Connecting with New Members of Congress

The 111th Congress officially convened on January 6th. With more than 50 new members in the House and 13 new senators ACA and its members now have an opportunity to educate more Senators and Representatives about the importance of our priority issues, like education.

Listed below are new members of Congress who bring to office a background in or have expressed interest in education issues. If you have a personal connection to any of these or other new or returning members of Congress, let us know about it. Send an e-mail to ccampbell@counseling.org. We may want to enlist your assistance in educating Congress about our concerns, so please let us know about your "connections!"

To find the names and contact information for your members of Congress, or to send an e-mail message, go to: www.capwiz.com/counseling, and enter your zip code under “Elected Officials.” Just fill out your personal information, add any additional comments you have to the message, and hit send!

We'll be offering more insights as Congress settles in, committee assignments are finalized, and the actual work of the 111th Congress begins.
New Members of the House of Representatives

Rep. Parker Griffith (D-Ala.-05)
Date of Birth: Aug. 6, 1942
Birthplace: Shreveport, La.
Residence: Huntsville
Occupation: State senator, retired oncologist, private-business owner
Education: B.S., M.D., Louisiana State University
Previous Office Held: State senator
Family: Wife Virginia, five children
Former 7th grade math teacher. Griffith Family Foundation awarding grants to classroom teachers.
Issues: early childhood; improving math and science education.

Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick (D-Ariz.-01)
Date of Birth: March 24, 1950
Birthplace: McNary, on the White Mountain Apache Nation reservation
Residence: Flagstaff
Occupation: State legislator, prosecutor, attorney, community college instructor
Education: B.A., J.D., University of Arizona
Previous Office Held: State representative
Family: Two adult children
Former teacher. Served in State House on Education K-12 Committee.
Issues: early childhood; increasing teacher pay; reforming NCLB.

Rep. Betsy Markey (D-Colo.-04)
Date of Birth: April 27, 1956
Birthplace: Creskill, N.J.
Residence: Fort Collins
Occupation: Former Senate staffer and former small-business owner
Education: B.A., University of Florida; M.A., American University
Previous Office Held: None
Family: Husband Jim Kelly, three children
Issues: amend NCLB; increase funding; train and retain high quality teachers.
Rep. Jared Polis (D-Colo.-02)
Date of Birth: May 12, 1975
Birthplace: Boulder
Residence: Boulder
Occupation: Entrepreneur
Education: B.A., Princeton University
Previous Office Held: Chairman, state Board of Education
Family: Partner Marlon Reis
Former State school board member; spearheaded coalitions to significantly raise funding for CO schools; founder/superintendent, the New America School, focused on empowering immigrant students through education; co-founded "The Academy of Urban Learning" to provide homeless and transitional youth with opportunity to earn high school diploma.
Special interests: universal preschool; increased parent involvement.

Rep. Jim Himes (D-Conn.-04)
Date of Birth: July 5, 1966
Birthplace: Lima, Peru (to American parents)
Residence: Cos Cob
Occupation: Vice president, Enterprise Community Partners
Education: B.A., Harvard University; Rhodes Scholar, Oxford University
Previous Office Held: Chairman, Greenwich Democratic Town Committee
Family: Wife Mary, two children
Issues: full funding for federal education "mandates"; fixing NCLB, including getting rid of the punitive nature; early childhood education; greater college access.

Rep. Tom Rooney (R-Fla.-16)
Date of Birth: Nov. 21, 1970
Birthplace: Philadelphia
Residence: Tequesta
Occupation: Attorney
Education: B.S., Washington and Jefferson College; M.A., University of Florida; J.D., University of Miami School of Law
Previous Office Held: None
Family: Wife Tara, two children
Director of children's services organization, with particular interests in abused, abandoned, and neglected children.
Rep. Suzanne Kosmas (D-Fla.-24)
Date of Birth: Feb. 25, 1944
Birthplace: Washington, D.C.
Residence: New Smyrna Beach
Occupation: Owner of Prestige Properties, a real estate company; former state representative.
Education: B.A., Stetson University
Previous Office Held: State representative
Family: Four children, nine grandchildren.
State legislator with strong interest in children's issues, including more money for local schools and child safety.

