

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION****Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services; Overview Information; State Program Improvement Grants Program; Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards for Fiscal Year (FY) 2003 (To Be Awarded in FY 2004)**

*Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:* 84.323A

**DATES:** Applications Available: January 15, 2004.

*Deadline for Transmittal of Applications:* February 27, 2004.

*Deadline for Intergovernmental Review:* April 27, 2004.

**Eligible Applicants:** A State educational agency (SEA) of one of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico or an outlying area (United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) that is not a current grantee as of February 1, 2004.

**Estimated Available Funds:** \$22,000,000.

**Estimated Range of Awards:** Awards will be not less than \$530,000, nor more than \$2,243,812 in the case of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Pursuant to subsection 655(b) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Secretary has increased the maximum award to account for inflation. In the case of an outlying area awards will be not less than \$84,800.

**Note:** Consistent with EDGAR 34 CFR 75.104(b), we will reject any application that proposes a project funding level for any year that exceeds the stated maximum award amount for that year.

We will set the amount of each grant after considering—

- (1) The amount of funds available for making the grants;
- (2) The relative population of the State or outlying area; and
- (3) The types of activities proposed by the State or outlying area.

**Estimated Average Size of Awards:** \$1,200,000.

**Estimated Number of Awards:** 20.

**Note:** The Department is not bound by any estimates in this notice.

**Project Period:** Not less than one year and not more than three years.

Full Text of Announcement

**I. Funding Opportunity Description**

**Purpose of Program:** The purpose of this program, authorized under IDEA, is to assist SEAs and their partners, referred to in section 652(b) of IDEA, with reforming and improving their

systems for providing educational, early intervention, and transitional services, including their systems for professional development, technical assistance, and dissemination of knowledge about best practices, to improve results for children with disabilities.

**Priorities:** In accordance with 34 CFR 75.105(b)(2)(iv) these priorities are allowable activities specified in the statute. (See sections 651–655 of IDEA.)

**Absolute Priority:** For FY 2004 this priority is an absolute priority. Under section 653 of IDEA and 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3), we consider only applications that meet this priority.

This priority supports projects that assist SEAs and their partners in reforming and improving their systems for providing educational, early intervention, and transitional services, including their systems for professional development, technical assistance, and dissemination of knowledge about best practices, to improve results for children with disabilities.

**State Improvement Plan.** Applicants must submit a State improvement plan that—

(a) Is integrated, to the maximum extent possible, with State plans under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, if appropriate;

(b) Identifies those critical aspects of early intervention, general education, and special education programs (including professional development, based on an assessment of State and local needs) that must be improved to enable children with disabilities to meet the goals established by the State under section 612(a)(16) of IDEA. Specifically, applicants must include:

(1) An analysis of all information, reasonably available to the SEA, on the performance of children with disabilities in the State, including—

(i) Their performance on State assessments and other performance indicators established for all children, including drop-out rates and graduation rates;

(ii) Their participation in postsecondary education and employment; and

(iii) How their performance on the assessments and indicators compares to that of non-disabled children;

(2) An analysis of State and local needs for professional development for personnel to serve children with disabilities that includes, at a minimum:

(i) The number of personnel providing special education and related services; and

(ii) Relevant information on current and anticipated personnel vacancies

and shortages (including the number of individuals described in paragraph (b)(2)(i) with temporary certification) and on the extent of certification or retraining necessary to eliminate those shortages that is based, to the maximum extent possible, on existing assessments of personnel needs;

(3) An analysis of the major findings of the Secretary's most recent reviews of State compliance, as they relate to improving results for children with disabilities; and

(4) An analysis of other information, reasonably available to the State, on the effectiveness of the State's systems of early intervention, special education, and general education in meeting the needs of children with disabilities;

(c) Describes a partnership agreement that—

(1) Specifies—

(i) The nature and extent of the partnership among the SEA, local educational agencies (LEAs), and other State agencies involved in, or concerned with, the education of children with disabilities, and the respective roles of each member of the partnership; and

(ii) How those agencies will work in partnership with other persons and organizations involved in, and concerned with, the education of children with disabilities, including the respective roles of each of these persons and organizations; and

(2) Is in effect for the period of the grant;

