

Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), National Policy Seminar (NPS) Report

March, 2-4, 2015, Washington D. C.

Unfortunately for the third year in a row rain, freezing rain, snow, and ice provided the unusually cold setting for the ACTE National Policy Seminar. Most attendees flew home Wednesday afternoon ahead of the Thursday, March 5th snow storm which shut down the federal government and all of Maryland once again.

With the agenda title, **Skills for the Hill**, Monday morning March 2nd started off with three advocacy breakout sessions to the 400 plus attendees. In the, Involving External Stakeholders, breakout the session emphasized using business and industry representatives and building community support to increase your advocacy impact by delivery of one clear message to policymakers and demonstrating large support for CTE. Carolyn Warner, Co-Chair, Arizona Skills Commission stated the Arizona Career and Technical Skills Assessment has already resulted in the industry-validated assessment and recognition of 52 of 71 specific career fields at the secondary level. Because of the Federal Carl Perkins Act skill assessment at the community college level is also being addressed. While proven technical skills are essential, they are not enough and the ability to communicate, collaborate, think, and demonstrate a work ethic that supports the goals and culture of the organization has resulted in Arizona adopting a nine standard, Arizona Essential Workplace Employability Skills matrix.

Ms. Warner stated there are 5 million open jobs in America with 6 million youth with no job skills.

Opening General Session

Washington Review "Something Old, Something New" began with a message from Le Ann Wilson, Executive Director ACTE. She invited everyone to come to the ACTE Career VISION conference November, 19-22, 2015 in New Orleans, reference www.careertechvisioin.com., early Bird registration by July 10, for the best ACTE member rate of \$395.

She also announced the featured CTE publication, Your First Year in CTE: 10 Things to Know, ACTE and NOCTI offer this book as a great resource for both new and veteran CTE teachers to "survive" and "thrive" in the CTE classroom. Members of ACTE price is \$9.95 at www.acteonline.org/shop or Amazon smile.

Keynote Speaker, was Carl Hulse, Chief Washington Correspondent, The New York Times, known as the "Mayor of Capitol Hill".

He emphasized the following:

The PSASA college student funding forms are being revised to a simpler format.

No Child Left Behind legislation revisions were pulled from the Republican bill in Congress leading to the signs of a poor climate of education bills this year in Congress.

Budget negotiations are increasingly more difficult issue within the republican and democrat priorities. Because the country is split with Democrats in costal and urban areas while the Republicans have many other strongholds in the mid-west, south, and other parts of the country, leading to very different views of government in the country leading to gridlock. Obama moved to the far left when the republicans won in 2014 causing more gridlock and refusal to compromise, in contrast to what Bill Clinton did in the past as he moved to the center to compromise when republicans won the mid-term elections.

The strong differences between Obama and Mc Connell and Boehner make it difficult for anyone to govern or get things past. The President using executive orders, powers, and actions at odds with Congress is unfortunately here to stay.

Perkins Funding and Federal Legislation

Making “Cents “of the Federal Funding Debate

For 2015 Perkins the status is the 1.18 current level funding with President Obama proposing no new formula funding increases for CTE Perkins even though in the Senate Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Subcommittee’s draft FY 2015 appropriations bill, Perkins State Grant funding was returned to its pre-sequestration level of \$1.23 billion and was supported by the CTE caucus. The President would change the Perkins formula funds to state grant proposals if he had his way but fortunately the strong bipartisan support and caucus members of both democrat and republican House and Senate representatives stop that from happening. We should thank them for their support and ask them to join the CTE caucus.

Nevertheless, funding for the Perkins Act and the high-quality programs it supports has not kept pace with growing demand, (Handout #1). As we went to the Hill we still ask the Congress members to support restoring funding back to the pre-sequestration limit of \$1.23 million.

The President wants to put any new CTE funding into his grant programs and new CTE Innovative Funds in its 2016 budget request like the proposed:

- \$200 million for Perkins; however, the additional funds would support the recently released American Technical Training Fund by providing competitive grants to “ support the development and operation of innovative, evidence-based job training programs in high demand fields that provide a path to the middle class for low income individuals”.
- \$100 million for apprenticeship grants to States to determine which licenses are need and which are not
- \$500 million for competitive Industry Credentials and Career Pathways Grants, including \$300 million specifically targeted at in-demand information technology jobs
- \$15 million increase for grants to States and partnerships of States where occupational licensing requirements create an unnecessary barrier to labor market entry

- \$37 million for the Workforce Data Quality Initiative
- A new \$125 competitive grant program to promote high school redesign focusing on STEM programs
- \$1.36 billion in mandatory funding for 2016 for the Americas College Promise, a \$60.3 billion investment over 10 years, which would provide free tuition and fees for the first two years of college

We will have to wait to see what happens in the appropriations process.

