

Washington Update September 16, 2016

Dear Colleagues:

It's been a busy week in Washington as legislators scramble to wrap up and get back on the campaign trail.

1. Action on Education Funding for FY 2017

Despite a push by Senate leadership to jam through a short term spending bill and get out of town this week, the work has spilled over into next week. Eager to avoid a government shutdown just before the election and to hit the campaign trail, Senators are stalled in negotiations with House leaders about spending for the Zika virus and whether those funds will be allowed to go to Planned Parenthood organizations. The first vote to move the bill is set for Monday afternoon, and there is a strong push to wrap things up by the end of next week.

The funding bill is expected to run through either December 9 or 15 at which time the 114th Congress will reconvene for the final time and determine next steps. Depending on the outcomes of the election, the next funding bill may carry the country through September 30, 2017 or provide another short-term fix until March or so 2017.

The short term funding bill we will likely see next week is not expected to have any significant policy riders related to education or to alter funding in any significant way. However, there is some talk of slight across the board cuts (perhaps 1%) which would mean that every education program would take a hit. The reason for this is that because some spending has increased (e.g programs with triggers related to the number of people who use the programs such as health care or Pell grants) and in order to stay under the sequester imposed spending cap, the money must come from other programs.

See: <http://thehill.com/blogs/floor-action/senate/296132-senate-funding-bill-slips-into-next-week>

2. House Passes Bill to Reauthorize Career and Technical Education Programs

On Tuesday the House passes HR 5587, the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act. With a vote of 405-5 (all "no's" were from Republicans), the bill supports funding for programs to prepare students for high skilled industry jobs in areas where employers have shortages. Specifically it:

- Adds a definition for students who can be "concentrators" in career and technical ed
- Allows states to withhold larger portion of funds for their own competitive grant or formula programs

- Creates a new grant program which would award funds to programs that align CTE with state workforce needs
- Reduces paperwork for schools

This legislation (generally called the Perkins Act) has not been reauthorized since 2006. The Senate HELP Committee has scheduled a markup for its version of the reauthorization bill for Wednesday, September 21. The bill will be expected to be similar to the House bill.

See: <http://edworkforce.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=401021>

3. Likely New Chair of House Education and Workforce Committee: Virginia Foxx (R-NC)

As current chair of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce John Kline prepares to retire at the end of the 114th Congress, Rep. Virginia Foxx is actively campaigning to be the new chair for the 115th Congress. First elected in 2004, Rep. Foxx currently chairs the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training and is third in seniority for Republicans among 22 on the Committee. A frequent, feisty tough-talking conservative, she is also a lifelong educator with an Ed.D. in Curriculum and Teaching from UNC-Greensboro. She served as president of Mayland Community College and in the NC State Senate for a decade. Foxx represents the 5th district in NC (Boone area).

Foxx's bio indicates that she "regularly takes a stand for the principles of individual freedom and limited government." She has been a vocal critic of regulatory proposals put forward by the Obama Administration intended to implement the Every Student Succeeds Act and is a long standing critic of the Administration's efforts to clamp down on for-profit colleges, recently noting that their work to close ITT Tech was done without "one iota of proof the school did anything wrong." She has indicated that her top legislative priority for the Committee for the next Congress would be revisiting the Higher Education Act and, in particular, seeking greater transparency from colleges on the graduation rate of Pell grant recipients.

See <http://foxx.house.gov/biography/> and <http://foxx.house.gov/issues/issue/?IssueID=60408>

4. House Democrat Coalition Releases Priorities for the Higher Education Act

A group of 52 members of the House of Representatives, the New Democrat Coalition, released a document this week outlining priorities for reauthorizing the Higher Education Act. Jared Polis (D-CO), vice-chair of the Coalition, noted that the Coalition is focused on the innovation aspects of the Higher Education Act. Among those priorities listed in the document is teacher preparation. The following is excerpted from the Coalition's document:

Reforming Teacher Preparation

- Increase mentorship for teachers and principals by creating new opportunities for residencies with experienced educators and administrators while fostering better ongoing support mechanisms for the first two years on the job.
- Robustly support the funding, implementation, and dissemination of teacher advancement tracks that have demonstrated effectiveness in their ability to increase teacher retention and improve teacher professional development.
- Develop and deploy teacher performance assessments that prioritize knowledge of culturally relevant teaching methods, racial and socioeconomic privilege and bias, and English language learner support.
- Incentivize more people to pursue careers in the teaching profession and increase the number of teachers in areas where there are shortages by improving the mobility of teacher licenses between states.
- Increase teacher diversity through recruiting, supporting, and retaining educators from underrepresented backgrounds.
- Reform student loan repayment models to provide clear and tangible incentives for teachers to stay in the classroom.

