



Issues Update

September 16, 2016

Issues Update is a report from the Kentucky Association for Career and Technical Education (KACTE) written by Executive Director Michael R. Stone and presented on its website, www.kacteonline.org. As needed, *Issues Update* will report on state and federal Career and Technical Education (CTE) policy and legislative developments. KACTE and Stone can be reached at kmstone1951@gmail.com or 502-223-1823.

U.S. House Passes Perkins Act Reauthorization; Senate Next

The first major step toward the reauthorization of the *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act* occurred on Sept. 13, 2016, when the U.S. House of Representatives passed **HR. 5587**, the *Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act*. The vote was 405-5. Half of Kentucky's congressmen voted for the Act: Reps. John Yarmuth, District 3; Hal Rogers, District 5; and Andy Barr, District 6. District 4 Rep. Thomas Massie was one of the five no votes. District 2 Rep. Brett Guthrie did not vote, but helped craft the legislation as a member of the House Education and the Workforce Committee.

District 1 currently does not have a congressman as Rep. Ed Whitfield resigned and will not be replaced until a special election is held on Nov. 8, which creates the unusual circumstance that voters in District 1 in Western Kentucky will vote in two congressional elections that day. One election will be for the unexpired term. The winner will be seated immediately as District 1 representative.

The second election will be for the full two-year congressional term, and the winner will be seated when the new Congress convenes. Representative Whitfield, who had announced earlier his intention to retire, said this would allow his successor to gain seniority, which is important for committee assignments. It also creates the possibility that one person could be elected for the remainder of the term, and another elected to the full term. Former Kentucky Commissioner of Agriculture Jamie Comer is favored in both elections, but nothing is certain in politics.

THE PERKINS ACT last was reauthorized in 2006. Named for long-time Eastern Kentucky Rep. Carl D. Perkins, the legislation sets the national priority for Career and Technical Education (CTE). More than \$1 billion in federal dollars provide an incentive for state and local educational agencies to maintain and improve CTE programs. As Kentucky's CTE teachers and administrators know, the *Perkins Act* funding is used largely for purchases of equipment and teacher professional development. Career and Technical Education Student Organizations (CTSOs) are cited in the Act.

The House-passed reauthorization, which may retain the *Perkins Act* title when the final version is passed by the Senate and signed into law by the President, maintains the basic state grant program (currently more than \$1.1 billion), establishes new definitions, simplifies accountability indicators, and seeks to provide more state and local control

over use of funds. (Please see *Issues Update* of July 12, 2016, for further details, or visit <http://ctepolicywatch.acteonline.org/>.)

The Kentucky Department of Education, Office of Career and Technical Education (OCTE) is seeking clarification of definitions and the impact in Kentucky of the proposed changes. Generally, most are supportive of the reauthorization, including the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) and Advance CTE, the association of CTE state directors.

REAUTHORIZATION ACTION now moves to the U.S. Senate. Communication with the staff of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell indicted the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension (HELP) Committee's intention to mark up its version of *Perkins Act* reauthorization the week of Sept. 19. Reports from ACTE suggest the HELP Committee is moving in the same bipartisan manner as did the House Education and the Workforce Committee. Several Senators and the Senate CTE Caucus have spoken of the importance of reauthorization.

There is little time remaining in the regular session of Congress, which will recess in early October for final election campaigning. There is conversation a lame-duck session may be held after the election, which would increase the likelihood a *Perkins Act* reauthorization could pass.

MEANWHILE, no federal programs will continue without approved appropriations, and to date Congress has not passed appropriation bills for Fiscal Year 2017, which begins on Oct. 1, 2016. Both the House and Senate have proposed level funding for Perkins Act programs at \$1.118 billion, which could be considered a victory since other educational programs are proposed for cuts. A stopgap continuing resolution is anticipated to be passed by the Sept. 30 end of the current fiscal year.

Action Needed

KACTE members and those who support CTE are advised to take two actions on behalf of CTE.

- Contact your congressman and both senators and ask for their support of adequate *Perkins Act* appropriations.
- Contact both Sen. McConnell and Senator Rand Paul and ask for their support of *Perkins Act* reauthorization.

Your efforts can make a difference. Time is short for action.