Joel Parker, Executive Director, Committee for Education Funding stated there is 70.7 billion in discretionary funding for the, Department of Education, of which Pell grants and other grants take up about 75% of funding.

Fortunately there are no across the board cuts in funding but there is a .01% funding cap which will limit increases in Perkins funds or likely a freeze in funding levels for 2015 and 2016 Perkins formula funds.

Non Defense Discretionary, funding about 12% of the overall budget does not look good in the future beyond 2016 with interest on the national debt and other areas growing. There could be cuts as much as 8.5% in office of education funding, 3% of the total budget which would potentially hurt Perkins formula funding in the future.

Overall 2015 budget is:

- Interest on the debt 6%,
- Social Security 24%,
- Discretionary Defense 15%,
- Non Defense Discretionary 12% including - Department of Education 3%,
- Medicare 14%,
- Medicaid 9%, and
- Other mandatory 17%.

In general the Republicans want to reduce revenue increases but the Democrats are opposed to entitlement cuts leaving little room for funds to be cut. Education and other Non Defense programs have borne the brunt of the cuts.

Jennifer Castagna, Senior Federal Policy Analyst, Education Council, LLC says we need to fight for the largest funding increase in the Department of Education, and Labor and Health besides increases in CTE funding.

Angela Hanks, Senior Federal Policy Analyst, National Skills Coalition says the new Workforce Investment Act passed with bipartisan support and \$ 21 million of the president priorities.

The only hope for increased 2015 education funding is that the Republicans in Congress want to increase Defense spending and if so then funding might increase in Non Defense discretionary funding.

Nationwide the Perkins formula nationwide overall is 60% for secondary and 40% for post secondary education as states determine their allocations.

The main feeling in Congress is that 12% of the total budget for Non Defense Discretionary spending will be the same or less in the future. They believe education funding is mostly a state responsibility and is a much higher percentage of the state budget.

Unfortunately Perkins funding has not kept pace with the needs of students, programs and their communities. (Handout #2) Building Pathways to Success

Policy Breakout Sessions

Long overdue for reauthorization the following Acts are strong and essential partners with Career and Technical Education as we urge Congress members to pass both of them, to incorporate the following recommendations and priorities during Hill visits. Currently at impasse in Congress but there are hopes it still can be passed.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Handout #3)

Priority #1: Incorporate Career Readiness

Priority#2: Support Secondary School Reform by Strengthening the Integration of Academics and CTE

Priority#3: Increase Support for Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling

Priority#4: Evaluate Data Collection Requirements to Reduce Burden and Inshore Program Integrity

Career Readiness Act of 2015 or S. 478 is being proposed to strengthen career readiness systems, CTE to the rescue! National Interest in CTE

High profile national leaders in organizations like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Council of Chief School Officers, Achieve, and American Federation of Teachers have taken a strong interest in CTE and Its role in economic development.

CTE is starting to be seen as a solution to many of the issues facing our educational and workforce development systems. However, with this recognition comes an increased expectation for high quality CTE.

Capitol Hill Visit

Starting off the second part of the morning of day two includes congressional staff and key members of Congress sharing their thoughts on the future of CTE policy. But this day brought increased security at the United States Capitol Visitor Ctr., Congressional Auditorium as Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, was giving his special presentation to members of Congress the same time we were attending the Capitol Visitor Center.

Sen. Tim Kane (D-VA) Co-chair, Senate CTE Caucus addressed the group and sees CTE coming back with a vengeance. He feels CTE informs and connects with academics and academics connect with CTE. There is strong bipartisan interest and support in Congress for CTE as policy advisers promoted aligning state standards, college and career readiness, innovative CTE programs, secondary and postsecondary connections, and aligning CTE with job opportunities.