Rep. Walt Minnick (D-Idaho-01)
Date of Birth: Sept. 20, 1942
Birthplace: Walla Walla, Wash.
Residence: Boise
Occupation: Chairman of SummerWinds Garden Centers, Inc.
Education: B.A., Whitman College; M.B.A., J.D., Harvard University
Previous Office Held: None
Family: Wife A.K. Lienhart-Minnick, four children
Issues: expanded access to higher education, including community colleges; rural education issue. Believes NCLB is a "one-size-fits-all unfunded mandate."
Rep. Debbie Halvorson (D-Ill.-11)
Date of Birth: March 1, 1958
Birthplace: Chicago
Residence: Crete
Occupation: State senator
Education: B.A., Governors State University
Previous Office Held: Majority leader, Illinois Senate
Family: Husband Jim Bush, four children
First woman majority leader of IL State Senate. Awards from the IL Education Association and NAMI, and "Legislator of the Year" for the IL ARC for her advocacy for people with developmental disabilities.
Issues: full funding of IDEA; higher high school graduation standards; increased funding of early childhood education.

Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-Maine-01)
Date of Birth: April 2, 1955
Birthplace: Minneapolis
Residence: North Haven
Occupation: Inn and restaurant owner
Education: B.A., College of the Atlantic
Previous Office Held: Maine state Senate
Family: Divorced, three children, one grandchild
Majority leader, Maine State Senate (daughter is majority leader in the Maine House!). Former school board member who talks about the connection between education and growing the economy.
Issues: full funding of the IDEA; more access to higher education; critical of NCLB "test mentality."

Rep. Marc Schauer (D-Mich.-07)
Date of Birth: Oct. 2, 1961
Birthplace: Howell
Residence: Battle Creek
Occupation: State senator
Education: B.A., Albion College; M.P.A., Western Michigan University; M.A., Michigan State University
Previous Office Held: Minority leader, Michigan Senate
Family: Wife Christine, three stepchildren
Father was a high school teacher. Works as social services organization director and has administered Head Start programs.
Date of Birth: Dec. 1, 1958
Birthplace: Pontiac
Residence: Bloomfield Township
Occupation: Part-time professor, Central Michigan University
Education: B.A., Alma College; M.B.A., University of Detroit; J.D., Wayne State University
Previous Office Held: Commissioner, Michigan Lottery
Family: Wife Colleen Ochoa, three children
Ranking member on State Senate Education Committee.
Issues: funding of early childhood education; stronger math/science curricula; class size reduction; increased use of technology in classrooms. States that we "must never neglect the unique needs of children in our special education programs."

Rep. Erik Paulsen (R-Minn.-03)
Date of Birth: May 14, 1965
Birthplace: Bakersfield, Calif.
Residence: Eden Prairie
Occupation: Business Analyst
Education: B.A. Mathematics, St. Olaf College
Previous Office Held: State representative, 1994-present
Family: Wife Kelly, four children
Learning Exchange volunteer (organization assists people with disabilities).
Issues: equity in education funding; local control of education decisions; teacher quality; full funding of the IDEA.

Rep. Gregg Harper (R-Miss.-03)
Date of Birth: June 1, 1952
Birthplace: Jackson
Residence: Pearl
Occupation: Prosecutor
Education: M.S., Mississippi College; J.D., University of Mississippi
Previous Office Held: None
Family: Wife Sidney, two children
Has child with Fragile X Syndrome. Supports helping families to advocate for their children, as well as promoting and funding research and "helping children with special needs."
Rep. Dina Titus (D-Nev.-03)
Date of Birth: May 23, 1950
Birthplace: Thomasville, Ga.
Residence: Las Vegas
Occupation: College professor
Education: B.A., College of William and Mary; M.A., University of Georgia; Ph.D., Florida State University
Previous Office Held: State senator, 1988-present; state Senate minority leader 1993-2008
Family: Husband Thomas C. Wrigh
Hopes to serve on House Education and Labor Committee. "An educator (college professor) from a family of educators." Interests include children, seniors, and individuals with disabilities, including the Dina Titus Estates, an innovative affordable housing complex for people with disabilities.
Issues: smaller class size in early grades; full-day kindergarten; health coverage for uninsured children.

