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Judith N. Flink will chair the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, aided by Claude O. Pressnell, Jr., who will serve as Vice Chair. Flink was appointed to the committee in 1999. Reappointed in 2002, she has served the committee as Vice Chair for the past three years. Pressnell, President and CEO of the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association (TICUA), has been serving on the committee since 2003. Flink, Executive Director of Student Financial Services at the University of Illinois, has provided congressional and committee testimony related to reauthorization of the Higher Education Act and given a number of presentations on student financial services. Over the next year, in addition to assisting Congress in its attempts to reauthorize the Higher Education Act, Flink and Pressnell will work on the College Textbook Cost Study, finalizing research on the feasibility of simplifying the federal need analysis formula.

Repeal school as lender program, urges Schumer

Following the tabling of Senator Charles Schumer's bill, S. 4035, which aims at amending the Higher Education Act of 1965, Congress has been hotly debating over the intentions of schools participating in the school as lender program. Schumer's bill urges the repeal of the program. Members of Congress have questioned schools' motives for participating in the school as lender program, casting doubts as to whether schools abide by its guiding principle, which states that it will be used only as a final option for students unable to acquire financial aid from any other source. Congress is divided over the issue, since most members opine that schools acting as private lenders push hapless students into quagmires of debt while amassing greater profits by extending lines of credit.

Arkansas' budget surplus may benefit higher education

Arkansas legislators are debating how to distribute a surplus expected at the end of the fiscal year. The surplus is expected to amount to between \$700 million and \$850 million. While some argue that the funds should be used for public school facilities, jails, and Medicaid, Governor Mike Huckabee insists that the entire amount should be allocated to fund higher education. State Senator David Bisbee opined that Medicaid's tremendous growth rate might topple higher education's bid for the money. In response to controversy over the issue, State Senator Jack Critcher suggested that the state separate needs from wants in order to identify priorities.

Plans to reduce budget deficit

As he signed the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, President Bush made reference to an extensive plan to cut the deficit in half by the end of 2009. The 2006 fiscal year's budget deficit was \$248 billion, much less than the estimated \$423 billion. The act has been introduced in order to improve the quality and accessibility of information about federal spending. The legislation entrusts the Office of Management and Budget with the responsibility of supervising a new website listing information about grants and contracts provided by federal government agencies.



The general public can readily access all information on the site, except for information classified for national security reasons. The quantifiable derivatives from the transparency measures include reduction of improper payments by \$7.8 billion, lowering the rate of improper payments by 17%, and taxpayer savings of \$900 million annually. Although Democrats aren't ecstatic at the news, it ushers in benefits for the student loan industry. The industry is apprehensive that the Democrats will introduce a major budget bill if they gain control of the House and Senate as a result of the upcoming November elections.

COE's new STEM development plans

Kathryn Kailikole has been appointed Executive Director of the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE)'s STEM Development Programs. Her newly created post has been designated to initiate support for pre-college learning for disadvantaged students. This new office was created specifically to support science, technology, engineering, and math pre-college education for disadvantaged students. Initially designed to provide students with support in math and science through the pre-college TRIO programs, the council will also work toward improving professional development training for teachers, developing curriculum, and helping schools meet state-specific STEM education standards, said a HEWI report.

The EPA's new compliance assistance center

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Stephen L. Johnson stated that the creation of a new national compliance assistance center for colleges and universities is in the pipeline. The agency has already assisted compliance centers in the industrial sector by helping companies comprehend compliance requirements. Beyond ensuring mere compliance with these set rules, the EPA also aims at providing companies with tools to improve their environmental performances. While visiting Washington University in St. Louis, Johnson announced a five-year grant of up to \$350,000, which will be made to a consortium comprised of four national academic organizations: the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), the Campus Consortium for Environmental Excellence (C2E2), the Campus Safety, Health, and Environmental Management Association (CSHEMA), and the Association of Higher Education Facilities Officers (APPA). Washington University is a member of NACUBO, CSHEMA, and APPA and is likely to become a member of C2E2.