



HIGHER EDUCATION UPDATE!

Reauthorization of HEA Postponed Until 2007

By Mary Lyn Hammer, President and CEO, Champion College Solutions

Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act has been effectively postponed through legislation extending the authorization and all of its programs through June 30, 2007. On Wednesday, September 27th, the U.S. House of Representatives approved, by voice vote, H.R. 6138 – The Third Higher Education Extension Act of 2006. Before the end of the weekend, the Senate will approve the House passed extension bill by another voice vote.

Unfortunately, there are strong signals being sent that Congress won't seek to complete the HEA legislation during the lame duck session following the elections as the proprietary community had hoped.

In a speech on the Senate floor on Tuesday, September 26th, Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee Chairman Mike Enzi stated that completion of HEA reauthorization would be a top priority next year, leaving little doubt of the likelihood of completion in a lame duck session.

If the Senate fails to act, this would mean that both the House passed bill and the Senate HELP Committee's bill (including all of the legislative priorities for 90-10, transfer of credit, and single definition) would "die" at the end of the session and the process is required to begin anew at the beginning of the next Congress.

The outcome of the elections will likely then dictate how the process will begin. If the House and Senate remain in the control of the Republicans, we can likely expect early introduction of bills that are very similar, if not identical, to what has been reported in the past. If the Democrats take over one or both Houses of Congress, it is reasonable to assume that they will seek to construct their own legislation ~ perhaps pulling some, but certainly not all provisions, from the current bills.

Regardless, the next couple of months will be critical in the on-going promotion of our views. During the month of October, while Members are on the campaign trail, schools should promote our issues. In November, following the elections, institutions should assess how the outcome of the November 7 elections affect the sector, then plan and respond accordingly.