



VSBA
Virginia School Boards Association
Leadership · Advocacy · Support

Federal Advocacy Update



Good Saturday Morning. At the conclusion of this message you will find the Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Update for November 21, 2020. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Have a good weekend!

Best,

J.T.

Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Update

November 21, 2020

Congressional Update

Congress Goes on Recess as Funding Deadline Looms

Current funding for the federal government, including funding for K-12 education programs, is set to expire on December 11. Although the House under Democrat majority leadership has passed the necessary legislation to fund governmental operations beyond this date, the Senate under Republican majority leadership has so far failed to pass comparable legislation this year. Despite this impending deadline, Senators have recessed until November 30 and the House is expected to follow suit soon. When they return, lawmakers will have eight legislative days to find agreement on this critical issue to avoid a government shutdown. Both Speaker Pelosi (D-CA) and Senate Majority Leader McConnell (R-KY) have publicly committed to a full-year spending agreement, as opposed to another temporary stopgap measure, but are still working to find consensus on top-line spending levels ahead of December 11. Once agreement on an overall amount is reached, Congress must then negotiate program-level details. This will ultimately determine how much funding various federal programs, such as those for K-12 education, will receive for the current 2021 federal fiscal year which began on October 1 of this year.

As these efforts continue, the United States has reached a grim milestone—more than a quarter of a million Americans have now died from the coronavirus pandemic. With daily cases spiking in nearly every state, pressure is mounting yet again on Congress to respond and pass additional relief measures for those effected. This week, NSBA was joined by other national organizations [calling on Congress to act](#) and provide much needed emergency funding relief for the K-12 community. Although both sides have so far been unwilling and unable to compromise on the total amount for a pandemic relief package—Democrats favor one totaling around \$2 trillion while Republicans support about \$500 billion—Congressional leaders are at least acknowledging the urgency of this issue once again and have reportedly [restarted negotiations](#) on a pandemic relief package in hopes of finding agreement.

If successful, pandemic aid could potentially be included in a larger year-end agreement resolving these funding impasses. However, much remains unclear about the path forward as President Trump has refused to concede the Presidential election and his administration has been largely absent from these recent discussions.

In related news, NSBA also signed two important coalition letters this week. NSBA joined more than 40 other organizations [in sending a letter](#) to reiterate the call for Congress to provide \$12 billion for funding for the E-Rate program to help close the Homework Gap in any COVID relief bill that is considered. That letter has received

national press attention. Additionally, NSBA also joined several national education organizations [in signing a letter to Congressional appropriators](#) to fund Title II-A (Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants Program) at \$2.1 billion when considering funding bills for FY2021. This important measure would assist teachers and other educators.

Congressional Leadership Races

Last week, the Senate re-elected current Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) to lead their respective caucuses in the upcoming 117th Congress. On Wednesday, November 18, House Democrats and Republicans largely followed suit re-electing or renominating most of their current leadership teams. Minority Leader McCarthy (R-CA) was re-elected by the House Republican caucus, while Minority Whip Scalise (R-LA) and Conference Chair Cheney (R-WY) were both re-elected to their current roles for the House Republican Caucus.

On the Democratic side of the aisle, House Majority Leader Hoyer (D-MD) and House Majority Whip Clyburn (D-SC) will remain in the number two and three leadership slots respectively. Speaker Pelosi (D-CA) was renominated to be Speaker once again pending a full vote by the House early next year. This vote will be crucial as Democrats' majority has been reduced as a result of the most recent November elections. House Democrats are expected to have a 222-223 majority in the next Congress, meaning that they will only have a four-to-five seat majority beginning next year.

Sen. Booker Introduces Education Jobs Bill

On Wednesday, November 18, Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) introduced legislation that would provide \$260 billion to help students and school professionals grapple with the ongoing pandemic. Modeled off of similar legislation introduced during the last Great Recession, the bill would create an "educator jobs fund" to provide financial support to states and school districts to help keep teachers, school leaders, and other school-based professionals as the pandemic continues and budgets are potentially cut in response. The bill, titled "The Educator Jobs Fund Act of 2020" also proposes significant funding to help schools defray the cost of purchasing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) among other efforts. Additional information on the bill can be found [here](#) and the text of the proposal will be available [here](#) soon.

New Legislation

[H.R.8776](#) To direct the Secretary of Labor to make grants to eligible applicants to provide stipends to individuals enrolled in a pre-apprenticeship program, and for other purposes. Sponsor: [Rep. Smith, Adam \[D-WA-9\]](#)

[H.R.8294](#) National Apprenticeship Act of 2020 Sponsor: [Rep. Davis, Susan A. \[D-CA-53\]](#)

[S.4917](#) A bill to amend the CARES Act to support States and local educational agencies in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic so that all students, especially historically underserved students, are provided with a safe, healthy, equitable, and excellent education. Sponsor: [Sen. Booker, Cory A. \[D-NJ\]](#)

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