

## ADDITIONAL VIEWS

H.R. 3644, the Bay-Watershed Education and Training Regional Program and National Environmental Literacy Grant Program Act, authorizes two existing programs within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA): the Bay-Watershed Education and Training Regional Program and the National Environmental Literacy Program. While both of these programs have received some level of funding from Congress, no authorization for either program has been enacted. Authorization levels in the bill, as introduced, are far above what the programs have historically received and are at a level that are unsupportable. Rather than address the concerns raised by Members of the Committee at both the Subcommittee hearing and full Committee mark-up of the legislation, specific authorization levels were replaced by “such sums as may be necessary” in the Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute that was considered at the mark-up.

At a time when the country faces record deficit levels, a “blank check” authorization for these two programs is irresponsible. Not only does this ignore this authorizing Committee’s responsibility to set funding levels for the Appropriators to follow, but it also ignores the realities of this country’s current economic problems.

As introduced, the legislation would have authorized the two programs at a total of \$235.0 million over a five year period. Concern over the funding levels were raised by Members of the Subcommittee during the Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife hearing which was held on October 15, 2009. In addition to concerns raised by Members, the NOAA testimony included the statement “NOAA supports education and outreach programs in the Office of Education and throughout NOAA’s line offices—the authorization levels in H.R. 3644 could divert funding from these other programs.”

Funding for the Bay-Watershed Education and Training Program began in Fiscal Year 2002 with the Chesapeake Bay B-WET program which received \$1.2 million. While five new B-WET programs have been added by Appropriators since Fiscal Year 2003, funding for the entire program has never exceeded \$9.699 million. H.R. 3644, as introduced, would increase this level to \$20.0 million in the first year and increase to \$25.0 million in the third year for a total authorization of \$117.5 million over five years. This level of increase represents an increase of more than 200 percent in the first year.

The President’s Fiscal Year 2010 budget request did not request any funding for either the B-WET California program (a decrease of \$2.5 million from the FY 2009 appropriated level) or the B-WET Regional Programs (a decrease of \$7.2 million from the FY 2009 appropriated level). Congressional action on the Department of Commerce’s appropriation in both the House and Senate bills in-

cluded funding levels far below the authorization levels in H.R. 3644 as introduced—\$2.5 million for the California B-WET program in the House-passed bill report language and \$7.2 million for the B-WET Regional Programs in the Senate-passed bill report language. It is clear that neither the President nor Congressional appropriators have supported the authorization levels intended by this legislation.

In addition, the National Environmental Literacy Program which has been funded under the line item in the NOAA budget called Competitive Education Grants has only been requested in the President's budget request since Fiscal Year 2008. In Fiscal Year 2008, the program received \$4.881 and in Fiscal Year 2009, the program received \$8.5 million. H.R. 3644 would increase this level to \$20.0 million in the first year and increase to \$25.0 million in the third year for a total authorization of \$117.5 million over five years. This level of increase represents an increase of more than 200 percent in the first year.

The President's Fiscal Year 2010 budget request included \$5.043 million for the Competitive Educational Grants—a decrease of \$4.0 million from the FY 2009 level. While both the House and Senate bills to appropriate funds for NOAA for Fiscal Year 2010 included increases to this program, neither bill approaches the funding levels included in H.R. 3644 as introduced.

In authorizing these programs that have been in existence for a number of years, reasonable authorization levels need to be established with existing national deficit levels in mind. Replacing unreasonable authorization levels with a blank check—as was done at the full Committee consideration of this legislation—ignores this Committee's responsibilities.

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