



VSBA
Virginia School Boards Association
Leadership · Advocacy · Support

Federal Advocacy Update



Good Friday Evening. At the conclusion of this message is the Federal Advocacy and Public Policy Update for October 30, 2020. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Have a good weekend!

Best,
J.T.

Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Update

October 30, 2020

Congressional Update

Lawmakers Aim for Lame Duck Pandemic Relief

Negotiations and wider discussions on a much-needed pandemic relief package have continued this week between Congress and the Trump Administration. Despite the on-again-off-again nature of these talks, both sides have remained optimistic for months about the potential for a deal. This week, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and U.S. Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin made a final attempt at finding agreement but were unsuccessful. Speaker Pelosi sent a letter to Mnuchin on Thursday, October 29, outlining the remaining areas of disagreement. In her letter, the Speaker noted that K-12 school funding, along with support for state and local government broadly, are among the outstanding issues for which they have not received a response from the Trump Administration. With the election less than a week away, the balance of power and control of the White House could shift dramatically. As a consequence, some lawmakers, including the Speaker herself, remain hopeful that agreement on a new pandemic relief package can be reached with the White House and Congressional Republicans when lawmakers reconvene after the November elections during the final “lame duck” session of the 116th Congress.

Congressional Democrats Unveil Education Jobs Bill

In light of stalled negotiations over another round of coronavirus assistance, House Education and Labor Committee member Rep. Jahana Hayes (D-CT), Committee Chairman Bobby Scott (D-CA), and Rep. Sablan (D-NMI) introduced the Save Education Jobs Act (H.R. 8691) to, among other objectives, protect an estimated four million education-related jobs currently at risk due to the ongoing pandemic. The legislation would create an Education Jobs Fund—similar to one passed during the Great Recession in 2010—to provide significant amounts of emergency financial assistance to states and local communities to avoid layoffs of teachers and other school-related jobs. A press release on the legislation can be viewed here; section-by-section summary here; and a factsheet on the proposal here.

Administration Update

Reading Scores Decline on Nation’s Report Card

The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), also known as the nation’s report card, released the most recent results for assessments conducted in the subjects of reading and math. The nationwide assessment of grade

12 students took place from January to March 2019 and found that while students' scores stayed the same in math, scores for reading dropped for all students. For lower-performing students, scores declined in both subjects—a troubling disparity. Although the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) did not advance a specific reason for these results, the office called for more research into the issue “. . . which [NCES] has now observed in multiple reading assessments. . . “ On Wednesday, October 28, NSBA issued a statement on these scores, strongly emphasizing that these findings underscore an urgent need to invest more resources in public schools to more effectively serve all students. NCES' press release on the results can be found here.

GAO Lead Study Released

In recognition of National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) shared a number of recent resources related to protecting children and students from lead exposure in child care facilities and schools. A recent GAO report from last month found that lead testing protocols are largely inadequate at many Head Start centers. In 2018, the agency came to a similar conclusion when it found that 41 percent of surveyed school districts had not tested their water systems for lead.

Congressional Legislation

H.R.8691 To authorize the establishment of an Education Jobs Fund to retain and create education jobs in communities most impacted by COVID-19, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep. Hayes, Jahana [D-CT-5]

H.R.8664 To provide funds to local educational agencies for personal protective equipment for educators and other staff, and students. Sponsor: Rep. Garcia, Jesus G. "Chuy" [D-IL-4]

S.4868 A bill to allow eligible entities under part B of title IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to use subgrant funds for activities authorized under such part, regardless of whether such activities are conducted during nonschool hours or periods when school is not in session, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen. Murkowski, Lisa [R-AK]

S.4865 A bill to improve the full-service community school program, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen. Brown, Sherrod [D-OH]

S.4831 A bill to provide resources for States, State educational agencies, local educational agencies, educators, school leaders, and others to measure and address instructional loss in students in kindergarten through grade 12. Sponsor: Sen. Hirono, Mazie K. [D-HI]

J.T. Kessler
Government Relations Specialist
Virginia School Boards Association
200 Hansen Road, Suite 2
Charlottesville, VA 22911
800-446-8722 or 434-295-8722 Office
434-295-8785 Fax
jason@vsba.org, www.vsba.org