The Torch

November 24, 2004

A bi-weekly report from the Coalition of Higher Education Assistance Organizations

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT
JEANNE F. DOTSON

When I was informed that we would send the Torch out early this week, my immediate thought was that I would just give all of you my Thanksgiving menu. In the interim, very important things began to occur in Washington. This past weekend, the House and Senate passed a bill to zero fund the Perkins Loan Program Federal Capital Contribution in the year 2006. We have come one step closer to shutting down the Perkins program. It will be very difficult to get FCC funding next year, especially with the cuts in all the other programs. This is obviously not a good thing. All of us need to make a commitment to form a grass roots movement to stop this from happening. Please take this threat seriously and watch your e-mail for alerts from COHEAO.

The ballots for our election have been sent to Primary voting members of the organization. Please exercise your duty as a member and place your vote. The deadline to receive the signed ballots is December 15, 2004. If you have not received a ballot, contact Andrew Stringer at astringer@wpllc.net.

My wish for all of you is for a very wonderful holiday weekend. Please be safe and eat well.
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COHEAO News

Register Today for the 2005 COHEAO Annual Conference

COHEAO's Annual Membership Conference will be held starting the evening of January 30, 2005 and ending on February 2. The conference will take place at the Ritz-Carlton Pentagon City in Arlington, Virginia, just across the river from Washington, DC. To register, go to http://www.coheao.org and click on the link under "2005 COHEAO Annual Conference" or fill out the attached form and fax it to 202-371-0197 or mail it to 1101 Vermont Avenue, NW., Suite 400, Washington, DC 20005. Payment can be by credit card via the web site or by check.

This will be a key conference that will cover the many hot issues in Congress and in the administration of the Perkins Loan and other programs. Topics that will be covered include a renewed look at the re-starting Higher Education Act reauthorization -- new Senate leadership will mean changes in the approach -- a discussion of major new institutional reporting requirements by the National Center on for Education Statistics, more on the controversial E-Oscar process for reporting to credit bureaus, and addresses by key members of Congress and staff. We will be attempting to re-group to raise the priority level for the Perkins Loan program in the future.

The meeting will feature sessions on the implications of the FY2005 budget on the Perkins Loan Program in FY2006 and beyond. With the cut in appropriations, grassroots activism will be even more important, which is why William "Bud" Blakey will host a session on grassroots lobbying. COHEAO members will have the opportunity to put their new skills to the test with a breakfast on Capital Hill followed by an opportunity to visit members of Congress from your state. With the Perkins Loan program under more scrutiny than in many years, it will be important to let your representatives know of its importance to students.

If you have any questions about the Annual Conference, please let Andrew Stringer or Harrison Wadsworth know by calling 202-289-3910 or 3903 or astringer@wpllc.net. We look forward to having a great turnout at this very important conference.

COHEAO to Hold Perkins Teleconference on December 7

Mark your calendars, COHEAO will hold a teleconference on December 7 from 2 to 3:30 p.m. eastern time to discuss how to effectively communicate with Members of Congress and on how the upcoming elections will affect the Perkins Loan Program and higher education in general. This will be a great opportunity to hear from experienced advocates about how to get your point across. The teleconference will be free for COHEAO members and cost $75 for non-members.

To register, complete and fax the attached registration form. Online registration will be available next week.

Silent Auction Scholarship Fundraiser Set for Annual Conference

COHEAO will again host the Silent Auction Scholarship Fundraiser at this year's Annual Conference. The event will take place after the first full day of the Annual Conference on Monday, January 31 at 6:00 p.m. at the Ritz Carlton Pentagon City Hotel in Arlington, Virginia.
Please participate in COHEAO's charity effort. Please consider helping in one of the following ways:

- Coming to our scholarship fundraiser and participating in the silent auction;
- Donating an item for the auction; or
- Making a financial contribution to the scholarship effort.

For ideas or suggestions of items to donate, please call Andrew Stringer at (202) 289-3900. **Please make sure donations and/or contributions sent in advance arrive by Friday, January 28, 2005; last-minute donations will also be collected at the meeting registration desk.** Please address items for the silent auction to the attention of Andrew Stringer at 1101 Vermont Ave, NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC, 20005. Make checks payable to COHEAO. A flyer regarding the silent auction is attached to the end of *The Torch*.

