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**Capital Update**
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**Checking Your Federal Advocacy To-Do List**

Congress returned from the August break this week with several highprofile items on the September agenda, including the first-ever papal address to a joint session of Congress. There are two legislative items that need the immediate attention of gifted education advocates.

**Funding for Fiscal Year 2016 - Javits**

You will, undoubtedly, read and hear about a possible government shutdown as the end of the fiscal year nears (Sept. 30) without Congressional action on the spending bills that fund government agencies and programs. Although Congressional leaders have sworn off legislating by crisis, we can expect some theatrics and then a short-term bill to continue federal funding at current levels until further details can be worked out.

The Javits Gifted and Talented Students program is currently funded at $10 million and must be re-funded each year. For fiscal year 2016, the Senate appropriations committee approved $11 million for the Javits program; however, the House eliminated the program.

This is **advocacy item #1**: The House Labor/HHS/Education appropriations subcommittee needs to hear from advocates to continue funding for the Javits Gifted and Talented Students program in fiscal year 2016. If your Representative is NOT a member of the subcommittee, ask your Representative to tell subcommittee leaders that he/she supports continued funding for the Javits program in FY 2016. Each Representative has an online email form to use for your message.

**Gifted Students in ESEA**

Recall that both the House and Senate passed separate versions of a bill to overhaul the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA; also known as No Child Left Behind), the federal umbrella law for PK-12 education. The Senate bill (S.1177) includes key portions of the TALENT Act – such as requiring state Title II professional development plans to include information about how the state will improve the skills of teachers, principals, and other school leaders in identifying gifted and talented students and providing instruction based on their specific learning needs. In addition to retaining the Javits program, the Senate bill also includes a requirement that state
report cards provide disaggregated student achievement data at each achievement level, which allows educators and the public to see which groups of students are achieving at the highest level. The House bill (H.R. 5) includes none of the TALENT Act provisions and does not include the Javits program.

The two bills must now be negotiated into a single version that can be approved by the House and Senate and sent to the White House for the president’s signature. Leaders from the House and Senate committees that handle education are managing the negotiations. Which brings us to to-do item #2: If your Representative or Senator serves on either of the committees that handle education, please contact him or her/them, urging that the gifted and talented education provisions from S.1177 be included in the final version of ESEA. As above, if your representatives in Congress do NOT serve on the education committees, contact them and ask them to convey your request to the appropriate committee leaders.

When you contact your Representative and Senators, please be sure to include a few words about why it is important to fund the Javits program (e.g., because the research funded through the Javits grants contributes to best classroom practices in identifying and serving underrepresented student populations; the state grants support state needs and priorities regarding serving gifted learners). It is also important to emphasize that federal leadership is needed if the nation is to better meet the needs of all students, including gifted and highpotential learners.

Your elected representatives need to hear from you; please reach out to them soon.