Good Friday Afternoon. At the conclusion of this message is the Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Update for August 20, 2021. Congress was on recess this past week so very little legislative action took place.

Please let me know if you have any questions about the items in this week's report. Have a great weekend!

Best,

J.T.

Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Update

August 20, 2021

Congressional Update

Congress Remains on Recess

After a flurry of activity last week in the Senate, legislative action on Capitol Hill has been relatively quiet this week as both chambers of Congress remain on recess. In anticipation of the House's early return from its annual August holiday, Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) recently instructed the House Rules Committee to begin work crafting a rule that will allow votes to commence next week on a bipartisan infrastructure package, recently approved by the Senate, along with a budget resolution advancing Congressional Democrats' separate efforts to pass a sizeable amount of President Biden's Build Back Better agenda. By linking both proposals together in this way, Congressional Democratic Leadership aims to garner the votes needed to pass these bills in both chambers in the weeks ahead.

As this process unfolds, VSBA's advocacy team will continue to work to ensure that lawmakers appreciate the significant infrastructure needs of the K-12 community.

Administration Update

USED Announces Civil Rights Data Collection

Late last week, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) announced in a letter to school superintendents that it will move forward with the normally biannual Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) for the coming 2021-22 school year. This would mark the first time that USED's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) has conducted this critically important data collection over consecutive years. The Department hopes that the newly added data collection will ". . . advance equity at a time when the nation's

educational landscape has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and schools are receiving substantial new federal funding to address new and longstanding challenges." A press release from the Department, detailing these changes, can be found here.

President Biden Directs USED to Push Back on State Anti-Mask Mandates

On Wednesday, August 18, President Biden issued a memo directing U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona to "use all available tools" at his Department's disposal to ensure a return to safe, in-person K-12 instruction for the upcoming 2021-22 school year. The directive comes amid a wave of Republican-led states imposing new laws or regulations preventing school districts and institutions from implementing mask mandates—a key COVID-19 mitigation strategy. "As I've said before, if you aren't going to fight COVID-19, at least get out of the way of everyone else who is trying . . . we're not going to sit by as governors try to block and intimidate educators protecting our children," Biden said during an address on Wednesday.

Department of Education to Host Webinar on Safely Returning to In-Person Instruction

The U.S. Department of Education is hosting a webinar series to support educational settings in safely sustaining or returning to in-person instruction. The series features lessons learned and best practices from faculty, staff, schools, districts, institutions of higher education, early childhood education providers, and other places of educational instruction describing approaches to operating during the COVID-19 pandemic. The next webinar, Returning to School: Strategies for Reengaging PreK-12 Students, scheduled for Wednesday, August 25, 2021, from 3:00-4:15pm ET. Following brief presentation by the federal agencies, field-based practitioners will share strategies they have found effective to reengage students, including special populations, through outreach and sustained connections. You must register to participate.