**It’s Fall: Time to Find Something for the Cooler Weather at the COHEAO Store**

With fall here, and the Annual Conference not far away, why not find appropriate attire at [http://www.westernprinting.net/coheao](http://www.westernprinting.net/coheao), where you will find high-quality clothing and outerwear bearing the distinctive COHEAO flame logo. The net proceeds from the sale of the clothing will go to the COHEAO scholarship fund, which awards $1,000 scholarships every year to deserving students with financial need who are attending COHEAO-member institutions of higher education. Check it out today and help yourself – and a student who can really use the assistance.

**CONGRESS**

**Congress Eliminates Perkins Loan Federal Capital Contribution for FY2005**

The House and Senate passed an omnibus spending bill on November 20, finishing their FY2005 appropriations work – almost. The final bill does not fund the Perkins Loan Federal Capital Contribution and funds loan cancellations at $66.7 million – the same as FY2004.

While the bill (H.R. 4818) passed both the House (344-51) and Senate (65-30), it contained controversial language that would have provided the chairmen of the House and Senate appropriations committees and their staff access to individual tax returns at the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). After some debate, Democrats and Republicans agreed not to send the legislation to the President for signature into law until December 6, when Congress will return to pass an enrollment resolution to correct the problem. In the meantime, Congress is expected to pass a continuing resolution today to fund government agencies through December 8.

The $388 billion omnibus spending bill funds the nine federal departments including the Department of Education. The bill makes a .8 percent across the board cut to all non-defense discretionary spending programs in order to keep discretionary spending within the $821.9 billion cap set in the FY2005 Budget Resolution. Regarding other federal student aid, the bill makes the following appropriations (before the across the board cut):
• Keeps the Pell Grant maximum at $4,050;
• Increases Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG) from $770 million in FY2004 to $785 million in FY2005;
• Keeps the Federal Work Study program essentially flat funded at $998 million; and
• Flat funds the Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnerships program (LEAP) at $66 million.

Another controversial portion of the bill involves Pell Grant eligibility. The final bill did not include language that would prevent the Department of Education from revising the eligibility formula for Pell Grants, saving over $270 million in the process. Opponents of the change, who claim it would prevent approximately 84,000 students from receiving a Pell Grant, were successful in blocking the change last year. However, this year the White House weighed in heavily on the issue, in favor of changing the formula that has been in place since 1988.

The White House exerting its influence in the final negotiations was not unique to the Pell Grant formula. Congressional Quarterly ran the headline “White House Flexes Muscle in Final Spending Talks” in its November 19 edition. The White House’s largest leverage point was in threatening to veto legislation that broke the FY2005 budget cap of $821.9 billion. Joshua Bolten, director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), said in a November 17 letter to Congressional appropriators, “The president’s senior advisors would recommend he veto any bill that exceeds the agreed-upon spending limits or remains within the limits only though the use of unacceptable budgetary devices that mask the true level of discretionary spending.” This policy meant that the Senate’s appropriations bills, some $8.1 billion over the discretionary cap, could not be used as a starting point for negotiations.

**Senate Confirms Several to Department of Education and National Council on Disability**

During its lame duck session, the Senate confirmed a number of nominations at the U.S. Department of Education that had been waiting for action.

The Senate confirmed Dr. Eugene Hickok to be Deputy Secretary of Education, Edward “Ted” McPherson to be Under Secretary of Education and John Hager to be Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

As deputy secretary, Hickok serves as chief policy advisor to the President. He was appointed in early April 2004, but prior to that, he served as Pennsylvania’s Secretary of Education. As Secretary, Hickok helped implement a sweeping education reform agenda. Hickok was also a founding member and chairman of the Education Leaders Council and was a college professor at Dickinson College for 15 years.

