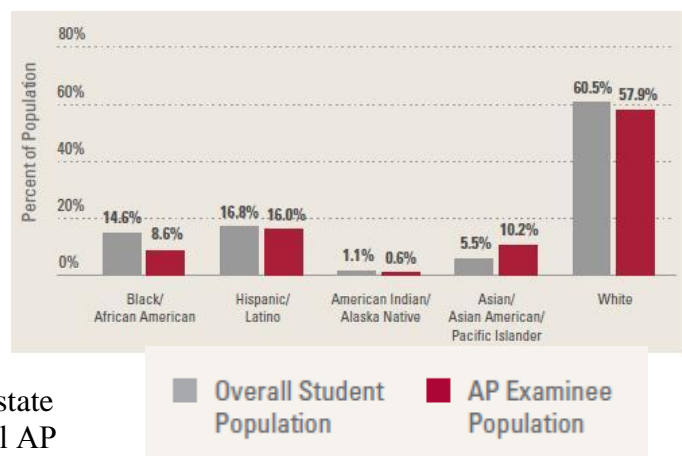
*The 7<sup>th</sup> Annual AP<sup>®</sup> Report to the Nation* finds that although the overall number of high school graduates participating and succeeding in the Advanced Placement (AP) exam has increased, minority students are still underrepresented in both AP classrooms and within the group

performing well. The College Board defines a successful AP experience as scoring a 3 or higher on a testing scale of 1 to 5.

“Students and educators routinely attest that exposure to AP’s high standards helps prepare students for success in college,” said **Trevor Packer, vice president of the AP program for the College Board**. “However, the likelihood of college success is significantly higher for AP students who score 3 or better. Accordingly, simply expanding AP course enrollments is not enough—this year’s report provides additional data points on exam performance that can help each state take a closer look at how well they are preparing all of their students, during the middle school and high school years, for the rigors of college-level course work.”

In 2010, a total of 853,314 seniors leaving high school reported taking an AP exam. According to the study, 508,818 of those students had a successful experience, which is nearly double the amount of students from the class of 2001. The number of minority students performing well has also doubled since 2001, with 11,911 more African American students, 41,000 more Hispanic students, and 1,207 more Indian/Alaska Native students scoring a 3 or higher. The number of low-income graduates with scores of 3 or higher has increased from 53,662 in 2006 to 84,135 in 2010.

Despite these improvements, the demographics of AP student participation and success are still far from mirroring the demographics of the overall student population. As the chart to the right shows, African American students represent 14.6 percent of the national student population, but they only represent 8.6 percent of the AP examinee population.



The report compares the demographics of a state with the demographics of a state’s successful AP student population to determine how well each state is preparing its students to succeed. This analysis shows that fourteen states have successfully eliminated the equity and excellence gap for Hispanic/Latino students, sixteen states have closed the gap for American Indian/Alaska Native students, and two states have closed the gap for African American students. However, the report notes that none of the states with substantial student populations in these demographics have eliminated these gaps.

*Report to the Nation* also provides state-by-state percentages of students in a graduating class who scored a 3 or higher. For the third year in a row, Maryland ranked first in the nation with 26.4 percent of its students performing successfully. New York (24.6 percent) and Virginia (23.7 percent) followed closely behind. On the other end of the spectrum are Mississippi (4.4 percent), Louisiana (4.6 percent), and North Dakota (6.8 percent). A number of states have made notable progress in the past five years; for example, Vermont experienced a 6 percent increase in the number of seniors scoring a 3 or higher on an AP exam during high school.



In order to expand AP participation and improve testing performance, the College Board recommends that states (1) enroll more willing and academically prepared students in AP classes, (2) hone existing practices to help an even greater proportion of college-bound students achieve success in AP, (3) increase access to and preparation for AP, and (4) build on successes in participation and ensure that more students are prepared for the rigors of AP. The report uses these four components to rate how well each state is currently providing students with AP opportunities and experiences.

