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*The Education Report*, a weekly publication of WPLL, provides an executive summary of public policy issues affecting American education. **Please use the bookmarks below to navigate to your area of interest:**

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## 1. Budget and Appropriations

The Republican-led House of Representatives made good on what they viewed as a major campaign promise this week—repeal of the Affordable Healthcare Act. Though the tone of the debate was more circumspect than anticipated, the intensity of the political and policy viewpoints voiced during the debate made clear the deep difference between the parties. Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) reiterated his pledge that the Senate will not take up the healthcare repeal bill, leaving many wondering what impact the House vote will have. Republicans vowed to continue their fight over healthcare policy in the budget and appropriations process, blocking funding for any initiative authorized by the new law.

The next order of business in the House will be reducing both the deficit and annual government spending. A resolution was introduced in the House this week that supports cutting spending in the FY 2011 budget—a major piece of unfinished business before the new Congress—back to FY 2008 levels. Though a resolution has no force of law, it does signal the seriousness of the Republican commitment to cut federal investments in all domestic areas—most particularly education. The resolution, known as HR 38, if implemented would result in a cut of \$9.42 billion for the Department of Education alone.

The decision on spending for FY 2011, however, will not be made by the House alone. The White House and the Democratic majority in the Senate are unlikely to agree to such dramatic cuts in critical domestic programs. The Senate returns to Washington next week, in time for the President’s State of the Union address on Tuesday. That will mark the true start of the legislative season, as he will outline his goals and priorities for the first session of the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress. Following that address, work will begin in earnest to finalize a budget for the government for the remaining months of FY 2011. At this point, it appears that a continuing resolution (CR) freezing all funding at last year’s level is the best outcome education advocates can hope for.

And even that result—a cut of \$40 billion over all government agencies—will be a hard fought victory.

Rumors have circulated all week that the President in his State of the Union speech will urge the Congress to take up the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) this year, linking school reform and improvement to economic recovery. An announcement by Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA) that he intends to bring a bill up for a vote in April, and comments from House Education and the Workforce Committee Chairman John Kline (R-MN) that ESEA is on the agenda, improve the likelihood that action might actually be taken sometime this year or next. Maybe.

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## **2. In Brief**

### **CAP LAUNCHES REPORT ON EDUCATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY**

On Wednesday, John Podesta, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Center for American Progress (CAP) convened an event to release a new report titled, “Return on Educational Investment: A District-by-District Evaluation of U.S. Educational Productivity.” Podesta explained that during this time of economic hardship, and while K-12 budgets are being cut, it is imperative that states, districts and schools learn how to spend funds effectively because simply spending more money does not guarantee improved outcomes. Podesta also stressed that CAP is not encouraging less spending on education, however CAP supports a “bigger bang for each buck.” Ulrich Boser, Senior Fellow at CAP, presented the report’s findings and explained how to navigate the accompanying interactive website. The report relies on 2007-08 spending data in relation to reading and math proficiency rates in 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade and also controls for many factors that the districts do not control, including special education populations. For the past ten years, Boser explained, schools have been implementing standards based reform, however there have been very few measures of productivity. CAP aims for this project to start a dialogue about productivity; identify districts that exemplify doing more with less; and to urge districts to pursue, “create and sustain educational efficiencies.” Findings of the report include: levels of efficiency vary greatly within states and across the nation; more than one million students are attending schools in highly inefficient districts; schools with high expenditures per student are often inefficient; and highly productive districts tend to be focused on improving student outcomes rather than administration. Additionally, it was found that only Florida and Texas conduct annual school-level productivity surveys that disclose how effectively funds are spent locally, highlighting the troubling absence of productivity in many conversations when it is clearly key to understanding the success of a school. The report also offers recommendations—lawmakers should emphasize educational efficiency; high quality management systems should be implemented within districts; and districts should track information on educational outcomes and finance to create strong data. The event also featured an expert panel who discussed the importance of measuring productivity and some of the challenges associated. Jim Shelton, Assistant Deputy Secretary for Innovation and Improvement at the U.S. Department of Education (ED), explained that the entire education pipeline, from early education through post-secondary education, needs to learn to “educate better,” and ED is aiming to “create the context to move solutions forward.” For more information and to download the report, visit <http://www.americanprogress.org/events/2011/01/district.html>.

