

Good Friday Afternoon! Below please find the Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Update for September 27, 2019. Have a good weekend and thank you for all you do on behalf of public education.

Best Wishes,
J.T.

Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Update

September 27, 2019

Congressional Updates

Senate Passes Spending Bill to Extend Federal Funding

Facing a government shut down on October 1, this week the Senate passed (82-15) a stopgap spending bill (H.R.4378) to continue funding federal programs at fiscal year 2019 levels, until November 21. Congress has not yet completed work on the Department of Education's fiscal year 2020 budget, but this step will ensure, assuming the president signs the bill, that federal education programs will remain funded even as federal leaders continue negotiating a final long-term spending package. As we reported last week, there are significant differences between how the House and Senate propose to address NSBA's fiscal year 2020 priorities, including for ESSA Title I, ESSA Title II, and the IDEA State Grants program. The House bill is significantly better for school districts and NSBA plans to urge Senators to move close to the House adopted amounts.

Senator Alexander Proposes Scaled-Back Higher Education Reauthorization Plan

With bipartisan higher education policy negotiations dragging, Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) proposed a scaled-back plan for reauthorizing the Higher Education Act. Alexander's plan, titled The Student Aid Improvement Act of 2019, focuses on FAFSA simplification and other financial aid streamlining, expanding Pell Grants for short-term training programs and providing aid to incarcerated students. He is also reportedly planning to include the College Transparency Act, which would improve higher education data use. The proposal does not include the HEA Title II educator recruitment, preparation, and retention provisions fought for by NSBA and our national K-12 association partners, but it would at least preserve the existing HEA Title II programs. NSBA does not expect Chairman Alexander's proposal to move through the Senate, given Democratic opposition to considering an HEA bill that does not comprehensively update the federal higher education law.

Administration Updates

Federal Agencies Release School Emergency Operations Guidance

The Departments of Education, Justice, Homeland Security, and Health and Human Services released a guide titled "[The Role of Districts in Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans](#)". The departments created the guide in response to a recommendation in the Federal Commission on School Safety's final report for federal leaders to provide resources to assist schools and school districts in developing customized school plans and community partnerships. NSBA participated extensively in the Commission's proceedings, with a focus on improving the application of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act's emergency data sharing provision, and we intend to closely review this new guidance from the school district perspective.

Department of Education Releases School Report Card Guidance

The Department of Education released a guide titled "[Opportunities and Responsibilities for State and Local Report Cards](#)" for local education leaders to ensure parents are provided with accurate and accessible information on how schools are performing within their states. The new guidance "is aimed at assisting education leaders with the design and implementation of state and school district report cards as required by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)". NSBA encourages readers to review the guidance and explore opportunities to better use accountability and other data to support local parent and community engagement initiatives.

Notable New K-12 Bills

[H.R.4465](#) To amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to allow local educational agencies to use certain grant funds provided through the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Program for school security measures, and for other purposes. Sponsor: [Rep. Tipton, Scott R. \[R-CO-3\]](#)

[S.2548](#) A bill to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to address and take action to prevent bullying and harassment of students. Sponsor: [Sen. Casey, Robert P., Jr. \[D-PA\]](#)

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