



**VSBA**  
Virginia School Boards Association  
Leadership · Advocacy · Support

## Federal Advocacy ..... Update



Good Monday Morning. At the conclusion of this message is the June 8, 2020 Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Update. Please note that the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee plans to hold a hearing next Wednesday, June 10, 2020 focused on the safe reopening of schools. Further information on the hearing, including a link to view it, are included in the weekly update.

If you have any questions regarding this update, please contact me. As always, thank you for all you do on behalf of public education in the Commonwealth.

Have a good week!

Best,

J.T.

### **Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Team**

June 8, 2020

#### **Congressional Update**

##### **House Aims to Pass Fiscal Year 2021 Spending Bills by August**

This week, House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Nita Lowey (D-NY) notified committee members that they should plan for a busy July. In a June 4 letter, she wrote "I wanted to alert you that I intend to hold all subcommittee and full committee markups the weeks of July 6 and 13. Further, I expect spending bills could be on the floor the weeks of July 20 and 27." This work would include committee and full House approval of the U.S. Department of Education's fiscal year 2021 budget, including funding for ESEA Title I, IDEA State Grants and all other funding that flows to school districts. While it is possible the House will meet this goal, the prospects for completing the appropriations process by the beginning of the federal fiscal year – October 1 – are much less clear in the Senate. NSBA expects the Senate and House to take the annual August recess, so negotiations between the bodies about final spending decisions would mostly need to be completed during a short September work period or during the tumultuous weeks leading up to the election. As a result, Congress may need to extend the education budget – as well as funding for other government agencies – at current levels until after the election. NSBA plans to continue advocating for increased local education funding under the assumption that Congress will meet its appropriations obligations on time, but the process could be extended until later in the year.

##### **Senate Education Committee Plans Hearing about Returning to School**

The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee plans to hold a hearing next Wednesday (June 10) titled, "COVID-19: Going Back to School Safely." The hearing follows a similar discussion with postsecondary leaders this week, which featured testimony about institutions' efforts to develop practices for housing, instruction, and other activities for the next school year that allow colleges and universities to reopen without compromising the health of students and staff. Witnesses at the K-12 safety hearing will include:

Ms. Susana Cordova, Superintendent, Denver Public Schools, Denver, CO

The Honorable John B. King, Jr., President and CEO, The Education Trust, Washington, DC

Dr. Penny Schwinn, Commissioner of Education, Tennessee Department of Education, Nashville, TN

Dr. Matthew Blomstedt, Commissioner of Education, Nebraska Department of Education, Lincoln, NE

The hearing will be livestreamed [here](#) at 10:00 AM (EDT) and the video and written testimony will remain archived on the committee's website for later viewing.

## **Congress Approves Paycheck Protection Program Changes**

Following House passage last week, the Senate approved legislation (H.R.7010) this week to reduce several Paycheck Protection Program restrictions, including permitting qualified entities to spend program funds over a longer period and lowering the percentage that must be spent on payroll to 60% (down from 75%). The program, established by the CARES Act, provides emergency funding to businesses, including many non-profit education organizations, that have been negatively impacted by the pandemic.

## **ADMINISTRATION UPDATE**

### **U.S. Department of Education Plans Virtual Learning Panel**

Assistant Secretary of the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Frank Brogan will lead a panel discussion on Tuesday, June 9 (2:30-3:45 PM EDT) about the practical application of virtual learning. The forum aims to offer information and resources to help districts establish or develop innovative virtual learning capabilities. Interested board members can register for the event [here](#)(space is limited).

### **U.S. Department of Education Approves Additional State CTE Plans**

Congress updated the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act in 2018. The new law required states to file interim implementation plans in 2019, followed by developing and filing long term (four year) plans this spring. Within the past month, the Department has approved a number of state plans, including the following approvals that were granted this week: [Georgia](#), [Hawaii](#), [Illinois](#), [Iowa](#), [Maine](#), [Maryland](#), [Massachusetts](#), [Michigan](#), [Montana](#), [New Hampshire](#), [North Dakota](#), [Oregon](#), [South Dakota](#), [Vermont](#), and [Wyoming](#). Further information on the state plans is available on the Department's [Perkins website](#). The federal government provides approximately \$1.2 billion annually to states, school districts, and community colleges through the Perkins CTE Act.

### **Government Accountability Office Publishes K-12 Infrastructure Report**

This week, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report titled "[K-12 Education: School Districts Frequently Identified Multiple Building Systems Needing Updates or Replacement](#)." The "report examines (1) the common facility condition issues school districts identify in public schools and how they have done so and (2) school districts' highest priorities for their school facility renovations and updates, and how districts and states fund them." Last year, Congress directed GAO to conduct the study and report back to legislators. The results provide useful data to support NSBA's advocacy for a massive federal investment in low income school districts' infrastructure.

### **Federal Communications Commission Encourages Broadband Program Participation**

The Federal Communications Commission and the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners published [a letter](#) to build public awareness of the FCC's Lifeline program. Like the E-rate, the Lifeline initiative is part of the federal Universal Service Fund. The program provides subsidies for low income households to connect to broadband. The letter highlights resources that community leaders, including school board members and school district leaders, can use to help qualified families learn about the program. NSBA encourages school board members to share these resources as a strategy for connecting students to the broadband services they need to participate in online learning. The program's funding is not sufficient to connect all families in need, so NSBA is continuing to work with other national groups to ask Congress to provide emergency funding and authority for the E-rate program to connect all students and teachers that need broadband assistance while learning and working from home.

### **Office of Elementary and Secondary Education Announces Competitive Grants**

This week, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education invited applications for the "State Tribal Education Partnership Grants to Tribal Educational Agencies" program. The program's purpose is to: "(1) Promote Tribal self-determination in education; (2) improve the academic achievement of Indian children and youth; and (3) promote the coordination and collaboration of tribal educational agencies (TEAs) with state educational agencies (SEAs) and local educational agencies (LEAs) to meet the unique education and culturally related academic needs of Indian students." The estimated available funds for this program total \$1.5-\$2 million, contingent upon the availability of funds and quality of applications. Applications are due by July 31, 2020, and further information is available [here](#).

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