

Washington Update July 12, 2019

Dear Colleagues:

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO INTERN IN THE U.S. SENATE, SCROLL TO ITEM #6 IN THIS BLOG. YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS THIS!

In the meantime, Congress came back to Washington this week with a boatload of work to do in the short few weeks before the next recess, in August. It could be a long hot summer.

1. First up: Budget and Funding

When Congress left for July 4 recess, the House had passed almost all of the 12 required funding bills and the Senate had not begun with any of the 12 bills. September 30 marks the end of the fiscal year; without the new spending bills signed into law, a government shutdown will be in the offing. With Congress scheduled to be in recess most of August, the pressure is on.

The holdup is the budget – or the overall spending caps which the House, the Senate and the White House must agree to. While the House adopted its own budget caps, they are higher than those which the Senate or the White House will accept. Added to the mix is the pending need to raise the debt ceiling (this is the borrowing limit for the federal government, which routinely needs to be raised to avoid default). Thus, the pressure is on from three corners: budget, FY 2020 funding bills and debt ceiling. These three dire needs are in the mix together and there is an effort to wrap their resolution into one package – possibly before the August recess.

Majority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) is pursuing an agreement with the Senate and the White House which would involve setting budget caps for two years and increasing the debt ceiling in a single package to pass this month. With the budget caps set, the way is paved to proceed to complete the 12 spending bills.

Educators remain jazzed by the education spending levels in the House Labor/HHS/Education spending bill. The increases are much needed and a push to include those levels in the Senate bill continues, though they are likely to represent the high water mark.

See: <https://www.pressreader.com/>

2. Senate Confirms New Higher Education Leader for Department of Education

On Thursday, the Senate voted 56-37 to confirm Robert King as Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education. King has been a higher education official in Kentucky and head of the State University of New York System. He has worked as a senior adviser to the Department since last year.

See: <https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2019/07/12/senate-confirms-robert-king-key-postsecondary-job>

3. American Federation for Teachers Sues Sec. DeVos over Loan Forgiveness

Yesterday the AFT filed suit against the Department of Education alleging it has mismanaged the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Program to the extent that it is violating the constitutional due process rights of borrowers, who are now teachers. To date 864 of the 76,002 claims for loan forgiveness have been approved. In other words, only 1% have been approved so far.

Last year, House Republicans -- led by Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), ranking member of the Committee on Education and Labor -- proposed a bill (the PROSPER Act) which would have eliminated the program. The bill received pushback from Democrats and a number of Republicans who support PSLF. A Democratic bill, the Aim Higher Act, proposed to expand the PSLF program. In addition -- a number of Senators, led by Sen. Kaine (D-VA) and Sen. Gillibrand (D-NY) -- have introduced a bill which would expand the program and enable borrowers to have half of their loans forgiven in five years, rather than waiting the 10 years as is currently required. Many educators are eligible for this program and many have been frustrated by how it is being administered.

See: <https://www.npr.org/2019/07/11/739860400/broken-promises-teachers-sue-u-s-over-student-loans-that-werent-forgiven>

4. Hearing on Teacher Preparation and Support in House Next Wednesday at 10:15 AM

Next Wednesday, July 17, The Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education Subcommittee and the Higher Education and the Workforce Investment Subcommittee will hold a joint hearing titled ‘Educating our Educators: How Federal Policy Can Better Support Teachers and School Leaders.’ The two subcommittees are part of the full Committee on Education and Labor. Witnesses for the hearing have not yet been announced, but it is likely that they will include experts from both higher education and PK-12. Tune in at 10:15 and you can watch the hearing, which will take place in 2175 Rayburn House Office building, the Committee hearing room.

See: <https://edlabor.house.gov/hearings/educating-our-educators-how-federal-policy-can-better-support-teachers-and-school-leaders->

5. New Resources for Educators

- **The National Center for Education Statistics of the Institute for Education Sciences** issued a report looking at the employment and educational experiences of college graduates a year after graduation. Some key take-aways include:

- The number of students graduating from for-profit colleges rose from 4.6% to 6% of all students in 8 years; 85% of them borrowed to attend vs. 65% who graduated from public colleges
- For-profit students took 104 months to earn a BA vs. 56 months for public school graduates and 45 months for private nonprofit graduates
- Of for-profit graduates 9% were unemployed while 6% of all graduates were unemployed
- Graduates of all types of colleges who became teachers earned about \$36,000 – about \$4000 less than the average made by their 2016 graduate peers in other fields.
- Women earned about \$4000 less than men a year out from college.

See: <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2019241>

- **The Center for American Progress** issued a report titled *Student Debt: An Overlooked Barrier to Increasing Teacher Diversity*. Key take aways include:
 - Black and Latinx students with teaching degrees were more likely to borrow money than their white peers: 91% of black students, 82% of Latinx students, 76% of white students
 - Black and Latinx teachers were more likely to borrow federal student aid funds for graduate school: 47% of Black students; 37% of Latinx students; 26% white students

See: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-postsecondary/reports/2019/07/09/471850/student-debt-overlooked-barrier-increasing-teacher-diversity/>

6. FABULOUS OPPORTUNITY FOR INTERNSHIP IN THE SENATE! DEADLINE JULY 26!

Our colleague, Dr. Kim Knackstedt (Ph.D. in special education from University of Kansas), who began working on the Hill as a doctoral student, is now moving into her 4th year as a Hill staffer! She works on the Senate HELP Committee for Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA). She holds the disability policy portfolio and is seeking an intern to work with her for the Fall semester. Her plan is to regularly host interns, so hopefully this will be an ongoing opportunity. PLEASE SHARE THE INFORMATION BELOW WITH ANYONE WHO YOU THINK WOULD BE INTERESTED, ESPECIALLY DOCTORAL STUDENTS!

FALL INTERNS/LAW CLERKS –

The U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP), Office of the Ranking Member, seeks unpaid interns and law clerks for the Fall of 2019 (Late August – December). The positions offer undergraduate, graduate, and law students the

opportunity to gain substantive experience in a Senate office while participating directly in the legislative process. Intern and law clerk responsibilities include, but are not limited to: assisting Committee staff in performing office duties, conducting research, analyzing legislation, drafting memorandums, and assisting in organizing hearings. Interns and law clerks play a key role in the office and will work closely with senior policy advisors.

The HELP Committee works on a wide range of issues in the areas of health, education, labor, workforce, pensions, oversight, and disabilities.

Qualifications: Applicants should have (i) an interest in public policy and (ii) a desire to learn. They also must have good attention to detail, work well under pressure, be self-motivated, and possess excellent written and oral communication skills.

Applications: Interested applicants should apply to this position by applying on the OAM website. **Washington state ties are preferred but not required.** Applicants are accepted on a rolling basis. The priority deadline for the Fall 2019 internship program is **Friday, July 26th, 2019.** The office is an equal opportunity employer. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, gender, identity or sexual orientation.

Wishing you a great summer weekend, which hopefully involves a lake, swimming pool, beach or other body of refreshing water!

Washington Update will be off next week and return July 25.

In the meantime, catch me on twitter @janewestdc

Best,

Jane