

Federal Relations Report October, 2013

Lynn Wolf
NDAESP Federal Relations
lynn_wolf@bismarckschools.org

Early in September, I received an email from one of Senator Heitkamp's staffers asking if the Senator could stop by Sunrise for breakfast with some of our students and visit with several administrators regarding the child nutrition program that is part of the United States Department of Agriculture farm program. The farm program will be coming up for a vote in the Senate in the next month or so.

On September 16, the Senator had breakfast with our students. She also took part in a round table discussion of the child nutrition program in schools with food service administrators from Mandan; the Youth Correctional Center; and Bismarck; child nutrition representatives from DPI; Bismarck Superintendent Tamara Uselman; Superintendent of Public Instruction, Kirsten Baesler; Dave Steckler and me.

Senator Heitkamp was seeking information on how the regulations put in place last year by the USDA. During the discussion, Senator Heitkamp asked many questions on the regulations to better understand the implications of the rules put in place in order to understand how the regulations affect the students in North Dakota and the food service activities at different institutions.

I appreciated the Senator's work to understand the complex issues she faces as part of her work in Washington. In listening to constituent's views on the USDA regulations she demonstrated her desire to serve the people of the state.

Even a non-news junkie has witnessed over the past few weeks the "shut down of the government." Non-essential personnel have been furloughed and various governmental functions/activities had come to a halt. Actually, approximately 17% of the government is shut down. Programs and activities carried out with mandatory spending and those that have already been funded (such as certain contracts and grant activities funded under the previous years' appropriations) will continue. Major K-12 state formula programs are forward-funded (meaning the funding for a fiscal year is provided to states in July of that fiscal year). In addition, a portion of this same funding is advance funded, which means it becomes available to states three months later in October – and we know that the checks for Title I were already cut by the Department of Education this year. However, Head Start and Impact Aid are adversely affected by the shutdown at this time as they are funded by current-year appropriations. Competitively-awarded programs will be stalled, as will the review of state ESEA waiver applications and exemptions.

Activities that, if suspended, would imminently threaten the safety of human life or the protection of property or would infringe upon the constitutional responsibilities of the President, will continue. Lastly, individual agencies must determine which employees are necessary to carry out this limited set of programs and functions.

We've been informed by the national media how the national parks, memorials and museums have been closed and barricaded to prevent the public from entering. A private citizen is even mowing the lawn of the Lincoln and Vietnam Memorials. Websites – even those that don't need constant supervision – have been shut down. I can't even get the right time (www.time.gov) in order to set my grandfather's clock.



Students at Sunrise Elementary School enjoy breakfast with Senator Heitkamp on September 16, 2013.