



VSBA
Virginia School Boards Association
Leadership · Advocacy · Support

Federal Advocacy Update



Good Saturday Morning. At the conclusion of this message please find the September 19, 2020 Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Update. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you for all you do on behalf of public education. Have a good weekend.

Best,

J.T.

Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Update

September 19, 2020

Congressional Update

Lawmakers are Close to Government Funding Deal

With the House reconvening earlier this week, both chambers of Congress are now in session with just 12 days to go before current funding for the federal government expires on October 1. Lawmakers must pass legislation, before this date, to avoid a lapse in funding and a shutdown of federal government operations. Democrats and Republicans in Congress have largely agreed, at least informally, to pass a Continuing Resolution (CR) to avoid this scenario. A CR would temporarily extend current funding levels for the federal government, including funding for federal education programs, for a yet to-be-determined date. Negotiations on this forthcoming legislation are taking place behind closed doors and primarily hinge on the length of the CR—Republicans favor a CR lasting through December 18 while Democrats would like it to run through February 26 of next year. Text of an agreement has not yet been released but is widely expected to emerge in the coming days to allow enough time for votes beginning as early as next week. As of Friday evening, some media reports were suggesting House and Senate negotiators reached a tentative deal through Dec. 11. NSBA will release additional details once negotiations are finalized.

COVID-19 Relief Talks Still in Motion

Another round of pandemic relief legislation, one that would likely contain significant additional emergency funding for the K-12 community, has been stalled since the summer. Congressional Democrats largely favor a \$3 trillion legislative package while Congressional Republicans favor a package falling somewhere between \$500 billion and \$1 trillion. Earlier this week, President Trump voiced support for pandemic relief totaling about \$1.5 trillion—a key signal that the White House is softening its position to get a deal. The President's remarks were largely in response to [a new bipartisan proposal](#) that was floated this week in the House that proposes \$1.5 trillion in new funding to respond to the ongoing pandemic. Despite the President's support, Republicans in both the House and Senate have not given this proposal a welcoming response and have reiterated their support for a bill closer to one with a \$500 billion price tag. As these negotiations continue, NSBA's advocacy team will continue to work to ensure that lawmakers understand the emergency funding challenges of the K-12 community and pass legislation that meets these significant needs.

Administration Update

FCC Announces New Opportunity for E-Rate Funding

The FCC's Wireline Bureau [announced](#) a second E-Rate application window for funding year 2020. Schools will be able to purchase additional bandwidth for this academic year to address higher than expected digital learning demand associated with instructional changes caused by the pandemic. Applicants may only seek support for on-campus category one Internet access and/or data transmission services. The second filing window will begin when the FCC publishes [the Order](#) in the Federal Register and will end on October 16. Interested schools should, therefore, act quickly to take advantage of this opportunity.

USED Unveils Per-Pupil Expenditure Data Explorer

On Wednesday, September 16, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) launched [a new website](#) that publishes how much money each school spends per student. Known as a Per Pupil Expenditure (PPE), these data are a reporting requirement under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), but there is not currently a centralized place where this information is available. USED's new website seeks to address this issue and increase transparency of PPE data moving forward. The related data explorer on this website provides a breakdown of federal, state, and local funds that compose PPE for each school and district beginning in the 2018-19 school year. The tool only has data from 20 states currently but USED anticipates more being added as additional data is made available for this purpose in the future. NSBA is exploring this site and doing an analysis of how the data is being compiled to insure its giving an accurate picture of PPE data.

USED Plans to Provide ESSA Title IV-A Waivers

On Thursday, September 17, USED [published a notice](#) indicating that it plans to provide SEAs waivers for various requirements of the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant Program (Title IV-A of ESSA). As part of USED's response to the ongoing pandemic, these waivers would cover the current 2020-21 school year and would allow SEAs to provide comparable flexibility for school districts related to the Title IV-A needs assessment, content-area spending requirements for the grant program, and allow for a greater share of these funds to be used for technology infrastructure. More information on these waivers can be found [here](#).

Recent Legislation

[H.R.8162](#) 21st Century Community Learning Centers Coronavirus Relief Act of 2020 Sponsor: [Rep. Wild, Susan \[D-PA-7\]](#)

[H.R.7909](#) Ensuring Children and Child Care Workers Are Safe Act of 2020 Sponsor: [Rep. Finkenauer, Abby \[D-IA-1\]](#)

[H.R.2639](#) Strength in Diversity Act of 2020 Sponsor: [Rep. Fudge, Marcia L. \[D-OH-11\]](#)

[S.2683](#) Child Care Protection Improvement Act of 2020 Sponsor: [Sen. Burr, Richard \[R-NC\]](#)

[S.Res.691](#) A resolution expressing support for evidence-based programs that facilitate social and emotional learning during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. Sponsor: [Sen. Blumenthal, Richard \[D-CT\]](#)

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