



## Concerned senators write letter to Spellings

### Concerned senators write letter to Spellings

A letter signed by 12 out of 20 members of the U.S. Senate's education committee and sent to Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings expressed concern over inclusion of some of the commission's recommendations regarding the future of higher education in the impending negotiated rulemaking process. The letter contends that the draft report approved by most of the commission members was "extremely broad" and possibly requires legislative action prior to its insertion in the regulations. Headed by the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Michael Enzi and senior Democrat Edward M. Kennedy, the possible move was apprehended by Hillary Rodham Clinton, Lamar Alexander, Richard Burr, James Jeffords, Christopher Dodd, Patty Murray, Johnny Isakson, Mike DeWine, John Ensign, and Jack Reed.

### New IT contracts to restructure ED's FSA systems

Perot Systems has been bestowed with a contract for managing the Education Department's data center operations for the federal student aid (FSA) program. The Virtual Data Center Services contract will host and process \$78 billion in annual postsecondary student financial aid, for a period of over 10 years. The new computing technology will be a significant cost saver and provide more effective processing of federal student financial aid. Perot Systems has also recently bagged a contact worth \$17 million to upgrade the FSA's Integrated Partner Management system. This five-year contract will integrate varied business functions to manage Title IV financial aid to postsecondary students. The functions include enrollment, eligibility, and oversight processes for managing trading partners such as schools, lenders, and federal and state agencies. Combined, the two contracts total over \$210 million.

### It's Nixon vs. Blunt on MOHELA money

Attorney General Jay Nixon and Missouri Governor Matt Blunt have apparently gotten into a tussle over the use of \$350 million to be received from the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority. Blunt wants to use the funds for construction of new buildings at state colleges and universities; under his plan, some money would also be used for an endowment for university research. Nixon contends that the money is supposed to be used for underwriting student loans and that using the quasi-governmental agency's funds for college buildings could violate the law. Demonstrating his strength, Blunt recently summoned several university officials to his office and also showed up along with them at a news conference. Nixon has not ruled out a possible lawsuit against the sale of MOHELA's assets. The loan authority's governing board has been forced to delay its vote on the use of the money until September 27, amid concerns of a potential lawsuit.

### Early admissions to end at Harvard

In a historic move, the flagship of universities, Harvard University, has removed its early admissions plan, making the admissions system more equitable for students. The plan, which allowed applicants



to apply to the university on November 1, favored affluent students who were better equipped and knew how the system worked. The new move will create a single application deadline of January 1, which should benefit low-income and minority students who have fewer resources—they will now get more time to plan for financial aid. According to the university's interim president Derek Bok, the change will make the admissions system simpler and fairer. With the cream of the crop scrapping early admissions, other institutions are expected to follow suit. The new system, with its January 1 application deadline, will be implemented at the start of the fall 2007 academic year.