I don’t know where the time goes. It seems like just a few weeks ago we were all together in Minot listening and learning and earning those much needed CEUs. In November, I attended the ASHA convention in Boston and actually visited briefly with another North Dakotan attending the convention! I also attended the last meeting of the ASHA Legislative Council on the Saturday and Sunday following the convention. It was during this meeting that the implementation of the new ASHA governance system was begun. The following information I initially requested to be sent to ASHA members in North Dakota, but with the new governance system, ASHA no longer makes the email “blast” service available to your representatives. I have asked NDSLHA to post it so that I can get the information to as many of the state’s members as possible.

This spring your new Advisory Councils will meet in D.C. with the ASHA Executive Board. There will be two separate councils—one for speech-language pathologists and one for audiologists. Each state will be allowed one representative for each Advisory Council. As your current LC representative, I will serve this spring on the SLP Advisory Council (as I am a SLP). Since we only had one LC representative for the state of ND, a representative for the new Audiology Advisory Council will need to be elected by the audiologists in North Dakota who are members of ASHA. (I did contact some of you audiologists to see if you would consider a nomination for this Advisory Council.) If you are an audiologist and have an interest in the policies and procedures of ASHA, please consider nominating yourself for this council, or at the very lease vote for this representative when notified of the election. It is an excellent opportunity to become an active part of our national/international organization. During the spring meeting, we will be visiting our congressmen to present information related to our profession and services that are affected by federal laws or regulations.

In the remainder of this announcement, I am including information that has come to my attention since my last report or email blast to my North Dakotan ASHA constituents:

Congress Completes Massive 2008 Federal Funding Bill

Ending months of arduous work, Congress passed an omnibus spending bill which would fund nearly all government operations for the next fiscal year and adjourned for the holidays. The $555 billion bill compiles the 11 remaining spending bills for FY 2008, including the Labor-Health and Human Services-Education (Labor-HHS) and Veterans Affairs (VA) appropriations. The President is expected to sign the federal spending legislation into law sometime before the end of the year.

After initially passing funding bills that added significantly to domestic programs, President Bush and congressional leaders were at a standoff as the year came to an end on a variety of policy issues and spending levels. Overall, the omnibus funding legislation represents significant concessions to the President’s proposed domestic funding levels, while preserving a number of congressional Democratic program priorities.
Most federal education programs received either no or nominal increases over 2007 spending with the exception being No Child Left Behind (NCLB) that received $24.8 billion, $1.1 billion above 2007. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B State Grants received $11 billion or $550 million above the President’s 2008 request and $259 million above 2007. The federal share of funding the education of students with disabilities will increase from 17.2% in 2007 to 17.3% in 2008.

The bill also provides $110.9 million for expanding of the National Children's Study – an increase of almost $42 million over the 2007 funding level. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) will receive approximately $29.2 billion, about $329 million over FY 2007 levels. And the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will see an increase of nearly $110 million for a total funding level of $6.38 billion in FY 2008.

The Newborn Hearing Screening program at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) received roughly a $2 million increase over FY 2007 to $11.8 million; and the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) was increased to just over $10 million in FY 2008.

The Veterans Health Administration will receive $37.2 billion under the FY 2008 omnibus spending bill – an increase of $4.5 billion from FY 2007 and $2.6 more than President Bush requested.

The legislation also contained funding for several other initiatives of interest to ASHA members:

- $268,000 to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Foundation for its 21st Century Scholars program;
- $100,00 to the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, NC, for a teletherapy program to address the shortage of speech language pathologists;
- $300,00 to the Hackett-Bower Clinic at Magnolia Speech School in Jackson, MS, for acquisition of equipment and programs; and
- $175,000 to the National Cued Speech Association for parent, teacher, and transliterator training and certification in cued speech for preschool and school-aged children.

Minutes from the Legislative Council and Assembly meetings are posted on the ASHA Web site at [http://www.asha.org/LC/archive](http://www.asha.org/LC/archive). If you have any questions regarding the discussions and actions taken by the Legislative Council, please do not hesitate to contact me. My email address is orlene.schroeder@minotstateu.edu and my office phone number is 701-858-3181.

Orlene Schroeder
ND Legislative Councilor