McPherson was appointed as the under secretary of education and a member of the President’s Management Council. As under secretary, McPherson is the chief operating officer of the Department in which he oversees the Office of Federal Student Aid, the Budget Service, and Offices of Management. Prior to his appointment in April 2004, he served as chief financial officer at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, during which time he was responsible for $123 billion in assets and $70 billion in spending. The Department of Agriculture received a “clean” audit opinion from its Office of Inspector General for FY2002. McPherson served as president
of InterSolve Group, a company he founded in 1989, prior to his appointment to the Agriculture Department.

Hager comes to his new appointment as the former lieutenant governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia and has served most recently as the assistant to the governor of Virginia for homeland security.

The Senate also confirmed the members of the National Council on Disability and the Board of Directors for the National Board of Education Sciences.

With the confirmations, the following members of the National Council on Disability were reappointed to terms ending in September 2006. The members are Milton Aponte, Robert Davila, Young Woo Kang, Kathleen Martinez, and Linda Wetters. Biographies of each of the members may be accessed at: http://www.ncd.gov/newsroom/members/ncdbios.htm#Aponte.

The following are members of the Board of Directors of the National Board for Education Sciences that were confirmed by the Senate earlier this week:

- Jonathan Baron for a term of 3 years
- Elizabeth Ann Bryan for a term of 4 years
- Carol D’Amico for a term of 2 years
- James Davis for a term of 2 years
- Robert Granger for a term of 4 years
- Frank Philip Handy for a term of 3 years
- Eric Hanushek for a term of 2 years
- Caroline Hoxby for a term of 4 years
- Gerald Lee for a term of 4 years
- Roberto Lopez for a term of 2 years
- Richard Milgram for a term of 3 years
- Sally Shaywitz for a term of 3 years
- Joseph Torgeson for a term of 4 years and
- Herbert John Walberg for a term of 3 years.

More information on each of the nominations can be obtained from www.ed.gov.

**INSIDE ED AND THE ADMINISTRATION**

**Department Releases Performance and Accountability Report**

The Department of Education released its FY2004 Performance and Accountability Report yesterday. The report is submitted to Congress once a year to detail the activities and improvements at the Department. While the report demonstrates a substantial amount of good news for the higher education community in general, the report notes that the Perkins Loan Program “has proven duplicative of other broader financial aid efforts and does not target monies effectively to the neediest students.”
The report demonstrated that while tuition has increased by 7 percent in 2003, the net price of attending a four-year institution for a dependent student in the lowest quartile of family income has actually decreased over the past decade. More students are using FAFSA on the Web to fill out their financial aid application, thereby allowing the Department to process applications within 24 hours. Student loan interest rates are at an all-time low and the cohort default rate is at an historic low as well. In addition, the Department cited an increase in minority graduation rates from four-year institutions as one of its key results over the past year.

In an attempt to eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse, the Department has made some substantial steps as well. To curb diploma mills, ED created a master list of accredited higher education institutions that can be made available to employers to verify an applicant’s credentials. The Office of Student Financial Assistance is also in the process of identifying areas that are particularly susceptible to significant erroneous payments. The Department has already worked with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Treasury Department to draft legislation that would permit the matching of Title IV applicant data.

The report also noted that the Government Accountability Office found that the volume of federal Direct Loans decreased from 34 percent to 28 percent in the late 1990’s. Schools leaving the program cited the difficulties in fulfilling the DL program requirements and higher loan origination fees as reasons for leaving.

The report did note that the average increase in tuition for higher education institutions in FY2003 was seven percent, a figure that is “well above the existing inflation rate and Department targets.” It also noted a trend in borrowers “rushing” to consolidate existing loans due to the low interest rates and a rise in “financial entities specializing in this [consolidation loans] field.”

To view a full copy of this report, visit: http://www.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/2004report/index.html

**Secretary Paige Resigns: Margaret Spellings to Become New Secretary**

On November 15 Education Secretary Rod Paige announced his resignation from the Cabinet. In his released statement, Paige said:

“I did not come to Washington as a career move. I came to help President Bush launch No Child Left Behind and Reading First and to help establish a culture of accountability in American education…. At the end of the President’s first term, I have served longer than any Republican United States secretary of education. At that time, my work here will be accomplished.”

