

**Environmental Education Policy**

**Post-Election Analysis and Strategies For This Year and Next**

North American Association for Environmental Education

November 2016

Over the past 25 years, NAAEE and our partners have strategically worked to create a wide and diverse foundation of support for programs and policies that favor environmental education (EE) at all levels of government. We will continue to foster that support as we monitor transition plans and administrative and Congressional appointments. While we face some uncertainty regarding federal challenges and opportunities in light of the election results, the field of EE, and this network in particular, benefits from the local advantage--our organizations and practitioners are trusted and appreciated members of the communities in which they work. Leveraging that local advantage will be critical to sustaining programs and moving policies that support the field and move us forward over the next several years.

As always, we’ll need your help in these coming months and years, and we’ll need more advocates than ever before, so we’ll be asking all of you to do some recruiting before the end of the year. One piece of great news is that at the NAAEE conference last month in Madison, we added more than 100 new advocates to our eePRO group! Let’s work together to see that number grow even more over the next several weeks and months!

Together, we will be even more strategic, systematic, and creative as EE advocates, especially at the state level. We also have to remember that the advocacy work that we do doesn’t just support individual legislative and appropriation items, important as they are. Our work also truly helps secure the future of the field in the broadest sense by connecting us more deeply with our communities and leaders.

Some important action items and policy updates are included below. Thank you for your past support and we look forward to your help in the future. We truly need your help to sustain the progress we’ve made.

*Brock Adler*, Chair, Advocacy Committee, NAAEE

*Sarah Bodor*, Director of Policy and Affiliate Relations, NAAEE

**Advocacy Strategy - Preparing for a New Congress and Administration**

**Planning and State Organizing**

This is the time to think about getting organized and energized in your state in support of EE. In general, our task is to tell the good stories of our work and shine a spotlight on success. Sharing these success stories with legislators helps them to become important allies and even champions for that work. They then advocate for us in Congress for funding and other priority items. Please join with others from your state and House districts to approach and engage your legislators, mostly through their environment or education staff. Please connect with your state EE association and get involved on the local level. Some state associations have organized advocacy efforts and others don’t. If not, please consider leading the effort! We’ll train and support you: let us know if you need help getting started! Find your state Affiliate here: <https://naaee.org/our-partners/affiliates>.

**Your Personal Plan and Commitment**

Plan for your personal participation now, beginning with a couple of activities before the end of 2016, and increased activity for the first few months of 2017, organizing and advocating in support of key federal EE appropriations (see below). If you haven’t done so already, sign up for our eePRO once a month advocacy email. And if you have signed up, please check that you get the notices when they are released to keep up with the timely items we will have in the winter.\* (See below for how to create a free eePRO account and sign up.) And please join us for the Thursday, December 1st call (call-in details below).

**Training**

Mark your calendar for the January 5, 2017, Advocacy 101 training call, 1-2 EST. Invite a colleague! If you can’t make it, we will post a recording on the eePRO advocacy group page that you can listen to later.

**Recruiting Additional Advocates**

As mentioned, our ranks are modest so additional help is really needed! Please make a personal request that your friends and colleagues join in this important effort. Let’s set a goal of 100 NEW advocates signed up on eePRO before the end of the year!

**Catch Up with Your Representatives**

Become reacquainted with or learn about your returning and/or new Members of Congress. The best time to connect with them is in December and January. They are developing their agendas for the year and need to hear from their constituents. To help you out, in December we’ll develop talking points and an initial policy agenda that will help you reach out to legislative staff and members of Congress.

**Thank Yous**

Post-election is a great time to say “thank you” to legislators who have supported EE in the past two years, even if they are retiring or were defeated. It’s better if the thanks comes from an organization, your state EE affiliate, or a partner with name recognition. It's also great to go public with your thanks by printing recognition in a newsletter or through social media. Check for State-by-state Congressional support here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0By_XmpaxiABPZjg0UHpma3BaeHc/view?usp=sharing>.

***Join our first Thursday EE advocacy calls, 1:00-2:00 ET. Details on eePRO.***

***Call-in: (712) 432-1212, ID: 639-367-277.***

 - Dec. 1 - launch of our 2017 policy agenda and our plans for the field in the 115th Congress.

 - Jan. 5, 2017 - our annual Advocacy 101 training. Spread the word!

 - Feb. 2, 2017 - launch of our critical appropriations campaign.

\*To sign up for the eePRO advocacy group, you have to first create a free eePRO account, and then sign up separately for the advocacy group. We request that in eePRO, you set your frequency preferences to “once a day” or “immediately” in your profile so that we can reach you with urgent messages at peak times (we send a low volume of alerts—but when we do send them, we want you to get them as soon as possible. [www.naaee.org/eepro/groups/advocacy](http://www.naaee.org/eepro/groups/advocacy)

**Policy Update for the End of the 114th and Start of the 115th Congress**

The items described here are all ongoing efforts. Additional updates will be provided on our December 1st call.

