



VSBA
Virginia School Boards Association
Leadership · Advocacy · Support

Federal Advocacy Update



Good Saturday Morning! Last evening, the United States House of Representatives passed the 3 trillion dollar HEROES Act by a vote of 208-199. This legislation will now head to the United States Senate. VSBA will continue to provide updates on the HEROES Act and other pertinent actions being taken in both Washington, D.C. and Richmond via email and on the [VSBA Legislative Update Blog](#).

At the conclusion of this message is the May 16, 2020 Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Update. Please let me know if you have any questions regarding this report.

As always, thank you for all you do on behalf of public education. Have a safe and enjoyable weekend!

Best,

J.T.

Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Update

May 16, 2020

Congressional Update

Senator Markey and 44 Co-sponsors Introduce Emergency E-rate Legislation

This week, Senator Ed Markey (D-MA), joined by 42 Democratic and 2 Independent senators, introduced legislation ([S.3690](#)) that proposes to provide \$4 billion in emergency funding, through the E-Rate program, to help connect elementary and secondary students and library patrons who lack broadband access for learning. The bill is a companion to a House measure introduced in April by Representative Grace Meng (D-NY). The sponsors' goal is to secure inclusion of the E-rate funding in the next COVID-19 emergency response bill considered by Congress. NSBA strongly supports the Markey/Meng proposal and is working with other national groups to build support for it.

Senate HELP Committee Holds Hearing About Safely Returning to School

This week, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee held a hearing titled, "COVID-19: Safely Getting Back to Work and Back to School." Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) said "all roads back to work and back to school go through testing." NIH infectious disease expert Fauci said, "we don't know everything about this virus and we really better be pretty careful, particularly when it comes to children." An archived video of the hearing may be accessed [here](#) for further information. Witnesses at the hearing included: Anthony Fauci, MD (Director, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, MD); Robert Redfield, MD (Director, United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA); ADM Brett Giroir, MD (Assistant Secretary for Health, United States Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C.); and Stephen Hahn, MD (Commissioner of Food and Drugs, United States Food and Drug Administration, Silver Spring, MD).

House Democrats Introduce New Pandemic Response Bill

Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) called a House vote for Friday on a \$3 trillion emergency bill to help states, communities, and individuals. As of this writing, the legislation is still being debated. Among other investments, the bill, (the HEROES Act, H.R.6800), provides the following funding:

\$1 trillion to state, local, territorial, and tribal governments.

\$90 billion for a State Fiscal Stabilization Fund for grants to States to support statewide and local funding for elementary and secondary schools and public postsecondary institutions. Approximately \$58 billion of the total would be provided to K-12 education.

\$1.5 billion in funding for the E-rate Program for schools and libraries to provide internet service in a technologically neutral way to students and teachers, prioritizing those without internet access at home.

\$3 billion for school meal providers and USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program.

Doubles the above-the-line deduction for certain unreimbursed out-of-pocket expenses for elementary and secondary school teachers from \$250 to \$500. This amount is adjusted for inflation.

We will continue urging Congress to provide \$200 billion in the bill to help school districts and a minimum of \$4 billion in funding to the E-Rate program to close the homework gap. Senate Majority Leader McConnell has called for a slower process, arguing that the CARES Act should be allowed to work before Congress takes additional action. As a result, VSBA does not expect Senate leaders to introduce new emergency legislation anytime soon, but we intend to continue talking with senators about the importance of providing additional funding for public education, including dedicated funding for student and teacher broadband connectivity. Efforts are also underway to encourage the House to increase investments in any final legislation that may be debated through a conference committee process.

Administration Update

Department of Education Publishes FAQs to Support CARES Act Implementation

The Department of Education released an [FAQ](#) document related to the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER Fund). The document responds to questions submitted to the Department by states and school districts. The FAQs are part of a series of periodic publications by the department to help states and school districts use federal funding to help their schools and students during the emergency. A compilation of the materials is available on the Department of Education's [COVID-19 webpage](#).

Department of Education Launches Weighted Funding Grant Competition

The Department of Education [announced](#) a new \$3 million grant competition for school districts to support student-centered funding programs. The competition, authorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act, will allow school districts to combine eligible federal funds with state and local funds in order to allocate resources based on students' individual needs. For more information about these grant competitions, pre-application technical assistance webinar opportunities, or if you would like to be a peer reviewer, please email WeightedFundingPilot@ed.gov.

Notable K-12 Bills

[H.R.943](#) Never Again Education Act Sponsor: [Rep. Maloney, Carolyn B. \[D-NY-12\]](#)

[H.R.6825](#) To increase the amount of loan forgiveness available to teachers. Sponsor: [Rep. Luria, Elaine G. \[D-VA-2\]](#)

[H.R.6811](#) To amend the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 to increase the age of eligibility for children to receive benefits under the special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children, and for other purposes. Sponsor: [Rep. DeLauro, Rosa L. \[D-CT-3\]](#)

[H.R.6801](#) To provide reimbursements for the emergency operational costs of school food authorities during the COVID-19 pandemic, and for other purposes. Sponsor: [Rep. Adams, Alma S. \[D-NC-12\]](#)

[H.Res.959](#) Recognizing the roles and contributions of the teachers of the United States in building and enhancing the civic, cultural, and economic well-being of the United States. Sponsor: [Rep. Graves, Sam \[R-MO-6\]](#)

[S.Res.571](#) A resolution congratulating the students, parents, teachers, and leaders of charter schools across the United States for making ongoing contributions to education and supporting the ideals and goals of the 21st annual National Charter Schools Week, to be held May 10 through May 16, 2020. Sponsor: [Sen. Bennet, Michael F. \[D-CO\]](#)

[S.3659](#) A bill to provide State and local workforce and career and technical education systems the support to respond to the COVID-19 national emergency. Sponsor: [Sen. Murray, Patty \[D-WA\]](#)

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