

**January 2011 ITAG Spotlight,
by Gail Kenkal, ITAG Treasurer**

Addressing Legislative Issues:

What Are the Javits Grants? How Can I Help?

Previous articles have been published on the status of the **Javits Grants**, the only federally funded program that supports gifted kids. Javits grants were founded to research ways to test, identify, and create appropriate programs for gifted students; to award grants to colleges, states, and districts to study and implement programs for underrepresented populations of gifted kids, such as children of poverty, minority, English language learners, and disabled students; and to award grants to states and districts to implement programs for gifted kids.

Javits grants have opened our eyes to new ways to identify gifted children. They have expanded our knowledge of gifted education so we can help educate teachers about gifted kids. "Best practices" used in gifted education are frequently adopted into regular classrooms for all students to benefit.

Iowa's ties to Javits grants:

- ◆ The Iowa Alternative Schools Project was born from a Javits grant. Prior to this project, virtually no information about talented students in alternative schools was available. School teachers in alternative schools needed training to recognize and support these learners, as well as to devise appropriate curriculum and service options. Now, for the first time, alternative school students are participating in a statewide online Advanced Placement Academy.
- ◆ The "Twice-Exceptional" project was funded with a three-year (2005-2008), \$904,772 federal Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Program grant to the Iowa Department of Education, who teamed with the University of Iowa's Belin-Blank Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development and Iowa's Area Education Agencies. The project's main goal was to learn more about gifted students who have a learning disability or an autism spectrum disorder.
- ◆ Other examples are available at www.nagc.org, type "Javits grants" in search box.

[The Council for Exceptional Children](http://www.nagc.org) summed up the importance of Javits grants by stating: "Our nation is failing to serve high-ability, low income students. The Javits program directly addresses this issue. It focuses on developing strategies to identify and serve students who traditionally have not had access to gifted education programs. Because of work done through the Javits program, teachers have been trained to better understand how to identify high ability in students and modify curriculum to meet their needs. If the Senate eliminates the Javits program, this work will end."

Last spring, Linda Moehring and I were on Capitol Hill meeting with all our Iowa Representatives and Senators, explaining the need for Javits funding. Senator Grassley and Senator Dodd (CT) sponsored a bill to keep Javits and restore funding in the amount of \$11.25 million. 13 other Senators co-signed the letters. On the House side, Rep. Gallegly (CA) and Rep. Matheson (UT) sponsored the bill and 48 other Representatives co-signed. Among them was Representative Loebbeck, (IA-2). (Senator Harkin is the chairman of the Subcommittee of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, Senate Appropriations Committee. Therefore, he cannot be a co-signer of the bill.)

Make your voices heard! Check the NAGC website, www.nagc.org, for current information on Javits funding and other legislative news on gifted education. Investigate "advocacy and legislation," on the left hand side of the website. Meet with your Congressman or their aides. Email, text, or write them. Let them know that gifted kids need their support. Explain the importance of Javits funding. Give personal examples of how gifted services have made a difference in the lives of gifted kids.