**Appropriations - FY 2017, Part II and FY 2018**

For the remainder of FY 2017 appropriations (thru Sept. 30, 2017), Congress has signaled that it will extend the current budget via a continuing resolution (CR) through March 2017. This means that all funding levels remain the same for that approximately 6 month time period. This will allow the new President and Congress to act on the second half of FY 2017 budget, while simultaneously planning for FY 2018. If this plays out as expected, EPA and NOAA funding would be essentially flat for the first half of FY 2017.

Our core D.C. team is already focusing on the current CR extension, including engaging members of the incoming administration. We are laying the groundwork for our Congressional champions who are determined to protect existing environmental education programs for the long term. We will need support from all of you in the final FY 2017 and full-year FY 2018 talks that begin in mid-winter. Specifically, we’ll need you to ask each of your legislators to sign letters of support for the ongoing federal funding of environmental education, or at least not to oppose them. More information will follow in January. Specific appropriations challenges are described below.

A promising development is that 3 of 4 incoming leaders of Congressional appropriations committees have voting histories in support of EE items. We have already started to work with our EE associations and advocates in the four states represented by appropriations leadership to bolster their connections and advocacy to help make all appropriations leaders into EE champions.

*Senate Appropriations Committee Leadership*

Sen. Thad Cochran (R-MS) will remain as Chair

Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT) announced as new ranking member

*House Appropriations Committee Leadership*

Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ-11) is expected to move up to Chair

Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY-17) likely to remain as ranking member

**Individual Appropriations Items**

**National Environmental Education Act (NEEA) Programs, which funds the EPA Office of Environmental Education.** This annual appropriation includes the 25 year old grant programs that provide several million dollars each year for environmental education including the national training grant. The office may be vulnerable as the EPA as a whole is regularly targeted for budget cuts. However, with several EE champions on the appropriations committees, our collective advocacy efforts can do a great deal to retain this key EE program. Also in our favor is that the grant program has made grants all over the country, so the funds come back to the community, to beloved organizations such as our zoos, universities, science high schools, soil and water conservation agencies, and many more. See the list of grants at [www.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-grants](http://www.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-grants), click on the “Grants Awarded” tab, and scroll down to the map.

**NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) & Environmental Literacy Grant Programs (ELG)*.*** B-WET funds locally relevant, experiential K-12 learning experiences. ELG supports formal and informal STEM education projects implemented on regional to national scales, with the goal of increasing environmental stewardship and informed decision-making among public and K-12 audiences.

Grants lists: [www.noaa.gov/office-education/elp/grants/awards](http://www.noaa.gov/office-education/elp/grants/awards), [www.noaa.gov/office-education/bwet/awards](http://www.noaa.gov/office-education/bwet/awards).

**Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Funding - Now and Into 2017**

The bill makes federal education funds explicitly for EE available to the states for the first time. NAAEE and our partners are working with the Dept. of Education to work out how to best leverage the new law to support the field, and we are also advocating for maximum funds to be appropriated for the key grant programs. Along with our state affiliates, we are also working with state education departments, school district and other local leaders to make them aware of this new funding opportunity. We especially need help at the state and local level to engage decision makers. An update is at <https://naaee.org/eepro/blog/help-secure-funding-essa>.

**Climate Change Education Act - H.R. 1961, S. 3074**

With the solid incremental success in the 114th Congress of getting the first Senate climate education bill introduced since then Senator Barack Obama’s initial bill in the 110th Congress, and having Sen. Markey’s (MA) related climate ed. amendment get as far as a rare Senate floor vote (S. Amend. 2176; 44 yea-53 no), we are cautiously optimistic about our prospects over the next few years, especially if larger, comprehensive climate legislation is proposed, and the items from this legislation can be added to more comprehensive piece. While our bill won’t be re-introduced until later in 2017, and we won’t have a bill number or exact language until then, it will be on our EE policy agenda from the start, so you’ll still be able to tell your legislators and their staff that it will be coming, and it will be important for them to be part of the initial group of cosponsors.

In the meantime, additional cosponsors are still useful by the end of 2016 to strengthen the position of this bill in the next Congress. See the list linked below of past supporters to make these easy calls and ask them cosponsor again. Between now and the second week of December is the best time to call.

*Congressional Climate Education Supporters* - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0By_XmpaxiABPUGpXbm5oLV9Fdnc/view?usp=sharing>

*Climate Change Education Act description* - <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1P0ikdmRNuXDXceQQael9UT3Db51EEewuYbvo2wsrfo4/edit?usp=sharing>