

Washington Update January 25, 2019

Dear Colleagues:

Well it's been an interesting year so far in Washington... Lots of activity and little output... (You're not really wondering "What's new?" are you?!)

1. The Sad Shutdown Saga...Headed to an End?

With President Trump's announcement this afternoon that a "deal" has been reached to end the shutdown, we can all heave a sigh of relief...sort of and temporarily. The President announced that he has agreed with Congressional leaders that all of the government will reopen and the shutdown will end...until February 15. In essence, he is giving the Congress three weeks to address the border security issue.

This comes as a great relief to so many -- air traffic controllers, TSA agents, FBI investigators, schools that provide free lunches and colleges and universities with research funding. Living in Washington and knowing people who have had to go to work without a paycheck, I can tell you this has been pretty grim on a personal level. Who has to work when they aren't getting paid? There is something fundamentally wrong with this.

Taxi, uber and lyft drivers have suffered with so much less business. Restaurants and government contractors have been hurting. And while relief appears imminent, it is temporary. Like you, I've never witnessed such dysfunction and I imagine, like you, I don't think expecting the government to function is too much to ask. Okay, enough of my soapbox!

On a positive note, it appears that Majority Leader Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Minority Leader Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-NY) have been talking with each other and the President. After both the Democratic and the Republican proposals to end the shutdown were defeated on the floor of the Senate yesterday, the new momentum for resolution is hopeful. On the House side Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) has held firm, having gained the upper hand with her successful cancellation of President Trump's delivery of the State of the Union address in the House chamber -- until the shutdown is over. It was originally scheduled for January 29. How this new temporary compromise will affect this cancellation is unknown for now.

It's past time to return to regular order -- if there even is such a thing these days. Committees in the House are organized and ready to work. Ending this fiasco permanently should clear the path for some serious hearings and policy considerations. Let's get going!

2. House Committee on Ed and Labor Announces Democratic Members and First Hearing – on January 31

The new Chair of the House Committee on Education and Labor, Rep. Bobby Scott (D-VA) has announced the first committee hearing for the 116th Congress. On January 31, Committee members will hear testimony about the impact the government shutdown could have on the school breakfast and lunch program. These programs feed about 30 million children every day in school. While the Trump Administration has indicated that funds for this program are available through March, others have sounded alarms. This week the National PTA, both unions, school boards, principals and superintendent associations sent a letter urging the end to the shutdown before the program is impacted.

How the temporary relief from the shutdown will effect the hearing is not yet known. Perhaps it will be postponed until after Feb. 15, or perhaps it will proceed. But the public scrutiny of a hearing would add additional pressure for a permanent resolution of the shutdown.

Democrats and Republicans have announced their lineups for Committees this year. The ratios are particularly interesting to note, as they are intended to reflect the overall ration of the majority party to the minority party. On the Committee on Education and Labor, Democrats hold 28 seats and Republicans hold 22 seats. See links to rosters below.

See: <https://www.pta.org/docs/default-source/files/advocacy/2019-letters-to-policymakers/fy19-shutdown-school-lunch-letter.pdf>

See: http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2019/01/shutdown-school-meals-house-education-hearing-bobby-scott.html?utm_source=feedblitz&utm_medium=FeedBlitzRss&utm_campaign=campaig nk-12

Democratic members of Ed and Labor Committee:

<https://edlabor.house.gov/about/membership>

Republican members of the Ed and Labor Committee: <https://republicans-edlabor.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=403148>

3. Four National Teacher of the Year Finalists Announced

Every year every state choses a state teacher of the year. These teachers come together in Washington under the auspices of the Council of Chief State School Officers to be considered for the honor of National Teacher of the Year. This week, the four finalists were announced. They are:

- **Donna Gradel, the 2019 Oklahoma Teacher of the Year**, a high school science teacher
- **Kelly Harper, the 2019 District of Columbia Teacher of the Year**, a 3rd grade teacher
- **Danielle Riha, the 2019 Alaska Teacher of the Year**, a middle school teacher
- **Rodney Robinson, the 2019 Virginia Teacher of the Year**, who teaches social studies in a juvenile detention facility

Former 2016 National Teacher of the Year Jahanna Hayes was elected to Congress in 2018 representing Connecticut's 5th Congressional district. She has also secured a spot on the Committee on Education and Labor. This is the first time a National Teacher of the Year has served in Congress.

<https://ccsso.org/blog/ccsso-announces-four-finalists-2019-national-teacher-year>

4. New Resources for Educators

- **Pew Research Center** has released a new poll indicating that improving the education system is a high priority for the American public:
<http://www.people-press.org/2019/01/24/publics-2019-priorities-economy-health-care-education-and-security-all-near-top-of-list/>
- **The American Federation of Teachers** has developed an online training course for educators on awareness of the opioid crisis:
<https://aftelearning.org/group/61>
- **The RAND Corporation** has released an analysis regarding the role artificial intelligence could play in the classroom in supporting K-12 teachers:
<https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE315.html>

Stay warm. See you on twitter @janewestdc

Best,

Jane