

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS COMMITTEE NEWS



Greetings from Gloria Jean,
NYSSCA's Government Relations Committee Chairperson

What's happening in Albany and Washington DC? The future of our profession and our ability to provide our service to the students of New York State is never to be taken for granted. Here are bills to be aware of (each title links to a web-page with more information):

[Blueprint for Education:](#) On March 13, 2010, the Obama administration released its blueprint for revising the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which would ask states to adopt college- and career-ready standards and reward schools for producing dramatic gains in student achievement. The proposal challenges the nation to embrace educational standards that would put America on a path to global leadership. The blueprint provides incentives for states to adopt academic standards that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and create accountability systems that measure student growth toward meeting the goal that all children graduate and succeed in college.

[Licensure of Mental Health Counselors:](#) The NYS Board of Regents Professional Practice Committee will discuss proposed amendments to the regulations for the licensure of mental health counselors, marriage and family therapists, creative arts therapists and psychoanalysts. A summary of the proposed amendments was published in the State Register on March 31, 2010. Comments should be submitted to Frank Muñoz, Deputy Commissioner for the Professions, NYSED, 89 Washington Avenue, 2M, Albany, New York 12234 or opdepcom@mail.nysed.gov by May 15, 2010. School counselors are *not* included in the regulation's definition of mental health counselor.

[Keep Our Educators Working Act \(S3206\):](#) US Senator Tom Harkin from Iowa, Chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and of the Senate Appropriations panel that funds education initiatives, introduced the Keep Our Educators Working Act in Washington on April 14, 2010. The bill, co-sponsored by NY Senator Kristen Gillibrand as well as many others, would create a \$23 billion Education Jobs Fund to help keep teachers, principals, librarians and other school personnel, including school counselors, on the job as states face crippling budget shortfalls.

[Pathways to College Act \(S1129/HR2579\):](#) US Senator Dick Durbin from Illinois proposed the Pathways to College Act to improve college-going rates of the neediest students through investment in college counseling, and focusing on the role of the school counselor in student achievement and college access. It is based in part from conclusions from the report from the Consortium on Chicago School Research, "[From High School to the Future: Potholes on the Road to College.](#)" The bill would provide competitive 5-year grants to high need school districts for the purpose of improving college going rates of all students. Eligible grant recipients would be required to use grant funds to provide the following:

- Professional development for high school counselors in postsecondary advising
- One on one meetings with a school counselor to develop a postsecondary plan for every student
- Information for all students and their families on the college application process, paying for college, and preparing for college
- Development of a school-wide plan to increase college-going culture in the school

FAFSA Completion Project: April 13, 2010, the U.S. Department of Education's Federal Student Aid (FSA) office, in response to concerns of secondary school counselors looking for assistance in determining which of their students have submitted a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for the upcoming school year, is establishing a process which would allow a limited number of secondary schools and local educational agencies (LEAs) to obtain FAFSA submission information for their students. Because of limited resources for the first phase of this effort this year, no more than 20 entities will be able to participate in this process. This information could help in implementing targeted outreach efforts to assist students and families who have not yet submitted a FAFSA, or who's submitted FAFSA may be incomplete.

School Counselors not included as Medicare Providers: HR 4872: On March 30th The Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act was signed into law by President Obama. While language adding counselors to the list of Medicare providers made it through a preliminary vote in the House Budget Committee, it didn't survive compromise with the Senate in the Rules Committee, thus ending its chance for inclusion in the final package.

Did you know? The US Department of Education awards grants annually for the development of elementary and secondary school counseling programs. Projects should: (1) use a developmental, preventive approach, (2) expand the inventory of effective counseling programs, (3) include in-service training, and (4) involve parents and community groups. The 2010 deadline was February 26th. Forty-four grant recipients averaging awards of \$350,000 will be selected from the applicants. Award recipients in New York State for 2009 were Bolivar-Richburg CSD (\$357,488 - Elementary), Buffalo Board of Education (\$400,000 – Elementary), Freeport Public Schools (\$378,810 – Elementary), Green Tech High School Charter (\$388,600 – Secondary), Lyndonville CSD (\$163,508 - Elementary), NYC Department of Education (\$400,000 – Elementary/\$399,001 - Secondary), Port Byron SD (\$362,850 - Elementary), Syracuse City SD (\$396,913 - Elementary), and Utica City Schools (\$215,641 – Elementary).