(d) Describes how grant funds will be used in undertaking the systemic-change activities, and the amount and nature of funds from any other sources, including funds under part B of IDEA retained for use at the State level under sections 611(f) and 619(d) of IDEA, that will be committed to the systemic-change activities;

(e) Describes the strategies the State will use to address the needs identified under paragraph (b), including how it will—

(1) Change State policies and procedures to address systemic barriers to improving results for children with disabilities;

(2) Hold LEAs and schools accountable for educational progress of children with disabilities;

(3) Provide technical assistance to LEAs and schools to improve results for children with disabilities;

(4) Address the identified needs for in-service and pre-service preparation to ensure that all personnel who work with children with disabilities (including both professional and paraprofessional personnel who provide special education, general education, related services, or early intervention services)

have the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the needs of children with disabilities, including a description of how it will—

(i) Prepare general and special education personnel with the content knowledge and collaborative skills needed to meet the needs of children with disabilities, including how the State will work with other States on common certification criteria;

(ii) Prepare professionals and paraprofessionals in the area of early intervention with the content knowledge and collaborative skills needed to meet the needs of infants and toddlers with disabilities;

(iii) Work with institutions of higher education and other entities that (on both a pre-service and an in-service basis) prepare personnel who work with children with disabilities to ensure that those institutions and entities develop the capacity to support quality professional development programs that meet State and local needs;

(iv) Work to develop collaborative agreements with other States for the joint support and development of programs to prepare personnel for which there is not sufficient demand within a single State to justify support or development of a program of preparation;

(v) Work in collaboration with other States, particularly neighboring States, to address the lack of uniformity and reciprocity in the credentialing of teachers and other personnel;

(vi) Enhance the ability of teachers and others to use strategies, like behavioral interventions, to address the conduct of children with disabilities that impedes the learning of children with disabilities and others;

(vii) Acquire and disseminate, to teachers, administrators, school board members, and related services personnel, significant knowledge derived from educational research and other sources, and how the State, if appropriate, will adopt promising practices, materials, and technology;

(viii) Recruit, prepare, and retain qualified personnel, including personnel with disabilities and personnel from groups that are underrepresented in the fields of regular education, special education, and related services;

(ix) Integrate its plan, to the maximum extent possible, with other professional development plans and activities, including plans and activities developed and carried out under other Federal and State laws that address personnel recruitment and training; and

(x) Provide for the joint training of parents and special education, related

services, and general education personnel;

(5) Address systemic problems identified in Federal compliance reviews, including shortages of qualified personnel;

(6) Disseminate results of the local capacity-building and improvement projects funded under section 611(f)(4) of IDEA;

(7) Address improving results for children with disabilities in the geographic areas of greatest need;

(8) Assess, on a regular basis, the extent to which the strategies implemented under this subpart have been effective; and

(9) Coordinate its improvement strategies with public and private sector resources.

*Required partners.* Applicants must:

(a) Establish a partnership with LEAs and other State agencies involved in, or concerned with, the education of children with disabilities; and

(b) Work in partnership with other persons and organizations involved in, and concerned with, the education of children with disabilities, including—

(1) The Governor;

(2) Parents of children with

disabilities;

(3) Parents of nondisabled children;

(4) Individuals with disabilities;

(5) Organizations representing individuals with disabilities and their parents, such as the parent training and information centers;

(6) Community-based and other nonprofit organizations involved in the education and employment of individuals with disabilities;

(7) The lead State agency for part C of IDEA;

(8) General and special education teachers, and early intervention personnel;

(9) The State advisory panel established under part B of IDEA;

(10) The State interagency coordinating council established under part C of IDEA; and

(11) Institutions of higher education within the State.

*Optional partners.* A partnership established by applicants may also include—

(a) Individuals knowledgeable about vocational education;

(b) The State agency for higher education;

(c) The State vocational rehabilitation agency;

(d) Public agencies with jurisdiction in the areas of health, mental health, social services, and juvenile justice; and

(e) Other individuals.

