

Congressional Updates

Fiscal Year 2020 Appropriations Process About to Leap Ahead

The Administration announced this week that the first portion of the President's Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Request will be sent to Capitol Hill on March 11. The second part of the Administration's budget request to Congress is expected March 18. NSBA expects the president's request to feature significant proposed cuts to the Department of Education and other federal agencies, but for the past two fiscal years Congress has not approved spending levels consistent with the White House's proposals. Delivery of the president's budget typically represents the beginning of the annual appropriations process on Capitol Hill. Although the Senate and House appropriations committees have already started initial work on the fiscal year 2020 spending process, the arrival of the president's budget will shift the process into "high gear." Over the coming weeks, Congress will review the president's request, discuss the aggregate spending levels that will guide the appropriations committees' work, and hold a host of hearings with administration officials and other stakeholders to help inform the process. Several of these hearings are scheduled for next week, when the House Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee hosts witnesses focused on "Oversight of For-Profit Colleges: Protecting Students and Taxpayer Dollars from Predatory Practices". The House Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee will also separately hear testimony from Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar who will talk about the president's spending request for HHS, including important programs that school districts use to serve students, such as Medicaid and Head Start.

Senate and House Education Committees Plan Higher Education Act Hearings

As they promised, leaders of the Senate and House education committees are focusing a significant amount of the committees' work on trying to reauthorize the Higher Education Act (HEA). The HEA debate will include a debate about programs that are important to elementary and secondary schools, such as the law's focus on educator recruitment, preparation, and retention. NSBA recently sent a [letter](#) to Capitol Hill urging lawmakers to strengthen HEA Title II, which is the principal section of the law focused on educator preparation and related issues. The ideas encapsulated by the letter will serve as the foundation for NSBA's HEA advocacy, which will include a focus on using the HEA to ensure school districts have a sufficient pipeline of effective special education teachers and other professionals. Next week, the Senate and House education committees will hold two higher education focused hearings. On Tuesday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee is holding a hearing titled "Reauthorizing the Higher Education Act: Simplifying the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) and Reducing the Burden of Verification." Witnesses have not yet been announced. On Wednesday, the House Education and Labor Committee will hold a hearing titled, "The Cost of College: Student Centered Reforms to Bring Higher Education Within Reach." Witnesses have not been announced; but, the hearing will be live-streamed [here](#).

Child Nutrition Hearing Scheduled for Next Week

Although the Higher Education Act is an important focus of the Education and Labor Committee's work, the committee is also pushing forward on other policy areas under its jurisdiction. Next week, the Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services will hold a hearing titled "Growing a Healthy Next Generation: Examining Federal Child Nutrition Programs." We expect this hearing to be part of a series of discussions that lay a foundation for the Education and Labor Committee's later consideration of bills designed to update the School Lunch Program and other nutrition initiatives. NSBA plans to be closely involved in this work. While witnesses have not yet been announced, NSBA is working to inform witness testimony. The hearing will be live-streamed [here](#).

Senators Scott, Sasse, and Cotton Reintroduce Education Savings Accounts for Military Families Act

U.S. Senators Tim Scott (R-SC), Ben Sasse (R-NE), and Tom Cotton (R-AR) introduced legislation again this Congress to establish Military Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) which would transform the Impact Aid program into an ESA. Like private school voucher programs, ESAs divert tax dollars away from public schools to accounts that are used for other educational expenses, including private school tuition. NSBA [joined](#) a coalition with 60 other organizations during the last Congress to defeat this legislation and will continue to advocate against the bill this Congress.

Notable New Education Legislation

- [H.R.1571](#) To establish State-Federal partnerships to provide students the opportunity to attain higher education at in-State public institutions of higher education without debt, to provide Federal Pell Grant eligibility to DREAMer students, to repeal suspension of eligibility under the Higher Education Act of 1965 for drug-related offenses, and for other purposes. Sponsor: [Rep. Pocan, Mark \[D-WI-2\]](#)
- [H.R.1565](#) To establish a new higher education data system to allow for more accurate, complete, and secure data on student retention, graduation, and earnings outcomes, at all levels of postsecondary enrollment, and for other purposes. Sponsor: [Rep. Hunter, Duncan D. \[R-CA-50\]](#)
- [H.R.1486](#) To amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to protect students from sexual abuse, and for other purposes. Sponsor: [Rep. Lieu, Ted \[D-CA-33\]](#)
- [H.R.1485](#) To authorize the Secretary of Education to carry out a program to increase access to prekindergarten through grade 12 computer science education. Sponsor: [Rep. Lee, Barbara \[D-CA-13\]](#)
- [H.Res.169](#) Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives regarding the need for increased diversity and inclusion in the tech sector, and increased access to opportunity in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) education. Sponsor: [Rep. Lee, Barbara \[D-CA-13\]](#)
- [S.686](#) A bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to provide greater access to higher education for America's students, to eliminate educational barriers for participation in a public service career, and for other purposes. Sponsor: [Sen. Cardin, Benjamin L. \[D-MD\]](#)
- [S.681](#) A bill to establish a new higher education data system to allow for more accurate, complete, and secure data on student retention, graduation, and earnings outcomes, at all levels of postsecondary enrollment, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen. Wyden, Ron [D-OR]

Administration Developments

Department Seeks Full-Service Community Schools Applicants

This week, the Department of Education invited school district and consortia applications for the Full-Service Community Schools Program. The Full-Service Community Schools program, authorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, provides support for the planning, implementation, and operation of full-service community schools. These schools focus on services for children and families that are designed to improve education outcomes. The program aims to promote full-service community schools by supporting effective services for children and families, particularly those living in high-poverty urban and rural areas. Applications are due by April 15, 2019. Further information about the funding opportunity is available [here](#).

Department Responds to State ESSA Consolidated Plan Amendments

The Department of Education responded to several state requests to change their Every Student Succeeds Act consolidated plans. The department [approved](#) amendments to Wyoming's plan on February 28, while [denying](#) change's to California's plan. Wyoming amended the State Plan after implementation of a new student assessment system – these amendments include changes to tested content areas, baseline goals, and academic and growth indicators. California sought to exclude the Progress in Achieving English Language Proficiency indicator that is required under ESSA from its system of annual meaningful differentiation for identification of schools in the 2020-2021 school year. The state requested this amendment because it is transitioning to a new English language proficiency assessment. In denying California's request, the Department said delaying the requirements would "undermine the intent of the statute that States set high expectations that apply to all students and hold schools accountable for reaching those expectations."

On a related note, [New Mexico](#) is seeking public comment on proposed amendments its ESSA Plan. The state [intends](#) to replace the existing A-F school grading system with "designations that shift the philosophy from identifying schools as 'failing' to providing support for schools in need, and celebrating success." According to this proposed grading system, schools in the top 25% based on their assessments, will be "Spotlight" schools. Schools in the middle 50% will be "Traditional Support" schools. And those in the bottom 25% would be Targeted Support schools, Comprehensive Support schools, and More Rigorous Intervention schools. The state is also transitioning to a [new assessment system](#), which the state will begin implementing in August 2019.

Thanks,

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Virginia School Boards Association, a voluntary, nonpartisan organization of Virginia school boards, promotes excellence in public education through advocacy, training and services.