See: <https://newdemocratcoalition-kind.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/new-democrat-coalition-releases-higher-education-priorities>

5. GAO Issues Report on Vouchers

At the request of Reps. Mark Pocan (D-WI), Gwen Moore (D-WI) and Marcia Fudge (D-OH), the GAO examined whether voucher programs are allowing participating schools to discriminate against students with disabilities in their admission policies. After reviewing the report, Rep. Pocan noted, "We already know voucher and many charter school programs lack the same levels of accountability and transparency as our public schools, but what this study proves is that many of these schools are also failing to meet the needs of special needs students and in many cases discriminating against them." The GAO study found that participation in taxpayer-funded voucher programs and education savings accounts has more than doubled in the last five years with taxpayers increasing spending on them from \$400 million to \$859 million.

See: <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-712>

6. The Teacher Shortage Crisis in the Spotlight: In Search of Solutions

This week the Learning Policy Institute, led by Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond, hosted an all day event in Washington to release their new analysis: *A Coming Crisis in Teaching? Teacher Supply, Demand and Shortages in the US*. The conference featured an all star line up of educators, analysts, researchers, policy makers, philanthropists and civil rights leaders considering and reflecting on the comprehensive set of briefs and reports issued on topics ranging from teacher turnover, attracting and retaining minority teachers, shortages in special education, STEM and English Learners, strategies for addressing shortages, implications of the new ESSA, equitable distribution of inexperienced teachers, building career ladders for teachers and teacher leadership roles, residency programs and lessons from high performing countries.

Among the findings in the reports:

- There was a 35% decline in enrollment in teacher preparation programs from 2009 to 2014
- There was a nationwide teacher shortage of 60,000 last year
- Teacher shortages could increase to 100,000 by 2018
- High minority and high poverty schools are hit hardest with uncertified teachers
- Teacher attrition is the biggest contributor to the shortage with job dissatisfaction cited as the biggest reason for leaving
- Teachers make 20% less than other college graduates; in 30 states a mid-career teacher heading a family of 4 is eligible for government assistance
- To increase the diversity in the teacher workforce minority recruitment and retention initiatives are required

Policy solutions recommended include:

- Use weighted student funding formulas to direct resources to districts with the neediest students
- Offer financial incentives to teachers such as mortgage guarantees, down payment assistance, child care support etc.
- Create “grow your own” and residency programs to prepare new teachers
- Develop strong universally available induction and mentoring for new teachers
- Strengthen principal preparation
- Develop a national teacher supply market and support teacher and pension mobility

Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN), who spoke at the conference, noted that “This research underscores the importance of offering effective incentives to keep our best teachers in the profession, contributing their expertise to help others.”

The report also rates each state using a variety of indicators (including average starting salary, attrition and working conditions) on “Teaching Attractiveness.” The most attractive state for teachers, according to this system, is Oregon, with the least attractive being Arizona. A second rating system looks at the disproportionate distribution of uncertified and inexperienced teachers to students of color, a “Teacher Equity Rating” -- rating Colorado the worst and Vermont the best.

The Center for American Progress also released a report this week examining the sharp decline in enrollment in teacher preparation programs.

Join the conversation on twitter using #solvingteachershortages

For LPI reports on teacher shortages: https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/event/solving-countrys-shortage?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=Solving%20Teacher%20Shortages%20Forum&utm_campaign=UA-67199435-1

For LPI interactive state rating system:

<https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/understanding-teacher-shortages-interactive>

See: https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/america-has-a-teacher-shortage-and-a-new-study-says-its-getting-worse/2016/09/14/d5de1cee-79e8-11e6-beac-57a4a412e93a_story.html

See: <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2016-09-14/the-teacher-shortage-crisis-is-here>

CAP report:

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/report/2016/09/14/144215/educator-pipeline-at-risk/>

7. Chiefs for Change Recommendations for ESSA Title II Priorities

Chiefs for Change, a group of reform oriented state chiefs, issued a document with recommendations about how states might use Title II ESSA funds. Among the recommendations offered is utilization of Title II funds for the controversial teacher preparation academies. Modeled after charter schools, these academies would function outside of the parameters of requirements for other teacher preparation programs in the state. The Chiefs cite the Relay GSE as a model for such academies. Relay, along with

some other independent teacher preparation programs, was recently scrutinized by researcher Ken Zeichner who concluded that:

“State policymakers should be very cautious in authorizing “teacher preparation academies” under a provision in the new federal education law (Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA). Such authorization would exempt those programs from the higher standards for teacher preparation that states typically seek to enforce for other teacher education programs. Policies should hold all programs to clear, consistent, and high standards.”

See: <http://chiefsforchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/CFC-Title-II-Policy-Brief.pdf>

For Zeichner’s critique of Relay and other independent teacher prep programs see <http://nepc.colorado.edu/files/publications/PB-Zeichner%20Teacher%20Education.pdf>

8. Damning Expose on Special Education in Texas

A recent remarkable expose from the Houston Chronicle, “Denied: How Texas keeps tens of thousands of children out of special education,” found that school officials in Texas set an arbitrary cap of 8.5% as the percentage of students who could receive special education services. School districts have been audited by the state to ensure their compliance. While the cap has saved the state billions of dollars, it has also denied services to thousands of students with disabilities.

See: <http://www.houstonchronicle.com/denied/?t=9c54f4ac20>

Have a great weekend. Don’t watch too many political shows (wish I could follow my own advice!) See you on twitter @janewestdc

Best, Jane