

Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Team

July 17, 2020

NSBA Weekly Update

Congressional Update

House Appropriations Committee Passes FY21 Education Spending Bill

On July 13, the House Appropriations Committee marked-up and passed their Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Labor-HHS-ED bill. The legislation would provide \$73.5 billion for the Department of Education and related programs (a proposed increase of \$716 million from FY20 enacted levels). Prior to consideration of the bill, [the committee released a report detailing specific funding levels for education programs.](#) The committee adopted a [manager's amendment](#) by voice vote from Rep. DeLauro (D-CT) which made minor changes to the underlying bill related to the public service loan forgiveness program. Rep. Cole (R-OK) introduced and withdrew a separate amendment that aimed to restore \$40 million in funding to Charter School Program grants. The committee ultimately approved this legislation in a [30-22](#) vote that fell along party lines. The bill will now advance to the House floor. It will likely be bundled with other funding legislation in the coming weeks as House Democratic leaders seek to pass all 12 federal funding bills for FY21 before the end of summer. Progress on appropriations in the Senate is much further behind and comparable legislation has yet to be introduced in the Senate.

NSBA and Governors Join with Other Organizations Calling for Immediate Education Relief

Today in a unified effort, NSBA, representing local elected school board members, and the National Governor's Association (NGA), representing the chief executives of the fifty states and five territories, joined with eight other national leadership organizations in sending a letter to Congressional leadership [calling on Congress](#) to immediately provide emergency funding for K-12 and higher education to deal with issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The letter calls for "Dedicated funding for public K-12 education to ensure that school districts have the resources they need to address revenue shortfalls and new expenses related to starting the next school year in a manner that prioritizes learning and safety of students and staff." The letter was noteworthy in signaling the seriousness of the issues since NGA does not typically sign nor send many coalition letters. Other groups joining NSBA and NGA included the American Federation of Teachers, Association of Community College Trustees, Council of Administrators of Special Education, Council of State Governments, National Association of State Boards of Education, National Association of State Directors of Special Education, National Center for Learning

Disabilities, and the State Higher Education Executive Officers.

Republican Marker Bill on COVID-19 Relief Expected Next Week

Senate Republicans are widely expected to introduce a marker bill in the coming days, likely in the early part of next week. The forthcoming legislation will provide a window into Congressional Republican priorities with regards to the next COVID-19 relief package. Leaders from both parties and in both chambers are engaging in discussions regarding the size, scope, and shape of the next pandemic aid package. The expected Republican proposal will likely include roughly \$1 trillion in further financial pandemic assistance and provide additional funding for K-12 education. The legislation is also expected to include liability protections for employers, postsecondary institutions, and potentially K-12 school districts—a key Republican priority in the upcoming negotiations—to encourage reopening efforts strongly supported by the Trump Administration. NSBA's advocacy team is working to ensure that the emergency funding needs of the K-12 community are reflected in this legislation, especially as discussions on the next pandemic aid package continue.

Education Plank of DNC Platform Continues to Take Shape

Last week, Former Vice President Joe Biden's Presidential campaign released [a set of recommendations](#) broadly aimed at unifying Democrats around a number of key domestic policy issues including education. Since that time the Democratic National Committee (DNC) has set about to translate aspects of these taskforce reports as they work to update [their party's platform](#) ahead of their convention later this year. While the recommendations included a proposal to triple Title I funding under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the document proposes new restrictions on charter schools and calls into question the preservation of assessment and accountability requirements mandated by ESSA. These proposals have revealed divisions among Democrats and supportive organizations in the lead up to the party's convention in Milwaukee later this year. [Civil rights groups and Democratically-leaning education reform organizations](#) in particular have voiced strong opposition to these proposals as the DNC Platform Drafting Committee continues to solicit feedback and input related to the education portion of the forthcoming DNC platform. Last month the Republican National Committee voted to retain the [party's 2016 platform](#) which strongly supports school choice, local control, and reducing the overall federal footprint in education.

Administration Update

CDC Expected to Provide Additional Reopening Guidance

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) plans to release supplementary guidance regarding the reopening of K-12 schools [later this month](#). Following a weeks-long public push by the Trump Administration to urge schools to physically reopen this fall, [CDC Director Redfield recently committed](#) to providing "additional" guidance for K-12 communities to reopen schools in-person for the upcoming school year. This

announcement comes after President Trump made several public statements recently calling into question the feasibility of the existing K-12 reopening guidance provided by the CDC. NSBA's advocacy team is following these developments closely and will circulate the new guidance documents as soon as they become available.

Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority Pilot Evaluation

The Institute for Education Sciences at the Department of Education released a Federal Register notice to conduct a study to evaluate the Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority (IADA) Pilot Program, authorized under ESSA. The IADA allows the Department to exempt certain states from some ESSA testing requirements, provided they pilot new assessments within the state. This study will produce a "Progress Report" and a "Best Practices Report". These reports will help the Department then target technical assistance to address barriers to making progress in pilot states, and they will provide a guide for other states to develop a new assessment. Comments must be submitted by September 14, 2020, and further information is available [here](#).

Department of Education Discretionary Grant regarding Native American Language Program

USED published notice on a discretionary grant program for the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education: "Indian Education Discretionary Grants Program – Native American Language Program". This discretionary grant program supports schools that use Native American and Alaska Native languages as the primary language of instruction to ensure that Native Americans and Alaska Natives continue to use, practice, maintain, and revitalize their languages. Further it seeks to improve educational opportunities and student outcomes within the Native American and Alaska Native communities. The Department intends to fund only one high-quality project per Native language. The estimated available funds for this program total \$1,546,986, contingent upon the availability of funds and quality of applications. Applications are due by August 28, 2020, and further information is available [here](#).

NSBA Update

National Homework Gap Day of Action on July 21, 2020: NSBA is helping lead a national effort on July 21 calling attention to the digital divide in education. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted a long-documented and persistent inequity affecting students that lack adequate broadband access. We encourage you to contact your local school board members to demonstrate their support for closing the homework gap and supporting the FCC's E-Rate program by visiting NSBA's, [homework gap](#) page where you can download our Day of Action Engagement Toolkit.

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