

Federal Relations Report February, 2014

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This will be the second year the National Leadership Conference will be held in conjunction with the Federal Relations Conference. The conference will be held February 23-26 in Arlington, VA. President Jason Hornbacher, President Elect Audrey Faul, NDAESP State Representative David Steckler, State Editor David Hanson and I will be attending the NAESP Leadership Conference. As part of the conference, we will be visiting with the North Dakota delegation in their offices asking for their consideration to support NAESP backed legislation.

Of course the big news for most of North Dakota is the passage of the Farm bill earlier this week. The bill has been forwarded to President Obama for his signature.

In his State of the Union address, the President called for universal prekindergarten education for all four year olds, and for Congress to act on proposals such as *Strong Start for America's Children Act of 2013* a bill that was introduced in Congress last year.

Last week, House Education and the Workforce Committee Chairman John Kline (R-MN) announced a full committee hearing to discuss early childhood education and care programs. He said, "The president and I agree more can be done to help kids get an early start on the path to success," Chairman Kline said. "However, with 45 federal programs tied to early childhood development and a \$13 billion annual taxpayer investment, we owe it to the American people to examine the strengths and weaknesses of current initiatives before crafting new ones. Next week's hearing will provide an opportunity to come together to discuss ways we can ensure existing federal efforts to support our youngest children and their families are working effectively and getting positive results."

On Thursday of this week, the US Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions will be holding a hearing on a bill supporting Children and Families through Investments in High-Quality Early Education.

It appears that the President, Senate and House are working on early education issues and may be moving towards a reauthorization of ESEA.

A couple of other interesting happenings in Washington include:

- Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) has introduced a school choice bill, the *Scholarship for Kids Act of 2014* to provide a scholarship program for low-income students. It will also consolidate 80 federal education programs (keeping intact school lunch programs and educational research funding) into one \$24 billion funding stream.
- Senator Pat Roberts (R-KS) has introduced the *Learning Opportunities Created at the Local (LOCAL) Level Act*. The legislation would "forbid the federal government from intervening in a state's education standards, curricula, and assessments through the use of incentives, mandates, grants, waivers or any other form of manipulation."

It's always interesting to tune into the things that are happening in Washington, but, it is more important to contact Senator Hoeven, Senator Heidkamp and Representative Cramer's offices if you feel strongly about any issue.