Members of Congress could not join us because of Netanyahu's speech but policymaker of the year awards were given to:

The Hon. Tim Kane (D-VA), Co-chair, Senate CTE Caucus

The Hon. Rob Portman (R-OH), Co-chair Senate CTE Caucus

Building our Next Perkins Act

The Perkins reauthorization act is not an immediate priority with a focus on the ESSA act. However the reauthorization priorities (Handout # 5)

- are:
1. Redefine the federal role in CTE
 2. Target Expenditures
 3. Define Program Quality Elements
 4. Ensure Relevant and Consistent Data
 5. Offer Incentives for Innovation
 6. Provide the Infrastructure to Support the System

Alisha Hyslop, Director of Public Policy, ACTE moderated interactive sessions gathering input from small-group teams of all attendees.

Other confirmed priorities for the Perkins reauthorization include:

- labor market support and private/public partnership to meet the needs of business and industry

- secondary and postsecondary partnerships
- performance and accountability
- need common language and definitions for CTE across states and the nation
- need a balance between local workforce needs and large national portable skill credentials
- challenged to create the balance between flexibility and the current structure of successful CTE
- high quality frameworks for all Perkins programs
- expanding opportunities for all students to work with emerging technologies
- demand site major industry license and certification be a part of requirements

Closing General Session

Administration Policies and Priorities - An Update on CTE -Related Activities

Portia Wu, Assistant Secretary, Employment and Training Administration, US Department of Labor –
 Talked about the new Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WOIA) with the new letter O is for opportunity. Their version is to develop strong regional economic areas where people want to live and work through education systems, workforce systems and customer service. Ways in which the workplace and lifelong learners can be served in a comprehensive system.

Johan Uvin, Acting Assistant Secretary, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, U. S. Department of Education - High school graduation rate is 81% with dropout rates markedly lower. Goal is to serve underserved populations. With the presidents Americans College Promise for two-year colleges in March 2016 when governors report their plans.

At www.regulations.gov post secondary education is named as a new partner, with continued LEA's secondary transition services throughout the school year.

- Career pathways our up scaling on front-line workers
- Apprenticeships with the Department of Labor are working with community colleges to move forward. Example, high school CTE students are first in line for post- secondary apprenticeships, age requirements can be an issue.

Paige Shevlin, Special Assistant to the President for Economic Policy, National Economic Council - the president and vice president are putting emphasis on training and economic growth. Strong employer engagement like externships for teachers linking employer with the curriculum, regional partnerships and the belief consumers make better choices for training programs.

The White House perspective on the WOIA act is:

- Measuring what matters - earnings and employment
- Employer engagement - serving employers effectively as good partnerships
- Transparency scorecards for training advisers view their role as serving 75% disconnected groups

- Establish a \$200 million grant for American Technical Training Program to award grants to programs for startup or expansion of successful job-training programs
- Work with industry for high-growth job opportunities, example: UPS - driver training program with a local community college
- Technology hiring - create entrance to information technology jobs, one half-million current openings, especially for women and minorities

Final Thoughts and Updates

Looking ahead to future ACTE conferences I reached out to the ACTE planning staff and found out the next three years of ACTE Career Tech Visions Conference series are:

- Career Tech Visions 2015, New Orleans, Nov. 19-12, 2015, register at www.Careertechvision.com
- Career Tech Visions 2016 ,Las Vegas, Nov.30 – Dec.3, 2016
- Career Tech Visions 2017 Nashville, Dec.6 -9, 2017
- 2015 OCATE Annual Conference, April 8, 2015

As the House and Senate Caucus for CTE expands please reach out to your House and Senate representatives and ask them to become a member if they already are not, check the ACTE website for members list, they are our voice for CTE on Capitol Hill. Invite your House or Senate representative to your school for a visit or invited them to use your school for local meetings and connections to business and industry.

The name of the game by the Presidents theme is promoting more grants and funds connecting partnerships between business and industry, secondary and postsecondary educators, and career and technical education and the labor market. So reach out to share the good things your schools, CTE students and programs are doing, continue promoting credential and licensure connections, address local employment needs and strengthen your postsecondary partnerships.

Keep up with the latest news at the a CTE website and in Techniques Magazine, recognize your deserving CTE professionals by nominating them for a CTE regional or national awards as well as ILS awards at www.lotambdaSigma.com website. We are all connected and reaching out for support in making new partnerships is essential for growth and survival.

Hope to see you and New Orleans and thanks for all you do.

Respectfully submitted, Rhonda Hoyman, ILS Grand Chapter Policy Seminar representative and President