



April 2009 Legislative Update



As the rest of the country marks the milestone of President Obama's first 100 days in office, the United States Student Association (USSA) applauds the administration for continuing to prioritize education reform. The first months of 2009 have brought about outstanding victories as well as new challenges for current and future students in America. USSA has actively represented students on Capitol Hill, the Department of Education, and the White House as we continue working to ensure that the student voice is not only heard, but that students have a real impact on the policies that affect them.

Victory for Students: The Fiscal Year 2010 Budget puts students first!

March 24th, during USSA's National Student Lobby Day, students from around the country lobbied their elected officials to "Reclaim Education and Invest in Our Nation" by passing a budget that echoes the increases in student aid included in President Obama's budget proposal and, on April 29th, Congress did just that! Students and education advocates around the country are celebrating the passages of S. Con. Res. 13, a budget that prioritizes students and access to higher education. On Wednesday April, 29th, The House of Representatives voted to pass the budget by a vote of 233-193, with the Senate vote of 53-43 following later that afternoon. The passages of this budget is a sweet victory for students because it includes reconciliation instructions needed to achieve the President Obama's proposal to end costly subsidies to private companies that profit from student loans and make the Pell grant program mandatory.

This victory was hard fought. Students worked in coalition with youth and community based organizations across the country to pass this transformative budget. There was strong opposition from banks that issue loans under the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFEL). These banks that earn huge profits from receiving multiple subsidies from the government in exchange for issuing loans to students will no longer be able to profit from student lending under President Obama's proposal. However, some FFEL lenders may be protected under an agreement included in S. Con. Res. 13 that will allow state-owned banks or nonprofit organizations that conduct the majority of lending to operate when the Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) program is eliminated. This agreement only effects five or six institutions and was necessary to win support from many legislators including Senate Budget Committee chairmen, Kent Conrad (ND).

The conference budget resolution also includes \$89.4 billion in discretionary spending for education programs. The actual funding for these programs will be decided by the Appropriations committee in the coming months. Members of the Appropriations Committee will use the \$89.4 billion as a blueprint to negotiate funding for education programs like TRIO, LEAP, and GEAR-UP.

The inclusion of reconciliation in the final budget resolution clears the path for the education committees in the House and Senate to craft legislation that will save \$1 billion dollars in education spending and

convert the Pell grant to an entitlement program. This next step in the Budget and Appropriations process is already underway. Congress will be looking to students for support in crafting this bill that will reform the federal student aid system. Look for information on how you can continue to be involved in this campaign at www.usstudents.org.

The Federal DREAM Act

On March 26th 2009, the American DREAM Act, H.R. 1751, was reintroduced in the House of Representatives along with S.729, the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM) in the Senate. The reintroduction of this powerful legislation, that will help over 65,000 students access an affordable education, came just days after hundreds of students marched to the nation's capitol demanding passage of the DREAM Act. If passed, the DREAM Act would offer undocumented students, with good moral character, conditional permanent resident status. Conditional permanent resident status would be similar to lawful permanent resident status, except that it would be awarded for a limited duration—six years under normal circumstances. At the end of that six years, if a student receives a four or two year degree, remains in good academic standing for two years, or service in the military for three years, that conditional status becomes permanent. To qualify for benefits under the DREAM act, a student must have been in the United States 5 years before the law is enacted, and before age 16. The latest version of the DREAM Act also includes a provision that caps eligibility for benefits under the DREAM Act at age 35.

Senators Richard “Dick” Durbin (D-IL) and Richard Lugar (R-IN) are the original co-sponsors of the DREAM Act in the Senate. Representatives Howard Berman (D-CA), Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL), and Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA) are original co-sponsors of the American DREAM Act in the House. Current focus on the DREAM Act is encouraging Members of Congress to support and cosponsor the DREAM Act. As we move forward in the legislative process, bipartisan cosponsors will be vital to passing this bill. There is a list of current cosponsors included below.

The next step for the DREAM Act will be the Judiciary committee where the details of the bill will be outlined. The timeline for this bill is unclear as the Obama administration and Congressional leaders debate the best avenue for the DREAM Act and Comprehensive Immigration Reform.

