



VSBA
Virginia School Boards Association
Leadership · Advocacy · Support

Federal Advocacy Update



Good Morning. Please find the Federal Advocacy and Public Policy Update for June 1, 2020 at the conclusion of this message.

The Senate and House will return to Washington this week with a busy schedule before the annual July 4th recess. The Senate Majority Leader plans to use the first two weeks of June to consider presidential nominations and indicated the final week of the month will be set-aside for debate about the Defense Authorization Act. The remaining schedule will be reserved for other Senate business, which could include discussions about additional pandemic aid.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has signaled additional supplemental funding will likely be needed to address the financial crisis created by the pandemic. However, he stated that the Senate would not consider spending at the \$3 trillion level recently approved by the House (the HEROES Act). Despite the acknowledgement that more funding may be needed, VSBA does not expect the Senate and House to agree to a new emergency bill until July. As this work unfolds, VSBA intends to continue fighting for a direct investment in local education budgets, along with dedicated funding for providing disconnected students and teachers home broadband to connect to the Internet.

Please let me know if you have any questions regarding this update. Thank you for all you do on behalf of public education.

Have a good week!

J..T.

Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Team

June 1, 2020

[Congressional Update](#)

[Senate HELP Committee Plans Hearings Focused on Return to School, College](#)

Senate HELP Committee Chairman Alexander (R-TN) announced this week that the committee will hold two hearings in June focused on postsecondary and K-12 plans to return to school this fall. The first hearing, scheduled for June 4, will focus on college campuses. Senators will hear testimony from:

- o Mr. Mitchell Daniels, President, Purdue University
- o Dr. Christina Paxson, President, Brown University
- o Dr. Logan Hampton, President, Lane College (TN)
- o Dr. Georges Benjamin, MD, MACP, FACEP(E), FNAPA, Hon FRSPH, Hon FFPH, American Public Health Association

The second hearing, scheduled for June 10, will focus on plans for safely reopening K-12 schools. The committee has not yet announced the witness list for the K-12 hearing.

U.S. Department of Education News

U.S. Ed Reports Every State Has Now Filed a K-12 Emergency Relief Fund Application

The Department of Education said this week that every state has requested funding through the CARES Act's \$13.4 billion Elementary and Secondary Education Relief Fund. Program funding is allocated by formula – based on a state's proportional share of Title I funding - but states were required to submit applications before the funding would be released. NSBA encourages district leaders to contact their State Education Agencies about the process and timeline for states to release the funds to the local level. States must provide 90% of the funding to school districts based on their proportional share of Title I funding. The funds may be utilized for a wide variety of uses, including any use authorized by the ESEA, IDEA, Perkins CTE Act, McKinney-Vento Act, and more.

Secretary DeVos Doubles Down on Controversial Equitable Services Decision

Earlier this month, the Department of Education published CARES Act guidance that took an expansive view of the law's equitable services language. Under the Department's interpretation, school districts were required to use a portion of their K-12 Emergency Relief Funds to provide all private school students with equitable services, not just those students who are disadvantaged or at risk. After learning that some states planned to ignore the non-binding guidance, Secretary DeVos announced plans to adopt regulations forcing states and school districts to follow her interpretation of the law. Congressional leaders, including Chairman Alexander, publicly disagree with the secretary's interpretations, but NSBA expects the agency to publish proposed regulations for public comment later this month. NSBA advocacy efforts to combat this misinterpretation of the law by the Secretary will aggressively continue as Congress considers new supplemental legislation.

Department Announces Mental Health Grants Competition

The Department of Education invited applications for the "School-Based Mental Health Services Grant Program." The program provides funding to increase the number of qualified mental health service providers available to students in districts with demonstrated need. Congress provided \$10 million for the program which aims to increase the number of counselors, social workers, psychologists, and other service providers. The Department estimates that 5 awards will be given, at \$2 million each. Applications are due by July 13, 2020 Further information is available [here](#).

J.T. Kessler
Government Relations Specialist
Virginia School Boards Association
200 Hansen Road, Suite 2
Charlottesville, VA 22911
800-446-8722 or 434-295-8722 Office
434-295-8785 Fax
jason@vsba.org, www.vsba.org