



National Coalition For Literacy

American Library Association ◦ Association of Adult Literacy Professional Developers ◦ Center for Literacy Studies, University of Tennessee ◦ Commission on Adult Basic Education ◦ Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy ◦ GED Testing Service ◦ Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy and the Goodling Institute for Research, Pennsylvania State University ◦ International Reading Association ◦ Literacy USA ◦ National Center for Family Literacy ◦ National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy ◦ National Center on Adult Literacy, University of Pennsylvania ◦ National Council of State Directors of Adult Education ◦ ProLiteracy Worldwide ◦ Student Coalition for Action in Literacy Education ◦ Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. ◦ Voices of Adult Learners United for Education ◦ World Education

Dear Representative:

The National Coalition for Literacy is a unique member organization made up of the Nation's service, research, and policy organizations in adult education, family literacy, and English language acquisition. Later this week the House of Representatives is scheduled to consider the Job Training Improvement Act of 2005 and the NCL would like to highlight some points that we feel are key.

With respect to Title I we have the following concerns:

ONE-STOP

Governors could assess each One-Stop partner for its share of One-Stop infrastructure costs and would require that the assessment be paid from each partner's administrative allowance.

1. In order to receive federal funding, States are being required to display accountability and success through data collection and reporting mechanisms.
2. If One-Stop partners are forced to share infrastructure costs less funding is available for data collection and reporting mechanisms, and consequentially the ability to meet federal funding requirements is diminished.
3. In essence, by cutting administrative funding now, One-Stop programs are being set up for zeroing out later.

At a time when States are being pressed to be more accountable and to institute extensive data collection and reporting mechanisms, the loss of administrative dollars will deal these efforts a severe blow.

Governors could reallocate program dollars into "additional costs" of One-Stop systems.

1. Reallocation of program dollars means a cut in funding for those receiving adult education services.
2. Approximately 3 Million people receiving adult education services but reallocation will consequentially drop program capacity.
3. The U.S Census claims 90 Million adults need services yet only 3 Million are currently served.

Reallocation will reduce the local program funding under Title II of the legislation, at a time when the Title II program barely serves 4 percent of those needing services.

NCL ONE-STOP REQUESTS

The legislation suggests that in calculating the assessment to each partner program the primary factor be the number of participants attributable to the program, but gives no guidance as to how this attribution is to be defined.

Therefore we respectfully request that there be a separate funding stream for One-Stop operations.

WIA PLUS BUDGET PROPOSAL

Although there is currently no language in the legislation reported out by the Committee on Education and the Workforce to implement this proposal found in the Department of Labor budget request for FY2006, there is a possibility that an amendment could be offered during floor consideration. This proposal would consolidate funds from a number of Federal programs – including adult education with no guarantee that the Title II appropriation would continue to serve adults in need of basic education or English as a second language – at a time when there is a critical and growing need for these services.

The Coalition is strongly opposed to any consolidation grant and asks you to reject such an amendment if offered.

With respect to Title II we offer the following observations:

STATE LEADERSHIP

Current Title II provisions set a funding cap of 12.5 percent for States to meet performance standards, reporting requirements, staff development and quality improvement needs. This was a reduction from 15 percent provided for in prior legislation.

1. A federal mandate requires that programs show continuous improvement and that programs exceed goals set for educational gain, secondary school completion, transition to postsecondary institutions and to training programs, and employment.
2. This mandate makes a strong case for restoring the set-a-side to 15 percent so States are actively supported by their legislators to fully execute staff development, data collection, and increase in reporting capacity, as required by the legislation.

INCENTIVE GRANTS

The Coalition thanks the Committee for uncoupling incentive grants for adult education from Title I and Vocational Education performance.

1. Twenty-three (23) States exceeded their own program goals, but were denied incentive grants because partner programs did not meet their goals.
2. These Twenty-three (23) States would benefit by this action and be able to serve additional participants.

TITLE

The Coalition also applauds the Committee's willingness to broaden the language in the title of the act to make it more representative of the broad purposes of adult education and family literacy.

REPORTING EARNINGS INCREASE

The Coalition is very concerned about this proposed addition to the reporting responsibilities of State and local programs.

1. Some States allow earnings tracking and data match by using Social Security Numbers as identifiers.
2. Social Security Numbers can be matched against Unemployment Insurance databases to provide information about the relative pay status of participants at program entry and at intervals established in legislation.
3. Some States maintain privacy statutes precluding the use of Social Security Numbers for data matching and consequently earnings tracking.
4. Earnings tracking and reporting in these states is then is at the will of students.
5. Without a consistent way to track earnings it is likely that States precluded from using Social Security Numbers as identifiers will not be capable to report earnings as well as other states.

We strongly advise that the legislation continue to require States to provide information as to how many participants have become employed but, until all States have equal access to the Unemployment Insurance data, they will not be required to report on earning increases.

TRANSITION TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION – PARTICULARLY COMMUNITY COLLEGES

The Coalition appreciates your adding a new purpose to the legislation – that of transition to higher education. As the pressure grows in the workforce for a better educated worker, postsecondary institutions, particularly community colleges, will be the next destination for both those completing secondary level instruction and those attaining sufficient proficiency in English. Community colleges will also be a primary purveyor of skill specific training along with longer and more rigorous certificate and degree granting programs.

To ACHIEVE THIS NEW PURPOSE, additional funding will be needed for STATES TO CREATE AND STRENGTHEN SPECIAL TRANSITION PROGRAMS, AS WELL AS FOR RELATED data gathering and for research. We recommend that funding ON THE ORDER OF \$50 MILLION BE AUTHORIZED for the Office of Vocational and Adult Education to operate a PROGRAM OF GRANTS TO STATES to support the development and management of programs SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED TO INCREASE TRANSITIONS BY ADULT EDUCATION STUDENTS TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, AS WELL AS TO GATHER DATA THAT WILL ASSIST STATES, LOCAL PROGRAMS AND OVAE TO PERFORM AND ESTABLISH ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THIS NEW PURPOSE.

Research for models of seamless curricular continua LINKING ADULT AND POSTSECONDARY PROGRAMS should be added to the list of potential activities of the Office of Vocational and Adult Education. The National Center for Educational Statistics should be empowered and funded to collect, analyze and report baseline and longitudinal data on transition programs.

The Coalition thanks you for your attention to these matters and for your overall support of our very hard-working and deserving adult students.