

Association for Career and Technical Education
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American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

Perhaps the single biggest policy accomplishment of 2009 was congressional passage of the [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act](#) (ARRA). This \$787.2 billion economic stimulus bill, enacted on February 17, was designed to create or save three to four million jobs through tax cuts (35 percent) and targeted spending (65 percent).

Education was one of the biggest beneficiaries of funding in the bill, with billions of dollars allocated to Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and Pell Grants. The law also established an almost \$50 billion [State Fiscal Stabilization Fund](#) to help backfill state education budget cuts and provided funds for competitive grants to states and local school districts. Additional funding was also provided to the Workforce Investment Act youth, adult and dislocated worker programs, and new competitive grants for job training in high-demand areas were authorized.

As the Department of Education has implemented ARRA programs, it has established four guiding reform priorities:

- adopting internationally benchmarked standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace
- recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals
- building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their practices
- turning around the lowest-performing schools

These priorities have formed the basis of competitions for [Race to the Top](#) grants and for states' access to the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Most of the ARRA funds have already been distributed to states and local recipients, with the exception of the competitive grants and a few remaining stabilization fund dollars. Race to the Top is receiving the bulk of the education community's current focus, and competition for funds is slated

to occur in early 2010.

While implementation of the ARRA continues, there is already movement in Congress to pass a second "jobs" bill. Early drafts include additional education resources for states, but it is too soon to tell what the final package will entail.

FY 2010 Appropriations

Following its work on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Congress turned its focus to the regular budget and appropriations process. Before beginning Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 bills, work had to be completed on unfinished FY 2009 bills that were operating under a continuing resolution (CR). The Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill for FY 2009 was finally signed into law on March 11, providing most education and workforce-development programs funding level to that received in FY 2008. This passage cleared the way for the Administration and Congress to work on FY 2010 allocations.

Traditionally the president releases his budget proposal for the upcoming fiscal year in early February. This budget serves as a guide for Congress during the appropriations process. Because the Administration was brand-new in 2009, a [budget blueprint](#) was released in February followed by a [detailed budget](#) release on May 7. The president suggested level funding for the Perkins program in FY 2010.

At the same time the president was working on his budget, Congress began developing the FY 2010 budget resolution, which was finalized on April 29. The budget resolution sets funding ceilings for general categories and serves as a guide for appropriators when allocating funds to specific programs. The House budget resolution provided \$88.7 billion for the education and training categories, while the Senate version included \$89.4 billion. Both of these numbers were several billion dollars above FY 09 levels, but less than the president's request.

During the summer, the House Appropriations Committee developed and approved the House Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill. The bill was then passed by the full House on July 24. The Senate Appropriations Committee approved its version of the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill on July 30, but did not bring the bill to the floor for a vote.

Since Congress was unable to finalize this spending bill (as well as a number of others) by the September 30 end-of-fiscal-year deadline, a CR was needed to keep programs operating at current funding levels and prevent a government shutdown. While the original CR was extended several times, Congress finally completed its appropriations work late in the year. On December 16, an omnibus appropriations bill containing final FY 2010 funding levels for programs under the departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, as well as the components of five other appropriations bills was enacted.

In this finished bill, the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act remains funded at FY 2009 levels. For details on more program allocations, please see [the funding chart](#) on ACTE's Web site.

American Graduation Initiative

During his first official speech to Congress on February 24, President Obama placed new emphasis on the importance of postsecondary education, including CTE specifically. He issued the following challenge: "Tonight, I ask every American to commit to at least one year or more of higher education or career training. This can be community college or a four-year school; vocational training or an apprenticeship."

Later in the year, this challenge materialized into a new legislative proposal. On July 14, President Obama unveiled the [American Graduation Initiative](#) (AGI). The proposal suggested substantial investments to improve community and technical colleges and postsecondary programs leading to industry-recognized credentials, certificates and associate degrees.

Almost immediately, Congress went to work on legislation that would enact this initiative. [H.R. 3221](#), the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act (SAFRA), was introduced in the House on July 15. This bill included the AGI, as well as funding for secondary school facilities, early childhood education, Pell grants and a new College Access and Completion Innovation Fund. All these programs were funded through changes to federal student loan programs. The changes would eliminate the Federal Family Education Loan program and provide all federal student loans directly from the government instead of intermediaries.

