

New Directions



The 110th U.S. Congress commenced on January 4, 2007, and the historic November elections flipped control of both the House and Senate to the Democrats and brought the nation its first female Speaker of the House. Democrats surged to victory vowing to clean up Washington, and uniting behind an ambitious 100-hour agenda.

But more important to ISTE members is what the new Congress will mean for education technology policy. Many of the key ed tech policy issues will be the same as in the last Congress (EETT Funding and E-Rate); however, the new Congressional lineup comprises stronger supporters for ISTE policy positions. For example, Representative Joe Barton (R-TX), the former chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which has jurisdiction over E-Rate, is a fierce opponent of the program. He is being replaced at the helm of the committee by John Dingell (D-MI), who has been a strong supporter of the E-Rate program, and we expect his support to continue in this leadership position. On the funding front, although there is no magic wand to wave to eradicate the nation's budget deficit, the new Democratic leadership will be more committed to dedicating funds for social spending, including education technology.

The new Congress will have to grapple with spending bills for both FY 07 and FY 08, as the previous Congress adjourned without passing an FY 07 education funding bill. We anticipate that for FY 07, the Enhancing Education Through Technology program will be funded at \$272 million, the same level as FY 06, and certainly a significant victory over the zero amount proposed

in President Bush's FY 07 budget. ISTE will urge Congress to restore funding for EETT to \$700 million for FY 08. After several years of significant funding cuts, this program must be returned to a robust funding level to support the goals of No Child Left Behind and to ensure our students have the skills to compete in today's workplace.

The NCLB legislation was signed into law by President Bush in 2001, and has a five-year authorization, which means that it was due for reauthorization in 2006. The new Congress is off to a fast start, will hold hearings, and committee staff are already drafting legislation to make changes to the current law. ISTE is working in collaboration with other education technology organizations to develop a strong set of legislative recommendations that will strengthen the technology components of the new K-12 legislation. Although both the House and Senate are already working on the legislation, and the President has indicated it is a priority for the Administration, it is possible that a final bill will not be signed into law until 2009. If a consensus is not achieved between the Congress and the President by this summer, then 2008 election politics will come into play, and it will be difficult for politicians to come to consensus on such a significant piece of legislation prior to the presidential election.

As the legislative year progresses, I encourage all *L&L* readers to join the Education Technology Action Network (<http://www.edtechactionnetwork.org>), to keep up to date about the most pressing education technology policy activities, and to send letters to their policymakers sharing their success stories and their opinions. Voices do carry! ■

VOICES CARRY

By Hilary Goldmann

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