### **HIGH PRAISE FOR TAP SYSTEM OF EVALUATION**

On Wednesday, the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) held an event at the National Press Club to release its new publication titled, “More than Measurement: The TAP

System’s Lessons Learned for Designing Better Teacher Evaluation Systems.” With teacher quality and teacher evaluation a central topic in all discussions regarding education reform, the release of this paper offers policymakers and practitioners an opportunity to understand the lessons learned from the TAP system. TAP was originally developed in 2000 by the Milken Family Foundation and is described as “the longest sustained and most successful effort to radically transform teacher evaluation using multiple measures, including student achievement gains, in the United States today.” Carmel Martin, Assistant Secretary for Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development at the Department of Education (ED), stated that she has been “a fan for years” and declared that “More than Measurement” will be a “must read” at ED. Specifically, Martin pointed out that TAP’s comprehensive evaluation system is an effective way to improve teaching and schools. Now run by NIET, the program exists in 15 states, 250 schools and serves over 10,000 teachers and 100,000 students across the country, thus proving, according to Martin, the TAP system is scalable. In addition, Martin highlighted the most important “lessons learned” from the last decade of work on teacher evaluation, which she believes will have the most impact on federal policy. This includes: 1) using multiple, rigorous and meaningful measures, which includes more than student achievement gains, to evaluate teachers; 2) using an evaluation system to support teachers and not just as a way to identify ineffective instructors; 3) implementing quality control and external technical assistance to support schools as they implement new evaluation systems; and 4) including teachers and school leaders in the development of the evaluation system as well as using master teachers and leaders as evaluators and coaches. For more information about this report, go to: [www.tapsystem.org](http://www.tapsystem.org).

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### **3. New Publications**

“2010 Brown Center Report on American Education: How Well Are American Students Learning” (January 2011)

[http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2011/0111\\_naep\\_loveless/0111\\_naep\\_loveless.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2011/0111_naep_loveless/0111_naep_loveless.pdf)

“Return on Educational Investment” A District-by-District Evaluation of U.S. Educational Productivity” (January 2011)

<http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/01/pdf/dwwroi.pdf>

“More than Measurement: The TAP System’s Lessons Learned for Designing Better Teacher Evaluation Systems” (January 2011) [http://www.tapsystem.org/publications/eval\\_lessons.pdf](http://www.tapsystem.org/publications/eval_lessons.pdf)

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### **4. In the News**

“Christie Says 23 Schools Get Charters” New York Times (1/18/11)

[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/19/education/19christie.html?\\_r=1&hpw](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/19/education/19christie.html?_r=1&hpw)

“Mrs. Obama Urges Students to Study Abroad” CNN (1/19/11)

<http://whitehouse.blogs.cnn.com/2011/01/19/mrs-obama-urges-students-to-study-abroad/>

“Can Obama, Congress Meet Minds to Revamp No Child Left Behind?” Christian Science Monitor (1/20/11) <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Education/2011/0120/Can-Obama-Congress-meet-minds-to-revamp-No-Child-Left-Behind>

“Rethinking Evaluations When Almost Every Teacher Gets an ‘A’” New York Times (1/20/11)  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/21/education/21bcteachers.html?\\_r=1&ref=education](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/21/education/21bcteachers.html?_r=1&ref=education)

“In Alexandria, Fight Over Additional Class Time Mirrors National Debate” Washington Post (1/20/11) <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/01/19/AR2011011907524.html?nav=mbot&sid=ST2011011908180>

“Governors Eye Greater Control Over Education” Education Week (1/21/11)  
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/01/20/18control.h30.html?tkn=ZPPFKVDY3QTPaSxV9dgh/ByN3+nwPZyxmrS4&cmp=clp-edweek>

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## 5. About WPLLC

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