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Here we go again.

After an extended lull in the action we will be jumping back into the fray on the Workforce Conference starting on Thursday, April 18, at 10:00 in 430 Dirksen. You should have received a notice from Kassebaum's staff as well.

During the break in talks there was an attempt by Kassebaum and Goodling to reach consensus on the core issues relating to the legislation. Two meetings between the two Chairs resulted in their requesting their respective staffs to attempt to construct this consensus document. Despite their efforts they were unable to resolve an entire package. They did make significant progress and are near a resolution on all but one of the "core" issues.

This near agreement will be what I expect to be the first item of explanation when we meet on Thursday. Once that is laid out I expect we will move on to the Side-by-Side and start with item #1 and move through the books, the old-fashioned way.

The following is a quick and dirty explanation of what I understand the current play and explanation on the near agreement is:

1. Federal Role - Drop the Partnership and have an interagency agreement.
2. Authorization Level - $5.6 billion - $600 million going to National Activities and $5 billion going to states.
3. Wagner-Peyser Funds - Moved out of the training portion of the block grant. Set outside the block grant.
4. Single Block/Percentages - Agree to having a single block grant to the states with the following set-asides:
   - 30% - Training
   - 25% - Flex Account
   - 20% - At Risk Youth
   - 20% - Voc Ed
   - 5% - Adult Education
5. Single State Plan - (this one I am not clear on) the Governors, educators and others responsible for the development of the comprehensive plan would work together and develop a unified plan. After this is done if one of the parties disagrees with a portion of the plan they retain the authority over their own activities to develop their own plan. Only those state who are in full agreement and have a unified plan will be eligible for federal incentive money.
6. Local Boards - Have a mandatory local board with a business majority and a requirement to have representative from employees and educators. The Governor would develop the criteria for the Board and the Chief Local Elected Official would appoint the actual members. Business reps would be selected from nominations from the business community.
7. Vouchers - This issue was what remained open. Kassebaum
offered a mandatory Pilot program in every state which would be of sufficient size, scope and quality to determine the effectiveness of the voucher program. This would be applicable to adult training activities.

The Goodling responded with a modification that would require a minimum of 5% of the training money in each state must be used through vouchers.

Kassebaum rejected this modification and with it any final agreement on the other items. The other items mentioned are still on the table and it seems we may see the House and Senate Republicans raise them individually for agreement.

OTHER ITEMS WHICH ARE OPEN:
* School to Work * Effective Date * Mandatory Drug Testing and GED requirements * At-Risk Youth * Accountability * Economic Development * Education within State formula * Maintenance of Effort for education * and many others.

OMER