*Use of funds.* Each SEA that receives a State Improvement Grant under this program—

(a) May use grant funds to carry out any activities that are described in the State's application and that are consistent with the purpose of this program;

(b) Shall, consistent with its partnership agreement established under the grant, award contracts or subgrants to LEAs, institutions of higher education, and parent training and information centers, as appropriate, to carry out its State improvement plan; and

(c) May award contracts and subgrants to other public and private entities, including the lead State agency under part C of IDEA, to carry out that plan;

(d)(1) Shall use not less than 75 percent of the funds it receives under the grant for any fiscal year—

(i) To ensure that there are sufficient regular education, special education, and related services personnel who have the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the needs of children with disabilities and developmental goals of young children; or

(ii) To work with other States on common certification criteria; or

(2) Shall use not less than 50 percent of those funds for these purposes, if the State demonstrates to the Secretary's satisfaction that it has the personnel described in paragraph (d)(1).

**Program Authority:** 20 U.S.C. 1461.

*Applicable Regulations:* The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 74, 75, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 85, 86, 97, 98, and 99.

**Note:** The regulations in 34 CFR part 86 apply to institutions of higher education only.

## II. Award Information

*Type of Award:* Discretionary Grants.

*Estimated Available Funds:*

\$22,000,000.

*Estimated Range of Awards:* Awards will be not less than \$530,000, nor more than \$2,243,812 in the case of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Pursuant to subsection 655(b) of IDEA the Secretary has increased the maximum award to account for inflation. In the case of an outlying area awards will be not less than \$84,800.

**Note:** Consistent with EDGAR 34 CFR 75.104(b), we will reject any application that proposes a project funding level for any year that exceeds the stated maximum award amount for that year.

We will set the amount of each grant after considering—

(1) the amount of funds available for making the grants;

(2) the relative population of the State or outlying area; and

(3) the types of activities proposed by the State or outlying area.

*Estimated Average Size of Awards:* \$1,200,000.

*Estimated Number of Awards:* 20.

**Note:** The Department is not bound by any estimates in this notice.

*Project Period:* Not less than one year and not more than three years.

### III. Eligibility Information

1. *Eligible Applicants:* An SEA of one of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico or an outlying area (United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) that is not a current grantee as of February 1, 2004.

2. *Cost Sharing or Matching:* This competition does not involve cost sharing or matching.

3. *Other: General Requirements—*

(a) The projects funded under this notice must make positive efforts to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities (see section 606 of IDEA).

(b) Applicants and grant recipients funded under this notice must involve individuals with disabilities or parents of individuals with disabilities in planning, implementing, and evaluating the projects (see section 661(f)(1)(A) of IDEA).

(c) The projects funded under these priorities must budget for a two-day Project Directors' meeting in Washington, DC during each year of the project.

(d) If a project maintains a Web site, it must include relevant information and documents in an accessible form.

### IV. Application and Submission Information

1. *Address to Request Application Package:* Education Publications Center (ED Pubs), P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794-1398. Telephone (toll free): 1-877-433-7827. FAX: 1-301-470-1244. If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), you may call (toll free): 1-877-576-7734.

You may also contact ED Pubs at its Web site: [www.ed.gov/pubs/edpubs.html](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/edpubs.html) or you may contact ED Pubs at its e-mail address: [edpubs@inet.ed.gov](mailto:edpubs@inet.ed.gov)

If you request an application from ED Pubs, be sure to identify this competition as follows: CFDA number 84.323A.

Individuals with disabilities may obtain a copy of the application package in an alternative format (e.g., Braille,

large print, audiotape, or computer diskette) by contacting the program contact persons listed in section VII of this notice. However, the Department is not able to reproduce in an alternative format the standard forms included in the application package.

2. *Content and Form of Application Submission:* Requirements concerning the content of an application, together with the forms you must submit, are in the application package for this competition.

*Page Limit:* The application narrative (Part III of the application) is where you, the applicant, address the selection criteria that reviewers use to evaluate your application. You must limit Part III to the equivalent of no more than 100 pages, using the following standards:

- A "page" is 8.5" × 11" (on one side only) with 1" margins at the top, bottom, and both sides.

- Double space (no more than three lines per vertical inch) all text in the application narrative, including titles, headings, footnotes, quotations, and captions, as well as all text in charts, tables, figures, and graphs.

- Use a font that is either 12-point or larger or no smaller than 10 pitch (characters per inch).

The page limit does not apply to Part I, the cover sheet; Part II, the budget section, including the narrative budget justification; Part IV, the assurances and certifications; or the one-page abstract, the resumes, the bibliography, references, or the letters of support. However, you must include all of the application narrative in Part III.