Rep. John Adler (D-N.J.-03)
Date of Birth: Aug. 23, 1959
Birthplace: Haddonfield
Residence: Cherry Hill
Occupation: State senator
Education: B.A., J.D., Harvard
Previous Office Held: State senator
Family: Wife Shelley Levitan, four children
Issues: inadequate funding for NCLB and overemphasis on testing; class size reduction; facilities improvement; full funding for IDEA; more money for early childhood; better college access.
Rep. Harry Teague (D-N.M.-02)
Date of Birth: June 29, 1949
Birthplace: Caddo County, Okla.
Residence: Hobbs
Occupation: President, Teaco Energy Services Inc.
Education: Hobbs High School, 1964-1966
Previous Office Held: Lea County Board of Commissioners
Family: Wife Nancy, two children and five grandchildren
High school dropout with priority interest in education. Began college scholarship program for employees' children.
Issues: increased funding for NCLB and eliminate punitive aspects; against private school vouchers; higher nationwide minimum teacher salaries.

Rep. Ben Luján (D-N.M.-03)
Date of Birth: June 7, 1972
Birthplace: Santa Fe
Residence: Nambé
Occupation: New Mexico Public Regulation Commissioner
Education: Bachelor's degree from New Mexico Highlands University
Previous Office Held: New Mexico Public Regulation Commissioner
Family: Single
Issues: elimination of NCLB; better connections between schools and communities to work on high school dropout rate; better teacher training.

Rep. Mike McMahon (D-N.Y.-13)
Date of Birth: Sept. 12, 1957
Birthplace: New York City
Residence: New York City
Occupation: Attorney
Education: Bachelor's degree, New York University; J.D., New York Law School
Previous Office Held: City council member, 2002-present
Family: Wife Judith Novellino McMahon, two children
Issues: reform of NCLB, including more flexibility and full funding; full funding of IDEA; reinstatement of music and art; school modernization.
Rep. Paul Tonko (D-N.Y.-21)
Birthplace: Amsterdam
Residence: Amsterdam
Occupation: Former CEO, New York State Energy Research and Development Authority
Education: M.S., Clarkson University
Previous Office Held: CEO, New York State Energy Research and Development Authority
Family: Single
Issues: full funding of IDEA; class size reduction; universal pre-K; elimination of unfunded mandates, e.g., NCLB; better pay and training for teachers; loan forgiveness to attract more math, science, and foreign language teachers.

Rep. Eric Massa (D-N.Y.-29)
Date of Birth: Sept. 16, 1959
Birthplace: Charleston, S.C.
Residence: Corning
Occupation: Retired Navy Commander
Education: U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis
Previous Office Held: None
Family: Wife Beverly, two children
Issues: change test mentality of NCLB; full funding of NCLB; implementation of proven programs like "Success for All"; against private school vouchers.

Rep. Larry Kissell (D-N.C.-08)
Date of Birth: Jan. 31, 1951
Birthplace: Pinehurst
Residence: Biscoe
Occupation: Retired social studies teacher, East Montgomery High School
Education: B.A., Wake Forest University
Previous Office Held: None
Family: Wife Tina, two children
High school social studies teacher (mother – retired teacher).
Rep. Kurt Schrader (D-Ore.-05)
Date of Birth: Oct. 19, 1951
Birthplace: Connecticut
Residence: Canby
Occupation: Veterinarian, small-business owner
Education: B.A., Cornell University; D.V.M., University of Illinois
Previous Office Held: State senator
Family: Wife Martha, four children
Issues: immediate investment in special education and Pell grants; vocational education.

Rep. Kathy Dahlkemper (D-Pa.-03)
Date of Birth: Dec. 10, 1957
Birthplace: Erie
Residence: Erie
Occupation: Small-business owner
Education: B.S., Edinboro University of Pennsylvania
Previous Office Held: None
Family: Husband Dan, five grown children
Supports increased investment in education.

Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-Va.-11)
Date of Birth: March 20, 1950
Birthplace: Boston
Residence: Mantua
Occupation: Chairman, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors; director of community relations, SAIC
Education: B.A., Maryknoll College; M.A., Harvard University
Previous Office Held: Chairman, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors; Providence District Supervisor, Fairfax County
Family: Wife Cathy, one child
Supports increasing investment in education to meet needs of the "global economy," including full funding of NCLB.
New Members of the Senate

Sen. Mark Begich (D-AK)
Date of Birth: March 31, 1962
Birthplace: Anchorage, AK
Residence: Anchorage
Occupation: Current Mayor of Anchorage
Education: Attended the University of Alaska Anchorage
Previous Office Held: Anchorage Assembly
Family: Wife Deborah Bonito, one child
Parents were teachers; father became a superintendent. "Friend of Education" from the Alaska Education Association. Founder, "Making a Difference" program for first time juvenile offenders.
Issues: local control and returning to education policy that respects community values; federally supported voluntary pre-K; expanded access to vocational and college programs.

Sen. Mark Udall (D-Colo.)
Date of Birth: July 18, 1950
Birthplace: Tucson, Ariz.
Residence: Eldorado Springs
Occupation: U.S. Representative
Education: B.A., Williams College
Previous Office Held: U.S. Representative
Family: Wife Maggie Fox, two children
Executive Director of CO Outward Bound School. Introduced the CLASS Act while serving in the House to better target groups with higher needs.
Issues: NCLB fallen short of expectations, with inadequate funding and poor implementation; consideration of broader factors for determining progress of students with disabilities.
Sen. Mike Johanns (R-Neb.)
Date of Birth: June 18, 1950
Birthplace: Osage, Iowa
Residence: Lincoln
Occupation: Politician/administrator
Education: Creighton University, law degree
Previous Office Held: U.S. Agriculture secretary, governor of Nebraska, mayor of Lincoln
Family: Wife Stephanie, two children
Issues: no new mandates on states; full funding of IDEA; federal government should "assist and partner with state and local education agencies, not control and administer them"; training and education programs in community colleges to prepare students for the modern workforce.

Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.)
Date of Birth: Jan. 28, 1947
Birthplace: St. Charles, Mo.
Residence: Madbury
Occupation: Attorney
Education: B.A., Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania; M.S., University of Mississippi
Previous Office Held: State Senate, 1991-96; governor, 1997-2003
Family: Husband Bill, three children
Teacher and college administrator. While governor, supported kindergarten initiative and Granite State Scholarship Program.
Issues: full funding of IDEA; universally designed assessments and creation of a comprehensive list of acceptable modifications; full funding of NCLB; reconfiguration of AYP; multiple assessment measures; high quality professional development.
Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.)
Date of Birth: May 18, 1948
Birthplace: Tucson, Ariz.
Residence: Santa Fe
Occupation: U.S. representative
Education: B.A., Prescott College; J.D., University of New Mexico
Previous Office Held: U.S. representative
Family: Wife Jill, one child
Served on House Labor-HHS-Education appropriations subcommittee and the House Democratic Education Task Force.
Issues: full funding of NCLB and more flexibility; class size reduction; infrastructure repair; more support for IDEA, vocational/technical, and adult education.

Sen. Kay Hagan (D-N.C.)
Date of Birth: May 26, 1953
Birthplace: Shelby
Residence: Greensboro
Occupation: State senator
Education: B.A., Florida State University; J.D., Wake Forest University
Previous Office Held: State senator
Family: Husband Chip, three children
Believes in connecting education with economic security, with focus on 21st century skills.
Issues: expanded access to pre-K and Head Start; high quality high school education, including smaller high schools; full funding of NCLB; more flexibility; measure schools' improvement, as well as achievement; implement growth models; share best practices across states.
Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.)
Date of Birth: Oct. 24, 1956
Birthplace: Myrtle Creek
Residence: Portland
Occupation: Budget analyst; Speaker, Oregon House of Representatives
Education: B.A., Stanford University; M.P.P., Princeton University
Family: Wife Mary, two children
First in family to go to college (Stanford, Princeton!).
Issues: full funding of public education; complete overhaul of NCLB, including measuring student's improvement over time, attendance, and graduation rate; broader curriculum ("don't choose between math and music"); full funding of Head Start and IDEA; more opportunities for parent involvement.

Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.)
Date of Birth: Dec. 15, 1954
Birthplace: Indianapolis
Residence: Alexandria
Occupation: Former businessman in high-tech industry
Education: B.A., George Washington University; J.D., Harvard University
Previous Office Held: Governor
Family: Wife Lisa Collins, three children
As governor, "Education for a Lifetime" initiative, especially focused on high school reform, and increased education funding. Connecting strong education system to global competitiveness.