On September 17, the House finalized and passed the SAFRA bill on a largely partisan vote. Throughout the fall, rumors were rampant that Senate action on a companion bill was imminent, but due to the time-consuming health care debate, a Senate bill was never introduced. Since this bill is being considered as a "reconciliation" bill by Congress because of its cost-saving changes to student loan programs, procedural rules have also slowed its movement. The latest predictions are that the Senate will introduce and consider its version of SAFRA in January, with hopes of final enactment early in 2010.

[Energy Policy](#)

On March 30, Rep. Jerry McNerney (D-CA) introduced the Grants for Renewable Energy Education for the Nation (GREEN) Act, [H.R. 1775](#). The GREEN Act authorized \$100 million in competitive grants to develop CTE programs-of-study curriculum and facilities in areas of renewable energy. This bill set the stage for CTE's inclusion in much broader energy legislation.

In the House, [H.R. 2454](#), the American Clean Energy and Security Act, was passed on June 26. This comprehensive energy legislation covers a multitude of issues, such as creating clean-energy jobs, addressing global warming and transitioning the nation to energy independence and a clean-energy economy.

To the benefit of CTE programs, language is included that would authorize the Secretary of Education to award grants for the development of CTE programs of study focused on emerging careers and jobs in renewable energy, energy efficiency and climate change mitigation-language derived from Rep. McNerney's bill.

H.R. 2454 also includes an expanded section related to green workforce development. It authorizes an "Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Worker Training Fund," a clearinghouse to provide CTE and job-training programs with resources related to renewable-energy sectors, and a green construction careers demonstration program.

Later in the fall, Sens. Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and John Kerry (D-MA) introduced [S. 1733](#), the Clean Energy Jobs and American Power Act, as a companion bill. This bill contains education and training provisions very similar to the House-passed bill. S. 1733 was approved by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on November 5, but was stalled as difficult negotiations continued.

The energy bill still has a long way to go through the legislative process, and there are many contentious issues yet to be resolved, but this issue remains a priority for Congress and will likely be addressed in some way in 2010.

[Workforce Investment Act](#)

2009 brought high hopes for a long-overdue reauthorization of the [Workforce Investment Act](#) (WIA), originally scheduled for 2003. However, while Congress did give the law quite a bit of attention during the

year, no actual legislation was ever introduced and work was postponed until 2010.

During the spring, the House Education and Labor Committee's Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Competitiveness held a series of five hearings on innovations and best practices under WIA. Topics included job training, adult education and family literacy, interagency cooperation, the function of Workforce Investment Boards, state and local roles, and many other intricacies of the legislation.

These subcommittee hearings were followed by a full Education and Labor Committee hearing on October 1 that focused on youth. During the hearing, Chairman George Miller (D-CA) said that part of the delay in WIA reauthorization was because he was "still trying to make sure that we have WIA right for this reauthorization." Key issues he identified were flexibility, partner integration, long-term connections between programs and current economic factors.

In the Senate, there was also some preliminary WIA action. Congressional staff on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee held four listening sessions in April to solicit input from national organizations. Following these sessions, the Senate HELP Committee's Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety held a hearing on July 16. Key panelists included Undersecretary of Education Martha Kanter and Assistant Secretary Jane Oates from the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration. They emphasized their close working relationship and pledged better integration of education and labor initiatives.

ACTE and the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium released a new set of [WIA recommendations](#) prior to the Senate hearing. The recommendations ask Congress to increase access to high-quality training, strengthen connections between education and workforce development systems and address administrative and infrastructure challenges.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act

U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan went on a "No Child Left Behind Listening and Learning Tour" early in 2009 to hear from schools and the general public. In late September, the secretary said that the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) could not wait any longer for reauthorization due to the law's important link to economic prosperity and national well-being.

