



VSBA
Virginia School Boards Association
Leadership · Advocacy · Support

Federal Advocacy Update



Good Friday Evening. At the conclusion of this message you will find the Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Update for November 6, 2020. If you have any questions, please contact me.

I hope each of you have a good weekend and thank you for all you do on behalf of public education in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Best,

J.T.

Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Update

November 6, 2020

Congressional Update

Changes in Senate Committee Leadership Likely After Election

As of this writing, the U.S. Presidential election is too close to call. Although several states have yet to finalize and formally declare a winner, Former Vice President Joe Biden is maintaining a sizeable lead in the electoral college and has a considerable advantage in the national popular vote. While the final presidential results are expected soon, more clarity is available further down the ballot where candidates from both parties have established [clearer outcomes](#) for their respective races.

The Senate education committee will likely be transformed next year as Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), and Senator Pat Roberts (R-KS) retire from Congress. Senator Doug Jones (D-AL) was defeated by Tommy Tuberville, which will create an additional opening on the committee, and Senator Kelly Loeffler (R-GA) will be part of a special run-off election in January to decide the winner of the Georgia seat. Should Republicans maintain control of the Senate—a result that will not become clear until two runoff elections are held in Georgia are complete—Senator Richard Burr (R-NC) will be next in line to become chairman of the committee. However, reports indicate that he may potentially take another committee leadership post instead. Should that happen Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) is the next most senior Republican on the committee, but he is not expected to receive the nod. That may mean that Senator Susan Collins (R-ME), who just secured reelection, will be the next most senior Republican on the committee. Should Democrats win the majority, Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) is widely expected to become chair.

Comparable changes on the House education committee are also likely, although to a much smaller extent. Democrats will maintain control of the House, but with a smaller majority. Thus far, incumbent education committee member Rep. Donna Shalala (D-FL) has lost reelection creating at least one new opening on the committee. Both Republicans and Democrats are expected to hold leadership elections later this month. It is widely expected that Ranking Member Virginia Foxx (R-NC) will retain her position in the upcoming 117th Congress and the same is predicted for current education committee Chairman Bobby Scott (D-VA). As a greater amount of official electoral data and information becomes available, VSBA's advocacy team will remain engaged with these processes and share relevant findings as they relate to K-12 education and Congressional committees of jurisdiction.

Majority Leader McConnell Embraces New Round of Pandemic Relief

Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY) won reelection this week and is widely expected to maintain his position as Senate Majority Leader if Republicans maintain control of the upper legislative chamber. Following his electoral win, Leader McConnell expressed openness to an additional round of pandemic relief legislation during the lame duck session of Congress. On Wednesday, October 4, the current Majority Leader [said](#), “We need another rescue package. . . and I think we need to do it before the end of the year.” This is a reversal of sorts given that the Leader McConnell, as recently as two weeks ago, [advocated against](#) relief legislation in the lead up to the November elections.

While formal negotiations have not yet restarted, lawmakers in both parties and in both chambers appear committed to providing additional pandemic relief during the upcoming lame duck session of Congress. Complicating matters further, current funding for the federal government will expire on December 11. Leader McConnell has also expressed interest in passing a larger spending bill, rather than an additional funding extension, to move past this deadline. As these twin efforts unfold, VSBA’s advocacy team will ensure Congress appreciates the significant emergency funding needs of the K-12 education community as a relief package is crafted.

[New Legislation](#)

[H.R.8715](#) — 116th Congress (2019-2020) To require the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of Education to make public a plan for the continuation of education during a public health emergency. Sponsor: [Rep. Payne, Donald M., Jr. \[D-NJ-10\]](#)

[H.R.8714](#) — 116th Congress (2019-2020) To amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to provide grants to local educational agencies to establish "Family Friendly School" policies at 500 elementary schools that align the school day with the work day to better support working families and to disseminate the learnings from these model schools so that other local educational agencies may adopt these practices, and to establish a supplemental 21st century community learning centers grant program to support programs and activities during summer recess when school is not in session. Sponsor: [Rep. Morelle, Joseph D. \[D-NY-25\]](#)

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