Co-sponsors in the House of Representatives

Rep Ackerman, Gary L. [NY-5] - 3/31/2009

Rep Cao, Anh "Joseph" [LA-2] - 3/26/2009

Rep Capps, Lois [CA-23] - 3/31/2009

Rep Capuano, Michael E. [MA-8] - 3/31/2009

Rep Carson, Andre [IN-7] - 4/22/2009

Rep Castor, Kathy [FL-11] - 4/30/2009

Rep Cleaver, Emanuel [MO-5] - 4/21/2009

Rep Conyers, John, Jr. [MI-14] - 3/26/2009

Rep Davis, Susan A. [CA-53] - 4/21/2009

Rep Diaz-Balart, Lincoln [FL-21] - 3/26/2009

Rep Diaz-Balart, Mario [FL-25] - 3/26/2009

Rep Engel, Eliot L. [NY-17] - 3/31/2009

Rep Eshoo, Anna G. [CA-14] - 4/21/2009

Rep Farr, Sam [CA-17] - 3/31/2009

Rep Fattah, Chaka [PA-2] - 4/21/2009

Rep Filner, Bob [CA-51] - 3/31/2009

Rep Gonzalez, Charles A. [TX-20] - 3/31/2009

Rep Grijalva, Raul M. [AZ-7] - 3/31/2009

Rep Hinojosa, Ruben [TX-15] - 3/31/2009

Rep Holt, Rush D. [NJ-12] - 4/21/2009

Rep Israel, Steve [NY-2] - 4/21/2009

Rep Johnson, Eddie Bernice [TX-30] - 4/30/2009

Rep Lee, Barbara [CA-9] - 4/21/2009

Rep Lofgren, Zoe [CA-16] - 3/26/2009

Rep McCarthy, Carolyn [NY-4] - 3/31/2009

Rep Meek, Kendrick B. [FL-17] - 4/22/2009

Rep Moore, Gwen [WI-4] - 4/30/2009

Rep Nunes, Devin [CA-21] - 3/26/2009

Rep Ortiz, Solomon P. [TX-27] - 4/21/2009

Rep Pastor, Ed [AZ-4] - 4/27/2009

Rep Polis, Jared [CO-2] - 3/26/2009

Rep Quigley, Mike [IL-5] - 4/30/2009

Rep Reyes, Silvestre [TX-16] - 4/23/2009

Rep Ros-Lehtinen, Ileana [FL-18] - 3/26/2009

Rep Roybal-Allard, Lucille [CA-34] - 3/26/2009

Rep Sanchez, Linda T. [CA-39] - 3/31/2009

Rep Schakowsky, Janice D. [IL-9] - 4/21/2009
Rep Serrano, Jose E. [NY-16] - 4/21/2009
Rep Stark, Fortney Pete [CA-13] - 4/22/2009
Rep Wasserman Schultz, Debbie [FL-20] - 4/21/2009

Rep Weiner, Anthony D. [NY-9] - 4/21/2009
Rep Woolsey, Lynn C. [CA-6] - 4/22/2009
Rep Wu, David [OR-1] - 4/22/2009

Co-sponsors in the US Senate

Sen Bingaman, Jeff [NM] - 3/30/2009
Sen Boxer, Barbara [CA] - 3/30/2009
Sen Cantwell, Maria [WA] - 4/22/2009
Sen Dodd, Christopher J. [CT] - 3/30/2009
Sen Feingold, Russell D. [WI] - 3/26/2009
Sen Feinstein, Dianne [CA] - 3/30/2009
Sen Gillibrand, Kirsten E. [NY] - 3/31/2009
Sen Harkin, Tom [IA] - 3/31/2009
Sen Kennedy, Edward M. [MA] - 3/26/2009
Sen Kerry, John F. [MA] - 3/30/2009
Sen Leahy, Patrick J. [VT] - 3/26/2009

Sen Lieberman, Joseph I. [CT] - 3/26/2009
Sen Lugar, Richard G. [IN] - 3/26/2009
Sen Martinez, Mel [FL] - 3/26/2009
Sen Menendez, Robert [NJ] - 3/30/2009
Sen Murray, Patty [WA] - 3/30/2009
Sen Nelson, Bill [FL] - 3/30/2009
Sen Reid, Harry [NV] - 3/26/2009
Sen Schumer, Charles E. [NY] - 4/2/2009
Sen Udall, Mark [CO] - 4/29/2009
Sen Whitehouse, Sheldon [RI] - 3/30/2009

The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act

On April 21st, President Obama signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act into law. The Serve America Act passed the House of Representatives with a vote of 321-105 on March 18 and the Senate also passed it with a strong vote of 79-19 on March 26. This bill, formally known as the GIVE Act, will engage Americans of all ages and backgrounds in volunteerism and civic engagement to support the areas in our country in need of revitalization.

USSA was a crucial component for the passage of this legislation. The Office of Speaker Nancy Pelosi asked USSA to give their input on the creation of this legislation and how it can help students from across the country achieve their dreams of going onto higher education. The Serve America Act includes provisions to encourage students to volunteer by offering financial support in engage for service that will go toward funding their higher education. It also establishes the Summer of Service program that engages middle and high school students in volunteer activities in their communities and allows them to earn a \$500 education award to be used for college costs. This legislation will help students perform better in school, prepare Americans for green and innovative 21st century jobs, and improve the quality of life in their communities. USSA applauds Congress for showing their commitment to education and the many people across the country that will benefit from the services made possible by the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act