

Legislative Update



NWP Receives Increase in Federal Funding

The National Writing Project's present situation in Washington, D.C., can be likened to the student who discovers he is getting good grades in his classes: while that student can be pleased with the success he's had so far, he still has a lot of work ahead of him to continue doing well.

Bearing that in mind, things are going well for the writing project in Washington, D.C. Following months of negotiation, Congress passed two bills of great significance to NWP in December. By overwhelming majorities, the House and Senate approved "No Child Left Behind," Congress' long-awaited elementary and secondary education reauthorization bill (ESEA), and the fiscal year 2002 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill. Both hold good news for NWP.

NWP is reauthorized for six years under the new ESEA bill, meaning the project should remain eligible to receive federal funding through fiscal year 2007. Further, NWP received a \$14 million appropriation as part of the fiscal year 2002 education spending package. This marks the sixth straight year that the organization has received an increase in funding from the federal government. President Bush is

expected to sign both bills into law in January.

"This is just fabulous news," said NWP Executive Director Richard Sterling. "Every writing project teacher, director, and co-director in the country deserves credit. The impact writing project sites and teachers are having in classrooms nationwide is clearly being recognized by our leaders in Washington, D.C."

As in years past, the writing project enjoyed strong bipartisan backing in both chambers of Congress this year, with Sen. Thad Cochran (R-MS), Rep. George Miller (D-CA), and Rep. Roger Wicker (R-MS) providing particularly crucial support. Cochran and Miller have formed the

backbone of NWP support on Capitol Hill since 1991, the first year the project received federal funding.

Getting back to the analogy of the initially successful student, NWP still has a lot of work ahead, and, as we have learned over the years, we can never afford to rest on our collective laurels. Toward that end, NWP will host its annual spring meeting in Washington, D.C., on April 11-12, 2002. And despite the success the writing project has enjoyed on Capitol Hill recently, it is still very important for site leaders and teachers to come to Washington, D.C., to educate their elected officials about the

important role of the writing project in their local communities. The federal government is expected to run a budget deficit in fiscal year 2002, and many in the capitol are already predicting calls for federal cutbacks next fiscal year. In these times of shifting national concerns, we need to remind legislators of the need to maintain education as a top priority.

If you have questions regarding the federal funding of NWP, please contact Andy Bradshaw at abradshaw@writingproject.org.



The Capitol Building in springtime.