We will reject your application if—

- You apply these standards and exceed the page limit; or
- You apply other standards and exceed the equivalent of the page limit.

3. *Submission Dates and Times:* Applications Available: January 15, 2004.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: February 27, 2004.

The dates and times for the transmittal of applications by mail or by hand (including a courier service or commercial carrier) are in the application package for this program. The application package also specifies the hours of operation of the e-Application Web site. We do not consider an application that does not comply with the deadline requirements.

Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: April 27, 2004.

4. *Intergovernmental Review:* This program is subject to Executive Order 12372 and the regulations in 34 CFR part 79. Information about Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs under Executive Order 12372

is in the application package for this program.

5. *Funding Restrictions:* We reference additional regulations outlining funding restrictions in the *Applicable Regulations* heading, in section I of this notice.

6. *Other Submission Requirements:* Instructions and requirements for the transmittal of applications by mail or by hand (including a courier service or commercial carrier) are in the application package for this program.

*Application Procedures:*

**Note:** Some of the procedures in these instructions for transmitting applications differ from those in the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) (34 CFR 75.102). Under the Administrative Procedure Act (5 U.S.C. 553) the Department generally offers interested parties the opportunity to comment on proposed regulations. However, these amendments make procedural changes only and do not establish new substantive policy. Therefore, under 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(A), the Secretary has determined that proposed rulemaking is not required.

### Pilot Project for Electronic Submission of Applications

We are continuing to expand our pilot project for electronic submission of applications to include additional formula grant programs and additional discretionary grant competitions. Special Education—State Program Improvement Grants Program—CFDA #84.323A is one of the programs included in the pilot project. If you are an applicant under the State Program Improvement Grants Program, you may submit your application to us in either electronic or paper format.

The pilot project involves the use of the Electronic Grant Application System (e-Application). If you use e-Application, you will be entering data online while completing your application. You may not e-mail an electronic copy of a grant application to us. If you participate in this voluntary pilot project by submitting an application electronically, the data you enter online will be saved into a database. We request your participation in e-Application. We shall continue to evaluate its success and solicit suggestions for its improvement.

If you participate in e-Application, please note the following:

- Your participation is voluntary.
- When you enter the e-Application system, you will find information about its hours of operation. We strongly recommend that you do not wait until the application deadline date to initiate an e-Application package.
- You will not receive additional point value because you submit a grant

application in electronic format, nor will we penalize you if you submit an application in paper format.

- You may submit all documents electronically, including the Application for Federal Education Assistance (ED 424), Budget Information—Non-Construction Programs (ED 524), and all necessary assurances and certifications.
- Your e-Application must comply with any page limit requirements described in this notice.

- After you electronically submit your application, you will receive an automatic acknowledgement, which will include a PR/Award number (an identifying number unique to your application).

- Within three working days after submitting your electronic application, fax a signed copy of the Application for Federal Education Assistance (ED 424) to the Application Control Center after following these steps:

1. Print ED 424 from e-Application.
2. The institution's Authorizing Representative must sign this form.
3. Place the PR/Award number in the upper right hand corner of the hard copy signature page of the ED 424.
4. Fax the signed ED 424 [or enter the name of your program specific cover page] to the Application Control Center at 1-202-260-1349.

- We may request that you give us original signatures on other forms at a later date.

**Application Deadline Date Extension in Case of System Unavailability:** If you elect to participate in the e-Application pilot for the State Program Improvement Grants Program and you are prevented from submitting your application on the application deadline date because the e-Application system is unavailable, we will grant you an extension of one business day in order to transmit your application electronically, by mail, or by hand delivery. We will grant this extension if—

1. You are a registered user of e-Application, and you have initiated an e-Application for this competition; and
2. (a) The e-Application system is unavailable for 60 minutes or more between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date; or
- (b) The e-Application system is unavailable for any period of time during the last hour of operation (that is, for any period of time between 3:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m., Washington, DC time) on the application deadline date.

We must acknowledge and confirm these periods of unavailability before granting you an extension. To request this extension or to confirm our

acknowledgement of any system unavailability, you may contact either (1) the persons listed elsewhere in this notice under For Further Information Contact (*see* VII. Agency Contact) or (2) the e-GRANTS help desk at 1-888-336-8930.

