

# Making Sausage



The legislative process is an ugly sight, and what goes in never looks like the final product. This is the process we are embarking upon with regard to the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). ISTE is leading the charge and meeting with policymakers to ensure that the next iteration of our nation's K-12 law transforms elementary and secondary schools into modern digital learning environments.

ISTE's top priority for NCLB reauthorization is to maintain a dedicated program for education technology. ISTE continues to strongly support the current Enhancing Education Through Technology program; however, it has received diminished support in Congress and no support with the Administration over the last few years, as evidenced by the continued cuts in funding, as well as comments from congressional staff describing EETT as a "boxes and wires" program, and that its focus is too broad. ISTE recognized that if we are to get traction for an educational technology program in the next authorization, we need to bring to Congress a proposal that significantly updates and revamps the existing law.

Working through ISTE's Public Policy and Advocacy Committee, ISTE's Board of Directors, and the Joint ISTE/CoSN Policy Committee, ISTE joined forces with the Consortium for School Networking, the Software and Information Industry Association, and the State Education Technology Directors Association to fashion a new education technology program for the reauthorization. Taking what we have learned about the successes of EETT, melding it with the feedback we have heard from policymakers, and instilling ISTE's guiding principle to promote technology as the means to move our schools

into digital learning environments, we agreed that a new program should focus on systemic school improvement and innovation, with a strong focus on professional development.

Naming this new program Innovation and Achievement for Competitiveness with Technology (IACT) and armed with a draft in hand, we held initial meetings with key congressional committee staff, including the offices of Senators Kennedy (D-MA) and Enzi (R-WY), Chair and Ranking Minority of the Senate Education Committee, and the offices of Representative Miller (D-CA) and McKeon (R-CA), Chair and Ranking Minority of the House Education Committee. All of these key staff expressed strong support for the direction we were taking.

Our success with the IACT proposal is evidenced by the fact that Congresswoman Roybal-Allard (D-CA), a senior member of the House, has agreed to be the lead sponsor in introducing this legislation. Congresswoman Roybal-Allard is strategically positioned to advance this legislation as a member of the House subcommittee that has jurisdiction over all education funding.

Whether a reauthorization will be complete this Congress is still uncertain. As the campaign season will be in full swing next year, if we do not have a new bill signed into law by the fall, an updated bill will probably not be enacted until after the election. If this scenario plays out, we will be living with the current NCLB law through 2009 or 2010. As negotiations continue with more input from policymakers and others in the education community, the final appearance of IACT will likely be different from the legislation we have now, but that's par for the course with making sausage. ■

VOICES CARRY

By Hilary Goldmann

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