



The Washington Flyer
February 18, 2011

No individual has any right to come into the world and go out of it without leaving something behind.
George Washington Carver

President's 2012 Budget Proposal

This week President Obama released his highly anticipated budget proposal for fiscal year 2012. Although not usually voted on by Congress, the President's budget demonstrates his legislative and economic priorities to Congress. His proposal has been met with [widespread skepticism](#) about the actual savings it is purported to represent. On its face, the 3.7 trillion budget calls for spending in [excess](#) of anticipated revenue over the next decade. Budget Committee Chairman Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) has been a vocal opponent of the President's budget saying that it is a "failure to show leadership" and demonstrate a true commitment to reducing the ballooning deficit. [Main priorities](#) of the President's proposed budget are education, innovation, and infrastructure. In conjunction with the budget release, the Department of Education held a conference on Monday highlighting changes and answering questions from the education community. In its budget booklet, the department outlined its expansive, 77 billion dollar agenda goals: recognizing and awarding student academic growth, focusing on college readiness, hiring and supporting great faculty members, and giving "more intensive" support to underperforming students in low income areas.

Department of Education Budget Highlights

In the [budget proposal](#) for education, the reauthorization of [ESEA](#) (Elementary and Secondary Education Act) is a main priority. Other priorities include rewarding excellence and innovation, supporting early learning, creating faculty improvement incentives, meeting the full range of student needs, and ensuring access to continued education. While most would agree that these are laudable goals, Education Committee Chairman Rep. John Kline's assertion that "since 1980 there has been a 425% increase in education spending but no improvement" illustrates the fact that reform is [not simply a matter of increased spending](#). First, the Race to the Top program (central component of the President's strategy) would receive an additional 900 million dollars in funding to be used for competitive grants to districts, expanding to the local level the original Race to the Top, which awarded competitive grants on the state level. Several groups have questioned whether this approach will widen the gap between underperforming institutions and top tier schools. Secondly, over 3 billion dollars would be invested in programs that promote the training, recruiting and retention of educators, especially in the areas of math and science which frequently present a staffing challenge. Thirdly, the Administration believes that the prevalence of "dropout factories" in low income communities is a direct result of negative environments. Therefore, the budget includes a 1.5 billion dollar proposal to establish a 21st Century Community Learning Center program, and 150 million dollars for "Promise Neighborhoods" to increase the opportunities for at-risk youth to avoid the poverty cycle. These plans call for the extension of the school day—before and after school programs, longer school days, summer enrichment programs, and using school facilities as community resource centers. One concern about these programs is the appropriating of millions of dollars for home visitation programs to support the government's early learning initiative. The budget includes 350 million dollars to establish an Early Learning Challenge Fund, designed to award competitive grants to states which establish early learning programs for children from birth to kindergarten. Although student health and safety and success should always be a priority, a holistic approach that seeks to educate, and some would argue, indoctrinate students year-round represents an overreach by the federal government. This also brings into question the role parents should play in their child's upbringing and the seeming attempt to relieve them of their God-given responsibility.

Conservative Political Action Conference Draws Attention

Over 11,000 people attended the annual Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) held in Washington, DC, on February 10-12, 2011. Traditionally, CPAC, which is organized by the American Conservative Union (ACU), has adhered to three central tenants of the conservative movement: economic freedom, national defense, and social conservatism. This year, several influential conservative organizations (Family Research Council, Concerned Women for America, Liberty Council, The Heritage Foundation, Media Research Center, National Organization for Marriage) withdrew from participating in the event, citing the inclusion of certain [groups](#) and a departure from the event's [traditional values](#). Several previously banned groups (Muslims for America, John Birch Society, Our America, GOProud) were allowed to join the planning committee, as well as have booths and distribute material espousing their particular viewpoints which included the redefinition of marriage, expansion of homosexual rights, legalization of marijuana, and [conspiracy theories](#) that question commonly accepted events in American history. A coalition of evangelical leaders and pastors [sent a memo](#) to the ACU Board expressing their disapproval of the inclusion of these groups. Despite this controversy, over a dozen potential Republican presidential hopefuls gave speeches on a variety of themes. One recurring theme was the highlighting of the concept of belief in American exceptionalism. Many tributes were made to President Ronald Reagan commemorating his place in the conservative movement and his 100th birthday. The majority of the attendees were college students which many view as a positive sign for the continuance of the conservative movement. The numerous panels, booths, media presentations, and [speeches](#) covered a wide array of differing views within the conservative movement. Typically, potential candidates use the receptiveness of the audience to test drive their message and gauge the viability of a bid to become President of the United States. Rep. Ron Paul, former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, and New Jersey Governor Chris Christie received the most votes in the Presidential contender straw poll. While CPAC was hailed as an organizational success by its sponsors, the Republican Presidential frontrunner has yet to be determined, and pundits question what the widening divide over social issues highlighted by CPAC will mean for the future of conservatism.

Operation Ultrasound

Focus on the Family has partnered with crisis pregnancy centers nationwide to raise funds for the purchase of ultrasound machines for their facilities. Ultrasound machines (sonograms) are used to detect potential problems in the womb, as well as allow a woman to see the image of her unborn child in motion. Ultrasound machines are prohibitively expensive (\$30,000-150,000) for many counseling centers; but because of this effort, over 500 machines have been purchased to date. This program was started in 2004 in response to the many grieving women who have contacted Focus on the Family with regret about their decision. [Operation Ultrasound](#) was launched to “empower women with the information they need to make informed decisions.” The combination of counseling and the ultrasound has increased the percentage of women who decide to carry babies to term instead of having an abortion. According to estimates gathered by participating clinics, approximately 90,000 babies have been saved through this effort.

In Case You Missed It:

[Weekly Market Update](#) provided by Jeff Beach of the [AACCS Investment Team at Merrill Lynch](#)

[D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Update](#)

[H.R. 358 - Protect Life Act Update](#)

[Hawaii Senate Passes Same-Sex Civil Unions Bill](#)

Editor: Maureen Wiebe
Staff Writer: Courtney Holloway

Legislative Office, 119 C Street SE, Washington, DC 20003
Phone: 202.547.2991 • Fax: 202.547.2992