You may access the electronic grant application for the State Program Improvement Grants Program at: <http://e-grants.ed.gov>

## V. Application Review Information

**Selection Criteria:** The selection criteria for this competition are listed in 34 CFR 75.210 of EDGAR. The specific selection criteria to be used for this competition are in the application package.

## VI. Award Administration Information

**1. Award Notices:** If your application is successful, we notify your U.S. Representative and U.S. Senators and send you a Grant Award Notification (GAN). We may also notify you informally.

If your application is not evaluated or not selected for funding, we notify you.

**2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements:** We identify administrative and national policy requirements in the application package and reference these and other requirements under the *Applicable Regulations* heading, in section I of this notice.

We reference the regulations outlining the terms and conditions of an award under the *Applicable Regulations* heading, in section I of this notice and include these and other specific conditions in the GAN. The GAN also incorporates your approved application as part of your binding commitments under the grant.

**3. Reporting:** At the end of your project period, each SEA that receives a grant must submit a final performance report, including financial information, as directed by the Secretary. If you receive a multi-year award, you must submit an annual performance report that provides the most current performance and financial expenditure information as specified by the Secretary in 34 CFR 75.118.

The reports must describe the progress of the State in meeting the performance goals established under Section 612(a)(16) of the Act, analyze the effectiveness of the State's strategies in meeting those goals, and identify any changes in the strategies needed to improve its performance. Grantees must also provide information required under EDGAR at 34 CFR 80.40.

**4. Performance Measures:** The goal of the State Program Improvement Grants

Program is to reform and improve State systems for providing educational, early intervention, and transitional services consistent with State-identified needs. The applicant's proposed project evaluation must describe the extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data on the project's contribution to the reform and improvement of such systems.

If funded, the applicant will be expected to report such data in the projects' annual performance reports (EDGAR, 34 CFR 75.590). Data should reflect how States have used SIG funding, in addition to state resources, to achieve changes and improvements in the systems for providing services.

## VII. Agency Contact

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** The Grants and Contracts Services Team, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., room 3317, Switzer Building, Washington, DC 20202-2550. Telephone: 1-202-205-8207.

If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), you may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339.

Individuals with disabilities may obtain this document in an alternative format (*e.g.*, Braille, large print, audiotape, or computer diskette) on request to the Grants and Contracts Services Team listed in this section.

## VIII. Other Information

**Electronic Access to This Document:** You may view this document, as well as all other documents of this Department published in the **Federal Register**, in text or Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) on the Internet at the following site: [www.ed.gov/news/fedregister](http://www.ed.gov/news/fedregister).

To use PDF you must have Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is available free at this site. If you have questions about using PDF, call the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO), toll free, at 1-888-293-6498; or in the Washington, DC, area at 1-202-512-1530.

**Note:** The official version of this document is the document published in the **Federal Register**. Free Internet access to the official edition of the **Federal Register** and the Code of Federal Regulations is available on GPO Access at: [www.gpoaccess.gov/nara/index.html](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/nara/index.html).

Dated: January 8, 2004.

**Troy R. Justesen,**

*Acting Deputy Assistant, Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.*

[FR Doc. 04-833 Filed 1-13-04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000-01-P

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, Hearing

**AGENCY:** Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, Education.

**ACTION:** Notice of upcoming hearing.

**SUMMARY:** This notice sets forth the schedule and proposed agenda of a forthcoming hearing of the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance. Individuals who will need accommodations for a disability in order to attend the meeting (*i.e.*, interpreting services, assistive listening devices, and/or materials in alternative format) should notify Ms. Hope M. Gray at (202) 219-2099 or via e-mail at [hope.gray@ed.gov](mailto:hope.gray@ed.gov) no later than Thursday, January 29, 2004. We will attempt to meet requests after this date, but cannot guarantee availability of the requested accommodation. The meeting site is accessible to individuals with disabilities. This notice also describes the functions of the Committee. Notice of this meeting is required under section 10(a)(2) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act. This document is intended to notify the general public.

