Greetings from Ohio, a swing state bombarded with advertising from our recent elections! It has been reported that nearly $100 million was spent in Ohio by the presidential campaigns alone. Imagine if these funds had been devoted to supporting literacy instruction instead!

Here at RRCNA, education policy and funding is our priority because we know the important work you are doing! The next few months are a critical time for us, so I’d like to update you on the issues we’ll be working on and ask for your assistance.

RRCNA is a member of a coalition called Advocates for Literacy, comprised of more than 70 national organizations advocating for federal education policy supporting comprehensive literacy strategies and adequate funding for effective literacy instruction at the state and local levels.

Joining voices with coalition members and our lobbying firm—Washington Partners, LLC—we are continuing to educate members of Congress and staff about the impact of the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Program. SRCL has provided funding to each state to develop a comprehensive literacy plan and discretionary grants to six states so far to implement their plans. Advocates for Literacy is working to increase federal funding for this literacy program so more states will have the opportunity to apply for these implementation funds.

Now that we are beyond the election, it is time again to make our voices heard with our members of Congress.

We urge Congress to replace the sequester with a balanced approach to deficit reduction and to invest in education.

There is much to be done before the current Congress goes home, but nothing more important than dealing with the sequestration and current year appropriations legislation. In order to leave Washington to campaign, Congress passed a 6-month continuing resolution to fund the government through March 27, 2013 at FY12 levels. Complicating matters, though, is the sequestration agreement, which was designed to be such an unthinkable solution that it would force legislators to fashion an agreement to reduce the country’s debt.

The Super Committee, appointed by Congress in 2011, couldn’t reach an agreement on how to come up with the required amount of savings, so according to the Budget Control Act signed into law by President Obama in 2011, sequestration takes effect on Jan. 2, 2013. This will result in across-the-board cuts to both non-defense and defense discretionary spending by 8–9%.

Defense industry lobbyists are pressing to be relieved of cuts to their programs citing national security concerns, which would then result in doubling cuts to nondefense related discretionary spending—including federal support of education. If sequestration stands, Title I, IDEA, and every other education funding line will be reduced by the 8–9%. If the defense industry is successful in changing the deal, those reductions to education could double.

Help take our message to your legislators
RRCNA is asking every member to contact your Congressional representative and senator and communicate this message:

The need to increase the federal investment in education has never been greater. Jobs and the economy are directly linked to such investments. Both unemployment rates and lifetime earnings are based on levels of education attainment. We urge Congress to replace the sequester with a balanced approach to deficit reduction and to invest in education.

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As the new Congress convenes in January, RRCNA will again designate our “Target 50” members — the representatives and senators serving on their respective education and appropriations committees. Over the 2-year Congress, we stay in touch with these legislators and their staff on our priority issues. In many cases, we enlist your participation as members who are constituents. You are able to localize the message and illustrate the impact of Reading Recovery on children’s literacy.

Online resources for your advocacy efforts

RRCNA has made available resources to help you with your advocacy efforts. The Public Policy section of our website provides you with timely information about federal policy and funding. Throughout the site you will find downloadable information suitable for sharing. The Members Only section of our website includes an attractive and easy-to-read 1-page handout for elected officials titled “Their Success Is Our Success.” For more in-depth information about the political process and reaching out to your legislators, an Advocacy Guide provides practical information about the process and contacting elected officials. We will be updating that information when new committees are formed at the beginning of the year. In addition to these web resources, we also are planning an advocacy and leadership strand for next June’s Teacher Leader Institute and Leadership Academy.

The months ahead are important for you and your students, so we will keep you informed through our monthly Connections enewsletter and special advocacy newsletters as needed. Be sure we have your correct email address so you can track our efforts! It’s sure to be an interesting and challenging time!

Only section of our website includes Timely information about federal policy and funding is available in the Public Policy section of the website, where additional advocacy resources can be downloaded and used for visits to elected officials at the state and national level.

Reading Recovery Advocacy Guide PDF is a 31-page planning and reference resource.

How-to resources include a fact sheet on Powerful Tools for Advocacy Outreach.