

Greetings ND ASPIRE Members,

We are having trouble with our ND ASPIRE e-mail server. I tried sending this message out to the ASPIRE list last Friday, but it is unclear whether no one received it or only some of our members received it. I apologize if you are getting this for the second time.

On Monday, March 23rd important hearings began on two bills that have been followed closely by the State Initiative Committee because they could increase the amount of need-based state aid, and other support available to the students we serve. **SB 2062** has been referred back to the House Appropriations - Education and Environment Subcommittee. This bill contains provisions that would increase need-based state grant aid, and create the merit-based Opportunity Grant. Unfortunately, the amount for individual state need-based grants was reduced from a maximum of \$2000/year to \$1500/year, but the bill has a provision that priority be given to students with the greatest need. The Opportunity Grant provides \$750/semester for students who meet certain GPA and test criteria. If your representatives are members of this committee, it is important that you let them know that you are **in favor of the increase in state need-based grant aid** in SB 2062 and that you would like to see the maximum restored to \$2000/qualifying student.

Senate Concurrent Resolution, **SCR 4030** passed the Senate and the House Constitutional Revision Committee began holding hearings also on Monday, the 23rd. **SCR 4030** creates a ND Constitutional amendment stating that the first 25% of all state oil tax revenue be put in a legacy fund and the earnings made available for future appropriations to elementary, secondary, and higher education, including higher education scholarships. If this passes in the 2009 Legislature, it will be placed on the general election ballot in 2010. In a previous e-mail, I spoke of the Hathaway Scholarship program at the University of Wyoming which was funded in a similar fashion. Washington State also has a legacy fund which they have been using to fund a number of education projects, **including supplementary funding for TRIO programs at several of their institutions**. If **SCR 4030** is adopted we could encourage the state to do look at similar ways to use the money. Please contact any of your representatives who are on the House Constitutional Revision Committee and ask them to support SCR 4030.

To read the most current versions of these bills and to find out if your representatives are members of the House Appropriations-Education and Environment Committee and/or the Constitutional Revision Committee, here are the links to that information on the Legislative website:

SB 2062: <http://www.legis.nd.gov/assembly/61-2009/bill-text/JANL0600.pdf>

SCR 4030: <http://www.legis.nd.gov/assembly/61-2009/bill-text/JGFP0400.pdf>

House Standing Committees: <http://www.legis.nd.gov/assembly/61-2009/house/standing-comm/>

If you aren't sure who your representatives are, click on this

link: <http://capwiz.com/nea/nd/state/main/?state=ND&view=myofficials#0>

Have a great week. Mary