**Dates and Times:** Thursday, February 5, 2004, beginning at 9 a.m. and ending at approximately 5 p.m.

**ADDRESSES:** The Holiday Inn on the Hill, 415 New Jersey Avenue, NW., the Federal South Room, Washington, DC 20001.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Dr. Brian K. Fitzgerald, Staff Director, Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, Capitol Place, 80 F Street, NW., Suite 413, Washington, DC 20202-7582 (202) 219-2099.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance is established under section 491 of the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 as amended by Pub. L. 100-50 (20 U.S.C. 1098). The Advisory Committee serves as an independent source of advice and counsel to the Congress and the Secretary of Education on student financial aid policy. Since its inception, the Committee has been charged with providing technical expertise with regard to systems of need analysis and application forms, making

recommendations that result in the maintenance of access to postsecondary education for low- and middle-income students; conducting a study of institutional lending in the Stafford Student Loan Program; assisting with activities related to the 1992 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965; conducting a three-year evaluation of the Ford Federal Direct Loan Program (FDLP) and the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP) under the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA) of 1993; and assisting Congress with the 1998 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

The congressional mandate requires the Advisory Committee to conduct objective, nonpartisan, and independent analyses on important aspects of the student assistance programs under Title VI of the Higher Education Act. The Committee traditionally approaches its work from a set of fundamental goals: Promoting access; ensuring program integrity; integrating delivery across the Title IV programs; eliminating or avoiding program complexity; and minimizing burden on students and institutions.

The most important charge of the Advisory Committee is to make recommendations to Congress and the Secretary that will lead to the maintenance and enhancement of access to postsecondary education for low- and middle-income students. In addition to carrying out its ongoing statutory charges, the Committee dedicated itself to articulating the current state of access by developing two reports on the condition of access, *Access Denied: Restoring the Nation's Commitment to Equal Educational Opportunity and Empty Promises: The Myth of College Access in America*. As a result of the findings in its access reports, the Committee submitted its access proposal to Congress in May 2003 in preparation for reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. The Committee will review and evaluate, from an access perspective, other reauthorization proposals and ideas emanating from Congress and the higher education community.

The proposed agenda includes discussion sessions with congressional staff, Department of Education officials, and members of the higher education community focusing on the need for simplification of need analysis, forms and delivery of student aid. Specifically, the hearing will initiate an Advisory Committee simplification study conducted at the request of Congress. The hearing will explore (a) congressional interests and proposals

for simplification, (b) perspectives of the higher education community and specific problems, including annual updates to the state tax allowances, (c) the student work penalty, and (d) early notification of student aid eligibility. Space is limited and you are encouraged to register early if you plan to attend. You may register through the Internet at [ADV\\_COMSFA@ed.gov](mailto:ADV_COMSFA@ed.gov) or [Tracy.Deanna.Jones@ed.gov](mailto:Tracy.Deanna.Jones@ed.gov). Please include your name, title, affiliation, complete address (including Internet and e-mail—if available), and telephone and fax numbers. If you are unable to register electronically, you may mail or fax your registration information to the Advisory Committee staff office at (202) 219-3032. Also, you may contact the Advisory Committee staff at (202) 219-2099. The registration deadline is Friday, January 30, 2004.

The Advisory Committee will meet in Washington, DC on Thursday, February 5, 2004, from 9 a.m. until approximately 5 p.m.

Record are kept of all Committee proceedings, and are available for public inspection at the Office of the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, Capitol Place, 80 F Street, NW., Suite 413, Washington, DC from the hours of 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., weekdays, except Federal holidays.

Dated: January 8, 2004.

**Brian K. Fitzgerald,**

*Staff Director, Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance.*

[FR Doc. 04-723 Filed 1-13-04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000-01-M

## DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

[FE Docket Nos. 03-60-NG, et al.]

### Office of Fossil Energy; Reliant Energy Services, Inc., et al.; Orders Granting and Amending, Authority To Import and Export Natural Gas, Including Liquefied Natural Gas

**AGENCY:** Office of Fossil Energy, DOE.

**ACTION:** Notice of Orders.

**SUMMARY:** The Office of Fossil Energy (FE) of the Department of Energy gives notice that during October 2003, it issued Orders granting and amending authority to import and export natural gas, including liquefied natural gas. These Orders are summarized in the attached appendix and may be found on the FE Web site at <http://www.fe.doe.gov> (select gas regulation). They are also available for inspection and copying in the Office of Natural Gas & Petroleum.

Import & Export Activities, Docket Room 3E-033, Forrestal Building, 1000