

## **OVERVIEW OF SEA GRANT COLLEGE RE-AUTHORIZATION**

Prepared for guidance of the National Sea Grant Review panel in fulfilling their responsibilities to advise the DOC Secretary, the NOAA administrator and the National Sea Grant College program Director concerning program re-authorization for 2008 and beyond.

### **Background**

The current authorization expires in 2008. The Panel has played an advisory role in the formulation of bills and provision of information for review of previous re-authorization bills. Among other functions, authorizing legislation affirms congressional intent for program funding and thus shields appropriations from assault as an un-authorized expenditure of funds. Programs without authorization, under current legislative procedures, are at risk for elimination by a single congressman and they are elevated in their vulnerability to presidential veto.

### **Central Parties To The Re-authorization Process**

A legislative bill accomplishes re-authorization for a program. The bills for the Sea Grant College program are introduced in the House Resources committee and in the Senate committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. The committee staffs draft the initial version of the proposed legislation.

DOC legislative affairs and NOAA legislative affairs will have the opportunity for presenting proposals relevant to the legislation. Such proposals originating from the NSGO Director's office up through the Secretary of Commerce offices are reviewed and cleared with OMB before transmission to legislative offices. As the bills move through hearings, modifications and conference, the department and units of the department are called upon for input. The Panel has a mandate for input on the content of legislation proposed by the Department and units within the Department as well as advising on issues and proposals flowing from congressional hearings and public participation.

### **Parties other than the Department of Commerce and the Executive Branch**

The SGA has been extensively involved in proposing to the Department and Congress language for inclusion in previous bill. Likewise, NASULGC representing Universities has been an active participant in development of legislation.

As the legislation moves through the development process, SGA has actively interacted with the congressional staff, participated in the scheduled hearings, communicated with interested publics, and collaborated with concerned citizens and interest groups on testimony, correspondence and maintaining understanding of the content and progress of the legislation.

Through- out the entire process from formulation of draft legislation to final congressional approval, the Panel has a clear advisory responsibility to the Department of Commerce and the units within it. Conduct of that responsibility is guided by FACA regulations. Thus the emphasis on preparation for the re-authorization by aggressive

collection of information concerning the status, effectiveness, challenges and perceived future from Executive and Legislative branch sources, university officials and program leaders, program clientele, and national and regional interest groups. Provision of accurate, timely and quality advise at the preparation stage of the legislative process is the most effective manner that the Panel can fulfill its mandate and make the most beneficial contribution to the future of the Sea Grant College program.

### **Anticipated Timelines and actions**

#### **1) Elections in fall 2006 and November 2006 Panel meeting**

The relevant committee membership will likely change following the election. . Establishing contact with the new leadership and their respective staff to understand their agenda and issues concerning the Sea Grant program will be a priority item of Panel business. The end of November Panel meeting should complete a quick review of panel member relationships with the new committee members. In addition, a compilation of the panel member's recommendations should be complete and reviewed during the November meeting. Lastly, implications from the NRC report should be compiled and incorporated into the candidate list for new legislative language. Meetings with the committee and member staffs in Mid November will be essential to providing informed advise to the NSGO, NOAA and the Department in Early January 2007. These November 2006 meeting will serve to establish relationships with the relevant staff members, determine their timetables for committee action, and identify both information needs as well as concerns they have about the program.

#### **2) January 2007- Anticipated date for launching development of new re-authorization Bills.**

Committee staff will begin collecting information for drafting of the new legislation. The challenges facing the Panel include:

- A) Assembling, compiling, and prioritizing a list of modifications, deletions and additions for review and coordination with CORE, NASULGC, SGA and the NSGO Director.
- B) Engaging the Secretary's office concerning their planned actions concerning re-authorizing and establishing a protocol for advising them throughout the entire legislative process.
- C) Achieving a high level if not complete consensus with NSGO office, SGA and National interest groups with a history of participating in the process on the desired elements, language and levels to be incorporated into the new legislation.
- D) Completing and affirming a packages of recommendations for both communication and discussion with the Department and Panel use in response to request for comment and advise concerning the re-authorization legislation.

#### **3) February through September / October 2007**

- A) Monitor progress of the bills and respond to emerging conflicts and proposed amendments through close ongoing communications with the NSGO Director, SGA, office of the Secretary and legislative contacts.

B) Respond in a timely manner to request for information, opportunities for participation in information sharing sessions and invitations to congressional hearings.

**Panel Members as Informed and Concerned Citizens**

- 1) Keeping your colleagues, friends and organizational contacts informed and engaged in communicating about and in support of the program will be an important activity to achieving a desired re-authorization bill.
- 2) Relaying to the Panel Executive committee and / or the reauthorizing committee issues and concerns discovered over the course of the legislative cycle will be vital to the ability of the Panel to be proactive in discharge of its responsibilities.