



VSBA
Virginia School Boards Association
Leadership · Advocacy · Support

Federal Advocacy Update



Good Saturday Morning! At the conclusion of this message is the January 16, 2021 Federal Advocacy and Public Policy Update. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Have a very safe and good weekend. As always, thank you for all you do to support public education in the Commonwealth.

Best,

J.T.

Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Update

January 16, 2021

Congressional Update

President-elect Biden Unveils Massive Pandemic Relief Plan

On Thursday, January 14, President-elect Joe Biden unveiled details of a \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief package dubbed the “American Rescue Plan.” The [proposal](#), which must still be considered and approved by Congress, would provide a host of new resources for pandemic-related activities such as vaccinations, treatments for patients, and direct aid to struggling families. Of note, the plan proposes \$170 billion in additional emergency relief specifically for education. To help realize President-elect Biden’s pledge to reopen the majority of K-8 schools in his first 100 days in office, \$130 billion of this funding would be directed to the K-12 education community to support these efforts. This funding could be used for a wide variety of related activities to support students, teachers, schools, and districts return safely to in-person instruction and overcome the challenges created by the current pandemic. The plan also includes a \$5 billion proposal to supplement Governors’ ongoing efforts to help education systems in their states while the remaining \$35 billion in education funding would be directed towards the higher education community. The plan emphasizes that all these funds should be directed towards entities that have been the most impacted by the pandemic.

In addition to these education specific proposals, the American Rescue Plan envisions \$350 billion in state and local fiscal relief—a key priority NSBA has been [advocating](#) for since last year given that nearly half of all of these dollars are spent in support of education. Upon the plan’s release, NSBA leadership issued a [statement](#) in support of this proposal and will work with lawmakers in the coming weeks ahead to ensure these bold and much needed steps can be enacted into law.

Administration Update

HHS Issues Guidance on School Vouchers Executive Order

On Monday, January 11, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued [guidance](#) for state and local entities administering the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) in relation to a recent [Executive Order](#) issued by President Trump on December 28, 2020. The order seeks to allow the nearly \$700 billion in federal funds

from the CSBG program, administered by HHS, to be used to pay for “private school tuition, home schooling, micro schooling, learning-pod expenses, special education services, or tutoring.” The guidance from HHS stipulates that while a grantee may use CSBG funds for this purpose, it must be justified via a statutorily-required community needs assessment which must take place at least once every three years. NSBA is opposed to this use of CSBG funding and will be advocating for it to be rescinded by the Biden administration.

USED Civil Rights Office Annual Report

On Wednesday, January 13, the U.S. Department of Education’s (USED) Office of Civil Rights (OCR) released its [annual report](#) for the most recent 2020 fiscal year. The report provides an overview of OCR’s civil rights enforcement activities for the past year and highlights specific achievements for the office. In particular, the report highlights the recent creation of the Outreach, Prevention, Education, and Non-Discrimination (OPEN) Center to help OCR proactively investigate civil rights complaints. For the most recent 2020 fiscal year, 45 percent of complaints received by OCR were Section 504/Title II related while 23 percent were related to Title IX. The report also touts the reduction in time it has taken officials to investigate and close investigations.

New Legislation

[H.Con.Res.4](#) Supporting the goals and ideals of No Name-Calling Week in bringing attention to name-calling of all kinds and providing schools with the tools and inspiration to launch an ongoing dialogue about ways to eliminate name-calling, bullying, and harassment in their communities. **Sponsor:** [Rep. Lee, Barbara \[D-CA-13\]](#)

[H.Res.33](#) Recognizing January 2021 as "National Mentoring Month", and for other purposes. **Sponsor:** [Rep. Scanlon, Mary Gay \[D-PA-5\]](#)

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