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A Professional Association's View of the Development of LEAD

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The passage of the Leadership in Educational Administration Development (LEAD) Act in 1983 signaled a new opportunity for improving the professional leadership of school administrators. But the manner in which the act was passed caused some problems in getting LEAD funded and operational. LEAD progressed from an idea into law so quickly that it had little time to gather support among educators or members of Congress. As a result LEAD has had a rocky early funding history and took longer than usual to get off the ground after it was funded.

The program was an immediate success. And now, although LEAD is operating successfully, there is another funding problem.

Congressional interest in leadership in school administration was stimulated by the effective schools research on the value of good leadership. Edward Larson, the key Congressional staff person in developing the legislation, notes in his legislative history of LEAD that Representatives Thomas Petri (R–WS) and William Goodling (R–PA) and Senator John Chafee (R–RI) were independently impressed with evidence about the importance of leadership from the effective schools literature.

At the same time there was a renewed recognition of the importance of leadership in the business world. The importance of leadership in private industry was dramatically spotlighted by Peters and Waterman in their runaway best seller *In Search of Excellence*. That recognition was most evident when Edward Larson of Representative Petri's office and David Griswold of Senator Chafee's staff went through an early version of LEAD and replaced the word administration with leadership.

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Larson's legislative history of LEAD details how the act came into being through an unusual set of circumstances. The sponsors had an unusual opportunity to move the bill and took it. And LEAD took a shortcut to passage.

After its passage, AASA and LEAD's congressional sponsors were faced with two immediate problems. First, we had to get LEAD funded. LEAD was authorized late in the appropriations cycle for federal fiscal year (FY) 1985. At that time the only chance for funding was to be included in one of the continuing resolutions that Congress was passing in lieu of regular appropriations bills. The continuing resolution is a "stopgap" device used by Congress when they have not passed a regular appropriations bill. Continuing resolutions were used frequently during President Reagan's years in office to avoid vetoes by combining spending the President wanted with spending Congress wanted. LEAD, lacking the support of members of the Education subcommittees and Department of Education, did not receive an appropriation for fiscal 1985.

Missing the fiscal 1985 appropriations cycle was almost the kiss of death for LEAD. Federal funding for elementary and secondary education declined by $1.4 billion from fiscal 1981 and fiscal 1983. In fiscal 1985, education funding was making a slow comeback despite stiff opposition from the Administration. Funding for a new program which lacked wide congressional support was hard to sell, even to other education groups. Also, the Department of Education strenuously opposed LEAD. The opposition manifested itself in the President's request for zero funding for LEAD for fiscal 1985 and fiscal 1986.

When funds are scarce, every existing program is fighting hard for growth. Lobbying for funding means making hard choices, and then urging congressmen who are being pressed to fund many worthy programs to spend the money on your cause. Such lobbying is difficult—legislative bodies deal with tough choices by creating confusion and roadblocks and making decisions behind closed doors.

Obtaining funding for LEAD required building broad support in Congress for a program after it was authorized, which is a reversal of the usual order. At the same time we were building a base of support in Congress, we had to identify administrators who were willing to go to bat for LEAD.

Senator Lawton Chiles (D-FL), the ranking Democrat on the Senate appropriations subcommittee responsible for education funding, and an original cosponsor of LEAD, had funding included in the Senate version of the fiscal 1986 appropriations bill. However, on the House side LEAD had no champion and was left out of the House version of the 1986 appropriations bill. When the House Senate conferees met to iron out differences between the two appropriations bills LEAD was deleted, that is, given zero funding.

Once an item in conference is agreed upon by both Houses it becomes part of the interlocking web of deals that constitutes compromise. At a 10:30 p.m. visit with the majority staff director of the subcommittee, AASA staff pleaded our case and were told that the subcommittee would not revisit the issue. LEAD funding seemed dead.

Early that same evening Nick Penning of AASA's government relations staff contacted a Kentucky administrator who was close to Representative William Natcher, chair of the House appropriations subcommittee that refused to fund LEAD. Besides being close to Chairman Natcher, this administrator was very active in professional development activities in Kentucky and was an immediate convert to LEAD. Overnight other Kentucky administrators with similar interests were contacted. Representative Natcher was contacted at home that night on behalf of LEAD and the next day he was swamped with calls. Nick also caused every other conferee to be contacted by at least one constituent that evening. LEAD funding was restored as the first item of business the next day, to our absolute surprise and delight.

Our second problem then reared its head: The Department of Education was determined not to spend the money. First, the Department asked that funding be rescinded. A rescission message is sent to the Congress and if in the next 45 days either house acts to affirm the rescission the cuts become effective. AASA learned that the rescission message was not going to be acted on, that LEAD was safe. But the Department had an excuse for not acting on LEAD regulations for 45 days.

When the rescission clock ran out the Department of Education assigned LEAD to the Office of Education Research and Information (OERI). This could have been bad news for LEAD but, fortunately there were several career staff in OERI who were committed to making LEAD work.

We waited, but the first step in the regulatory process, the notice of proposed rulemaking, never appeared. Somewhere in the process the regulations had stalled. AASA next went to Representative Petri and Senator Chafee and asked Edward Larson and David Griswold to push OERI to get the regulations out. Both Larson and Griswold were informed by ED that regulations would be out soon. Skeptical, Ed and David began working regularly with AASA and other interested groups to get the regulations out. We waited, but there were still no regulations.

One year after the original appropriation, and following a second appropriation for FY 1987, we met with Bruce Carnes, Deputy Undersecretary of Education and the right hand of Secretary William Bennett. Undersecretary Carnes expressed the official position of opposition to LEAD, but was upset that the law was being circumvented and that funds were in fact being impounded. He promised action and the next day it was announced that LEAD regulations would be issued so funds could finally begin to flow. Finally, a notice of proposed rulemaking was issued and LEAD was on the way to becoming a reality.

There was immediate interest in LEAD among the various state administrator associations. The extent of that interest was first evident when AASA sponsored a seminar on the LEAD program. The purpose of the conference was to inform potential bidders about the purposes of LEAD and the procedures for application. Over 100 persons representing state associations, universities, nonprofit groups, and some school districts attended the conference.

Nearly all state administrator associations, many universities, state departments of education, private contractors, and at least two school districts applied for funding. Eventually the Department of Education selected a mix of contractors. Most contracts went to consortia of professional associations, universities, and state departments of education. Sixteen state professional groups affiliated with AASA were directly involved in LEAD contracts. Of particular pride to AASA is the eager and open way LEAD centers have sought the best thinking from education and private industry. Developments such as those in Texas where the DuPont Corporation has shared its leadership development knowledge, staff, and facilities with the LEAD center are positive harbingers of the future.

Like most successful programs, LEAD now has many supporters, including the Department of Education. Most LEAD grantees are excited and successful, and want LEAD to go on for the foreseeable future.

Just when things finally seem rosy there are some clouds on the horizon. In the debate leading to the fiscal 1989 appropriations, the Department of Education sought to cut funding for LEAD in half, based on the 50 percent reduction in the federal share of operating costs called for in year four. AASA disputed that logic, arguing that funding could go into a new round of centers or even for expanded activities for ever larger state centers. However, most LEAD centers seemed to accept the department's logic by failing to make a different case to Congress. Hence, federal funding for LEAD may terminate in two years when the law calls for funds to the original centers to be phased out unless we all pull together again.

AASA strongly supports federal funds for administrator preparation and will seek either changes in LEAD or a new program to provide those funds. Too much hard work went into the creation and development of LEAD for our support to flag. The challenge is to others who support improved educational leadership to step forward with good ideas and a willingness to work.

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