



VSBA
Virginia School Boards Association
Leadership · Advocacy · Support

Federal Advocacy Update



Good Saturday Morning. Please find the October 24, 2020 Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Update at the conclusion of this message. Have a good weekend.

Best,

J.T.

Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Update

October 24, 2020

Congressional Update

Coronavirus Relief Negotiations Continue

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and U.S. Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin have continued to discuss and negotiate a potential new round of emergency relief funding and related measures in response to the ongoing pandemic. Both Congressional Democrats and the Trump Administration have expressed in recent weeks their mutual desire to reach a deal on a legislative package that would provide significant aid for those impacted by the coronavirus, including the K-12 education community. Both sides have come closer together on costs, which would likely total about \$2 trillion and include at least \$100 billion in emergency relief funding for the wider education community. Yet Speaker Pelosi and Secretary Mnuchin remain at odds over liability protections for businesses that would shield them from potential lawsuits related to COVID-19 outbreaks—a key priority for Republicans—and additional aid for state and local governments, a central priority for Democrats.

Although both the White House and Congressional Democrats appear to be inching closer to a deal, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) is not supportive of a pandemic measure of this size or scope. He has repeatedly argued this week that the proposals currently under consideration lack sufficient support to clear the Senate should they materialize. Despite modest progress this week, no deal has yet been struck between the two sides. With less than two weeks until the November elections, much-needed pandemic relief will likely not be addressed until after November 3.

Administration Update

USED Announces School Leadership Honors

On Monday, October 19, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) announced 10 principals as the recipients of the 2020 Terrel H. Bell Award for Outstanding School Leadership. This award is intended to honor principals overseeing National Blue Ribbon Schools who are nominated by their communities for outstanding school leadership. Several national organizations representing school principals, in conjunction with USED, help make this award selection each year. More information about the awardees can be found [here](#).

Biden Campaign Noncommittal on Testing Waivers

On Thursday, October 22, the Education Writers Association (EWA) hosted a virtual event interviewing Stef Feldman, the Policy Director for Former Vice President Joe Biden's presidential campaign. During the event,

Feldman was asked whether a new Biden Administration would provide standardized testing waivers to states absolving them of related assessment and accountability requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) as a response to the ongoing pandemic. Feldman replied, in part, that “. . . the answer to this question depends on how much progress we can make in supporting our schools and getting them up and running.” Although the Trump Administration provided waivers earlier this year, USED has [most recently told states](#) that they will not extend these flexibilities moving forward. The full EWA interview can be found [here](#).

New Legislation

[H.R.8634](#) — 116th Congress (2019-2020) To improve United States cybersecurity through STEM scholarships, prize competitions, and other STEM activities, and for other purposes. Sponsor: [Rep. Horn, Kendra S. \[D-OK-5\]](#)

[H.R.8612](#) — 116th Congress (2019-2020) To direct the Director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency to establish a School Cybersecurity Clearinghouse, and for other purposes. Sponsor: [Rep. Matsui, Doris O. \[D-CA-6\]](#)

[S.4831](#) — 116th Congress (2019-2020) 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. \[D-HI\]](#)

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