The President nominated Margaret Spellings, his top domestic policy advisor, to replace Paige. Many, including Hill Democrats, see the nomination of Spellings as a good choice and believe she will be much more involved in policy making at the elementary and secondary education level. Prior to serving in the White House, Spellings was a senior advisor to President Bush when he was the governor of Texas. Spellings’ also served as the associate executive director for the Texas Association of School Boards.
From the remarks that were made by both President Bush and Spellings during the nomination announcement, it does not appear that the Bush Administration is going to take a more active role in higher education policy, as many in the community had hoped it would, but is rather going to work towards expanding No Child Left Behind (NCLB). During the remarks, President Bush stated that he and the new Secretary were “determined to extend the high standards and accountability measure of the No Child Left Behind Act to all of America’s public high schools.”

The transcript of the President’s nomination is located at [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

**Department Releases 2005-2006 SAR/ISIR**

The Department of Education has released the 2005-2006 SAR/ISIR Comment Codes and Text reference guide. The guide is a companion to the 2005-2006 EDE Technical Reference document.

For more information and instructions on how to download the Comment Codes and Text, visit: [http://www.ifap.ed.gov/eannouncements/1115SARISIRCommCodes0506.html](http://www.ifap.ed.gov/eannouncements/1115SARISIRCommCodes0506.html)

**Department Issues Dear Colleague on Return of Title IV Aid**

On November 17, Sally Stroup, Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education at the Department of Education, released a dear colleague letter regarding the return of Title IV student financial aid for students who withdraw from school. The letter changes a February 2004 dear colleague letter (GEN-04-03) that stipulated that schools that are required to take attendance must determine that a student has withdrawn within one week of the student’s withdrawal date (as reported by the school). The new letter expands the time to within two weeks of the student’s withdrawal date.

To view the entire letter, visit: [http://www.ifap.ed.gov/dpcletters/GEN0412.html](http://www.ifap.ed.gov/dpcletters/GEN0412.html)

**INDUSTRY NEWS**

**Kathleen Smith to Leave Education and the Workforce Committee for Private Sector**

The Education Finance Council (EFC) announced that Kathleen Smith will be the organization’s next president. Smith returns to EFC after serving as a professional staff member on the House Education and the Workforce Committee for the past three years. Previous President Mark Powden left to return to a position on the Senate staff.

On the Education and Workforce Committee staff, Smith worked directly with members of Congress in shaping education policy, including playing a lead role on several major pieces of bipartisan education legislation. Prior to her tenure on the Hill, Smith served as chief of staff and director of corporate communications for EFC. She also worked as the director of federal relations at the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency, as the director of communications and public relations for the Connecticut Student Loan Foundation, as assistant director of financial aid at D’Youville College of New York and as a program analyst at the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation.
IRS to Contract with Collections Agencies

Language that would have blocked the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) from contracting with private debt collection companies was removed from FY2005 omnibus spending legislation that the House and Senate passed on November 20.

The American Jobs Creation Act, passed earlier this year, authorizes the IRS to contract with collection agencies for tax collection. Previous versions of appropriations bills included provisions that prevented the IRS from implementing any such contracts. This was removed from the final omnibus bill.

Recent ACE and CEF Activity

The Committee for Education Funding (CEF) was active over the past two weeks lobbying Members of Congress to increase education funding in the FY2005 omnibus spending bill. CEF representative meet with staff in the offices of Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) and House Appropriations Committee member Roger Wicker (R-MS). Andrew Stringer represented COHEAO at a meeting with staff from Senator Hutchison (R-TX) as well. CEF also sent a letter to all Members of Congress opposing funding levels in the FY2005 omnibus.

With the FY2005 appropriations process over, CEF will transition its efforts to lobby for FY2006 education funding. Last week, CEF representatives meet with Kathy Stack, director of education issues at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), to discuss FY2006 appropriations.
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Register for the
COHEAO Teleconference to discuss
the Elections and How to Communicate with Congress
Tuesday, December 7, 2004
2:00 – 3:30 p.m. Eastern

COHEAO will hold a teleconference on December 7 from 2-3:30 p.m. eastern to discuss how to effectively communicate with Members of Congress and on how the recent elections will affect the Perkins Loan Program and higher education in general.