Secretary Duncan commended ESEA for closing achievement gaps but said the law is too focused on lofty goals. He urged that a new law be more concerned with issues including teaching, school leadership and student growth. He also called the "No Child Left Behind" name toxic and suggested a re-branding of the law is in order.

Throughout 2009, Congress hosted several hearings on ESEA-related topics such as high school reform, the dropout crisis and graduation rates. Numerous bills on these and other issues were introduced, but ultimately little progress was made on producing comprehensive ESEA legislation in either the House or the Senate as other domestic priorities took precedence.

Chairman George Miller (D-CA) of the House Education and Labor Committee has said the law is in need of a major overhaul and Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA) of the Senate HELP Committee has stated a need to address its unintended consequences. However, mid-term elections could hinder progress on a reauthorization in 2010 as Members of Congress in tight races will be reticent to address the many controversial issues in ESEA during their campaigns.

ACTE has submitted a set of [recommendations](#) for the reauthorization of ESEA.

Common Core State Standards Initiative

Led by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), 48 states, two territories and the District of Columbia joined a movement this year to develop common state standards in English language arts and mathematics. According to the NGA Center and CCSSO, the standards will span grades K-12 and will focus on ensuring U.S. students are college- and career-ready and meet international benchmarks. States will voluntarily adopt the standards once they are completed.

While there has always been a strong local-control element to the American education system, policy leaders have increasingly called for more rigorous and comparable measures across states to ensure that all students are reaching key achievement levels. The success of this project may have great influence over further efforts to standardize curriculum and assessments across the country.

The Common Core draft standards are publicly available at www.corestandards.org and are currently in a validation phase, with final versions expected in early 2010. ACTE has signed on as an [endorsing partner](#) of the Common Core project and submitted [feedback](#) on the draft standards during the public comment period.

CTE Caucus Activities

During the 2008 election, Congressional CTE Caucus co-founder and then co-chair Rep. Phil English (R-PA) was defeated in a close race. His departure from the House left a vacancy in the caucus leadership that resulted in an uncertain start to 2009. Fortunately, a new leader, Rep. Steven LaTourette (R-OH), stepped up to join Rep. Brian Baird (D-WA) in chairing the CTE Caucus. Both Rep. Baird and Rep. LaTourette worked hard on behalf of CTE throughout the year.

Rep. Baird led efforts to circulate a CTE Caucus "Dear Colleague" letter advocating for a Perkins funding increase. He was joined on that letter by Rep. Mike Castle (R-DE) (since Rep. LaTourette is on the Appropriations Committee and not in a position to circulate funding letters), and together they recruited 46 other Members of Congress to sign in support of additional Perkins funding.

The CTE Caucus was also vital to the success of the CTE event "What's Cooking on Capitol Hill." This event was sponsored by ACTE, Participant Media, BET and Viacom, with the CTE Caucus serving as honorary host. This event featured students from many different career and technical student organizations discussing projects related to food, ranging from production to hospitality. It was held in conjunction with the film *Pressure Cooker*. There were over 120 congressional staff and four Members of Congress in attendance, and the event was a huge success in drawing attention to CTE.

As we move into 2010, ACTE is excited to work on new projects with the Congressional CTE Caucus including activities related to CTE month, the FY 2011 budget and appropriations process and additional successful events on the Hill.

Top 10 Most Popular CTE Policy Watch Blog Posts of 2009

1. [CTE Students Give Back on National Day of Service](#)
2. [Is CTE a Way out for Disadvantaged Students or a Trap?](#)
3. [Top 10 Hardest Jobs to Fill](#)
4. [Mike Rowe Advocating for CTE](#)

5. [What Does It Mean to Be "Career Ready"?](#)
6. [Francis Tuttle Girl Tech Gets Recognized on Capitol Hill](#)
7. [Common Core Standards Are to Be College and Career Focused](#)
8. [New Presidential Report Highlights CTE](#)
9. [Secretary Duncan Says He's "a Big Fan" of CTE](#)
10. [Promoting the Value of Career Guidance](#)

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact the [ACTE Public Policy Department](#). You can read more about ACTE's policy activities and the latest happenings in Washington, DC, on ACTE's [CTE Policy Watch blog](#) -- check it out today!

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