To read the full report, visit: <http://apreport.collegeboard.org/>



## **STATE OF THE STATES: Governors Prioritize International Competitiveness, Innovation, Graduation Rates, and Vocational Education**

### **North Carolina: Perdue Calls for Investing in Education**

**North Carolina Governor Bev Perdue (D)** delivered her [state of the state address](#) on February 14, joking that some people had accused her of ruining Valentine’s Day for their significant other. During her speech, she stressed the importance of education in preparing students to compete with their international peers in today’s global economy.

Reflecting on a recent trip to China, the governor said, “I went into classrooms where children were studying concepts far in advance of American children of similar ages. They demand more work out of their kids. They require more involvement from parents. They expect no less than excellence from their students and teachers and parents and schools. Education in China is a major part of the reason their workers are global competitors.”

Although the state is facing a \$2.4 billion deficit, the governor called for investing in education and promised that her proposed budget would fund every current state-supported teacher and teaching assistant position. In an effort to move more students through the education pipeline, she proposed a scholarship program that would allow qualifying high school juniors to earn a two-year college degree at no cost.

Perdue took pride in the state’s virtual public school and its enrollment of 46,000 students. She also spoke highly of the “Career and College—Ready, Set, Go!” initiative and explained how it had played an important role in securing \$400 million from the federal Race to the Top competition.

### **Oklahoma: Fallin Supports Public-Private Partnership to Spur Innovation**

“There is nothing more important to our future and our long-term prosperity than education,” said **Oklahoma Governor Mary Fallin (R)**, during her [state of the state address](#) on February 7. “It is the cornerstone of a prosperous society.”

During her speech, the governor talked at length about education and discussed her work with the state superintendent to develop a public-private partnership where private money would

match state dollars to fund innovative learning programs designed to enhance student performance and close achievement gaps.

Fallin asked the legislature to send her a bill eliminating “trial de novo,” a practice that guarantees tenured teachers the right to appeal a school board’s termination to the district court for a new trial. In the midst of tough budget times, the governor recommended that schools restructure their budgets with the goal of sending more money directly to the classrooms and less to overhead and administrative costs. She also expressed her support for using more electronic textbooks, reducing remediation rates, and developing more sophisticated student-tracking databases.

### **Texas: Perry Concentrates on Improving High School Graduation Rate**

During his [state of the state address](#) on February 8, **Texas Governor Rick Perry (R)** called for a number of initiatives aimed at improving Texas’s high school and college graduation rates. He suggested requiring high school enrollment as a prerequisite to allowing students to get their driver’s license. The governor also recommended offering employers a \$1,500 tax incentive for every employee who earns their diploma or GED after being granted two hours a week of paid leave to study or go to class. For colleges and universities, he suggested implementing outcomes-based funding, which is a funding stream based on the number of degrees an institution awards.

The governor focused on expanding Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) academies and the state’s Virtual School Network, in particular adding high school classes so that students across the state would have access to courses their schools might not offer. Perry challenged Texas’s institutions of higher education to develop bachelor’s degrees that cost no more than \$10,000, including textbooks.

“Let’s leverage web-based instruction, innovative teaching techniques, and aggressive efficiency measures to reach that goal,” Perry said. “Imagine the potential impact on affordability and graduation rates, and the number of skilled workers it would send into our economy.”

He thanked policymakers for their leadership in increasing accountability in schools, saying, “The quality of education in our state is getting better and better preparing hardworking Texans to apply their legendary work ethic and provide for their families.”

Perry pointed out that the state’s share of public education spending had increased by 82 percent over the past decade, from \$11 billion to \$20 billion in 2009. However, he called for school districts to reduce their expenses in these tight budgetary times.

***Straight A’s: Public Education Policy and Progress*** is a biweekly newsletter that focuses on education news and events in Washington, DC and around the country. The format makes information on federal education policy accessible to everyone from elected officials and policymakers to parents and community leaders. Contributors include Jason Amos, editor, Emily Roosa, writer, and Kate Bradley, copyeditor.

The Alliance for Excellent Education is a national policy and advocacy organization that works to improve national and federal policy so that all students can achieve at high academic levels and graduate from high school ready for success in college, work, and citizenship in the twenty-first century. For more information about the Alliance, visit <http://www.all4ed.org>.