Prices for the COHEAO teleconference are:

**Members (primary or secondary):** No charge

**Non-Members:** $75

To register, please complete this form and fax it to 202-371-0197, or visit [www.coheao.org](http://www.coheao.org) and complete the online registration form. Payments can be made by credit card online at [www.coheao.org](http://www.coheao.org) or by check. Checks should be made payable to COHEAO, and mailed to: 1101 Vermont Ave., NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC, 20005. Please remember to include a copy of this form when payment is sent. If you have any questions, contact Andrew Stringer at 202-289-3903 or by email at astringer@wpllc.net. COHEAO’s Federal Tax ID number is 52-123-6537.

Name, Title, and Institution

Street Address

City, State, and Zip

Telephone, Fax, and Email

**COHEAO Member:** Y or N
Each year, COHEAO raises money for the COHEAO Scholarships that go annually to needy students attending member institutions. During this year’s Annual Conference, COHEAO will hold a silent auction to raise money for the scholarship program on Monday, January 31, 2005 at 6:00 pm.

We are writing to encourage your participation in COHEAO’s charity effort. Please consider helping in one of the following ways:

- Coming to our scholarship fundraiser and participating in the silent auction;
- Donating an item for the auction; or
- Making a financial contribution to the scholarship effort.

Gifts at last year’s auction included: a football signed by Joe Paterno; Waterford Crystal; various bottles of wine; clothing from member institutions; and several other wonderful gifts.

For ideas or suggestions of items to donate, please call Andrew Stringer at (202) 289-3900. Please make sure donations and/or contributions that are sent in advance arrive by Friday, January 28, 2005; last minute donations will also be collected at the meeting registration desk. Please address items for the silent auction to the attention of Andrew Stringer at 1101 Vermont Ave, NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC, 20005. Make checks payable to COHEAO.

We appreciate the work that you do for our nation’s students and we would welcome any support you might be able to offer. Thank you for joining COHEAO in our scholarship efforts.

The COHEAO Scholarship Committee
Register Today
for the
2005 COHEAO Annual Conference
January 30 - February 2
at the
Ritz-Carlton Pentagon City, Arlington, Virginia
THREE WAYS TO REGISTER NOW AVAILABLE
1. ONLINE at www.coheao.org
credit card payment available only online
2. By fax: 202-371-0197
3. By mail: COHEAO, 1101 Vermont Ave., NW, Suite 400,
Washington, DC, 20005

Name: ____________________________________________________________
Title: _____________________________________________________________
Organization: ______________________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________________________
City: ____________________________
State: _______ Zip: ______________
Email: ____________________________

Member $ 495  Non-Member $ 550

**Onsite Registration:**
$510 for COHEAO Members
$565 for Non-members

*Please send check or money order for the appropriate amount to*
COHEAO, 1101 Vermont Ave, NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC, 20005
OR REGISTER ONLINE TO PAY BY CREDIT CARD at www.coheao.org.

Hotel reservations should be made separately by calling the Ritz-Carlton Pentagon City at (703) 415-5000. To ensure that you receive the SPECIAL COHEAO ANNUAL CONFERENCE HOTEL ROOM RATE OF $195 for a single or double room call for reservations before January 5, 2005.

Refunds - Requests for refunds will be honored only if notification of cancellation is received five business days before the conference. Registrants who fail to cancel will not be refunded their registration fee. With at least ten business days notice, the full registration fee may be applied to a future COHEAO conference. A $50.00 administrative fee will be charged for all cancellations. No refund will be honored after the conference. Substitutions may be made if registrant cannot attend. Please notify COHEAO of substitutions by fax 202-371-0197; e-mail astringer@wpllc.net; or telephone 202-289-3910.
Some articles in this memorandum include links to Internet sites for the convenience of World Wide Web users. COHEAO is not responsible for the availability or content of these external sites, nor does COHEAO endorse, warrant or guarantee the information, services, or products described or offered at these other Internet sites.

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