



CAROLINA IN THE CAPITOL JANUARY 2009

Welcome to "Carolina in the Capitol," a periodic electronic bulletin produced by UNC-Chapel Hill's Office of Federal Affairs ("OFA"). Carolina in the Capitol will provide up-to-date information on federal legislative and policy issues that are relevant to our interests here on campus.

This month's edition is devoted to introducing the 111th Congress and the new Obama Administration. If at anytime you have questions or would like additional information about the University's federal affairs, please feel free to contact Karen Regan, Director of Federal Affairs, at karenregan@unc.edu or 843-0050.

INTRODUCTION TO THE 111th CONGRESS. The 2008 elections brought momentous changes to the political landscape in Washington, with Democrats winning control of the White House, the U.S. Senate, and the U.S. House. With significant majorities, 256-178 in the House (with one vacancy) and a probable 59-41 advantage in the Senate, congressional Democrats are well-positioned to work with the incoming President Obama on major issues facing the nation.

Notable changes in the North Carolina congressional delegation include Senator Kay Hagan's (D) defeat of Senator Elizabeth Dole (R) and Representative Larry Kissell's (D) win over five-term incumbent Republican Robin Hayes (NC-8). Senator Hagan has been given assignments on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, the Armed Services Committee, and Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee, while Rep. Kissell serves on the House Armed Services and Agriculture Committees.

Congressman Bob Etheridge (D) was given a seat on the powerful House Ways and Means Committee, which oversees a wide array of issues, including Social Security, Medicare, unemployment benefits, among others. The Committee also has sole jurisdiction over tariffs and revenue-raising methods. Rep. Etheridge is the only North Carolina member serving on Ways and Means and the first North Carolinian to serve since 1984.

Meanwhile, first-term NC Senator Richard Burr, regarded by many as one of the GOP's rising stars, has been named chief deputy minority whip for the Republican minority.

OBAMA'S ADMINISTRATION STAFFS UP

- **HIGHER EDUCATION.** Arne Duncan, the outgoing superintendent of schools in Chicago, was named by President Obama as his pick for Education Secretary. Duncan is well-regarded by advocates of school reform and is widely praised for changes he pushed in Chicago. Duncan, a fellow Harvard graduate and long-time personal friend of Obama's, has not been a player in higher education policy, although it has been assumed that the education secretary was selected primarily for his K-12 credentials.

- **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY.** In his inaugural address, President Obama pledged to “restore science to its rightful place and wield technology’s wonders to raise health care’s quality and lower its costs” and has often spoke of his commitment to the values of free inquiry in science. President Obama named John Holdren, a climate and energy expert, as his science adviser and director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (“OSTP”). Holdren will also co-chair the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (“PCAST”). His PCAST co-chairs include: Harold Varmus, president of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center and former NIH director; and Eric Lander, a key player in the mapping of the human genome and founding director of the Broad Institute, which is dedicated to the study of genomics for biomedical sciences.

THE STIMULUS PACKAGE. Both the House and Senate have released their respective versions of the economic stimulus package, dubbed the “American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.” The massive \$819 billion proposal includes significant funding for both K-12 and higher education. Congressional Republicans have been critical of the measure, citing too great an emphasis on spending and not enough on tax cuts. In the end, however, the legislation is expected to pass largely intact.

In most respects, the House version is more generous to education than its Senate counterpart, but both of them contemplate significant increases in student aid (e.g., increased maximum Pell Grant award by \$500) and federally-sponsored research funding (e.g., NIH, DoE, NSF, NASA), as well as new spending for Medicaid and Medicare and electronic health records. Additionally, both versions of the stimulus contain monies for higher education facility renovation and repair and for improving the energy efficiency of higher ed infrastructure (\$6B in the House; \$3.5B in the Senate). The final stimulus package is also likely to expand the higher education tuition tax credit. For more information on the stimulus as it relates to the interests of the higher education, please see Inside Higher Education’s “*The Senate Weighs-In*” at: www.insidehighered.com/news/2009/01/28/stimulus.

The House is set to vote on its final bill this evening, while the Senate Appropriations and Finance Committees approved their portions of the stimulus on Tuesday. President Obama wants Congress to send him the final package by February 13th.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2009 FUNDING. The 110th Congress adjourned in mid-December 2008 but left unfinished nine of twelve FY 2009 appropriations bills that must be passed to fund the federal government. Only the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security have their final budgets; all other federal agencies are operating at FY 2008 funding levels under the terms of a continuing resolution (“CR”) approved through March 6, 2009. This translates into flat funding for most agencies. The House is expected to wrap up its work on FY09 appropriations next week, and Congress hopes to send an omnibus appropriations bill to the President in mid-February.

UPCOMING EVENTS FROM THE OFFICE OF FEDERAL AFFAIRS

NIH ADVOCACY DAY. On February 3, Ron Falk, MD, Doc J Thurston Distinguished Professor of Medicine and Chief, Division of Nephrology and Hypertension, and UNC Kidney Center Director, will represent UNC’s School of Medicine during the 2009 NIH

Advocacy Day sponsored by the Association of American Medical Colleges ("AAMC"). The program includes presentations from key administration and congressional officials about the current political and fiscal environment affecting research funding as well as an opportunity for Dr. Falk to meet with the NC congressional delegation to advocate for increased NIH funding.

UNC ACADEMYHEALTH CHAPTER MEETS WITH CONGRESSIONAL STAFFERS.

The UNC student chapter of AcademyHealth, a student organization that supports the professional development and intellectual engagement of students interested in health services research and health policy, will travel to Washington for the AcademyHealth National Health Policy Conference on February 2-3, 2009. Approximately, 15 first- and second-year masters students from the Health Policy and Management Department in the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health are planning to attend the policy conference and to meet with senior congressional staff to discuss legislative priorities for the 111th Congress and professional advice.

HUMANITIES ADVOCACY DAY. On March 11th, Dr. William ("Bill") Andrews, E. Maynard Adams Professor of English and Senior Associate Dean for Fine Arts and Humanities, will join more than 100 academics and university representatives to increase awareness and support for the National Endowment for the Humanities ("NEH"). The annual Humanities Advocacy Day is organized by the National Humanities Alliance and includes budget briefings on the NEH, a Congressional Reception, and an exhibit of NEH-supported projects, as well as meetings with Members and staff of the NC congressional delegation.