

Washington Update June 1, 2018

Dear Colleagues:

Congress has been in recess this week, but back at the ranch June is shaping up to be a blockbuster with both bodies poised to take up education spending bills and the House leaning toward bringing the unpopular partisan Higher Education Act Reauthorization bill, the PROSPER Act to the floor.

1. The House is Poised to Bring the PROSPER Act to the Floor – Time to Contact Your Representatives: All Teacher Related Provisions Would Be ELIMINATED!

Last December the House Committee on Education and Labor, led by Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC) had a multi-day marathon markup of what has come to be known as the PROSPER Act – a bill to reauthorize the Higher Education Act. The Bill, H.R. 4508, has yet to garner any Democratic support and is opposed by virtually all education organizations. The Trump Administration's own Department of Defense came out opposing the bill as did multiple veterans groups indicating that the bill fails to protect them against predatory practices employed by proprietary institutions. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the bill represents a \$15 billion cut in student aid over the next decade.

Despite the many concerns with the bill and the limited support, the House leadership appears poised to bring the bill to the floor for a vote in mid June. Rep. Steve Scalise (R-LA), Majority Whip, hosted a meeting with Republicans last week to discuss the measure. Chairwoman Foxx is reportedly pursuing securing votes with her colleagues, though many have heard concerns from constituents back home.

For those with a keen interest in how the Higher Education Act affects teachers, the bill is a bust. In the midst of a critical teacher shortage and lowered enrollment in teacher preparation programs around the country, the bill eliminates every provision targeted to support teacher candidates and transformative programs, such as residencies.

Specifically, the PROSPER Act eliminates:

- Title II – the teacher preparation title, including the Teacher Quality Partnership Grants;
- TEACH grants which support teacher candidates preparing for high need fields and schools;
- Loan forgiveness programs that support those in teaching, including the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, the Stafford Loan Forgiveness Program for Teachers and the Loan Forgiveness for Service in Areas of National Need.

Higher Education organizations are speaking out about the detrimental effect of this bill on teachers and teacher preparation (see links to two op eds below). Now is time for you to take action to let your Representatives know that you do not support this bill. You can link to the AACTE (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education) advocacy cite below and simply enter your zip code and follow the directions. In a minute you can weigh in! This is the time to take action!

Here is the link to the AACTE alert system where you can let your House Representative know what you think:

ACT NOW

See: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/4508>

See: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2018/05/22/is-congress-about-to-gut-funding-for-teacher-preparation-programs/?utm_term=.7a3655f0acbd

See: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2018/01/16/the-teacher-takes-on-much-more-than-just-teaching-which-is-why-the-house-overhaul-of-higher-ed-must-be-resisted/?utm_term=.13ff64d69057

2. FY 2019 Education Spending Bills Lining Up for Consideration

Before going into recess, both the House and Senate set top line spending levels for their respective Labor/HHS/Education Appropriations bills. The House will have to keep its bill at the same level as last year, whereas the Senate bill will have an additional \$2 billion in funding. If they ever make it to conference, the numbers will need to be reconciled there. Dates are set for Appropriators to begin consideration of their bills in June. House Appropriators have announced they will take up the bill sometime in June and the Senate Appropriations Committee is targeting the week of June 25. Next week, on June 5, the Senate Subcommittee on Labor/HHS/Education will hear Education Secretary Betsy DeVos testify in support of the President's budget proposal. If anything like her appearance before the House Committee, fireworks can be expected.

While an additional \$2 billion sounds promising for the Senate bill, the competition for those funds will be intense. An Increase for the National Institutes for Health is always a bi-partisan priority. Funds to fight the Opiod Epidemic are also in great demand. This is the time to weigh in and let your Representative and Senators know what funding is important for educators.

3. Secretary DeVos Visits Maryland School as Part of School Safety Commission

Amidst criticism that the President's school safety commission (created after the February massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida) is not hearing from educators, Sec. DeVos visited Hebron Harman Elementary School in Maryland this week to learn about the use of Positive Behavioral Supports and Intervention (PBIS), a research based strategy well known to educators and apparently new to Sec. DeVos. The consideration of systems to improve school climate and student behavior is now on the radar screen of the commission.

George Sugai, director fo the Center for Positive Behavioral Supports at the University of Connecticut , - an expert well known to most educators – participated in the visit. Hebron Harman is one of over 26,000 schools that use the framework. Nearly every state is using PBIS to some extent.

DeVos noted that the commission will focus on practices that might not be well-known across the country. JoAnn Bartoletti, executive director of the National Association of Secondary School Principals responded that PBIS isn't exactly a secret. "PBIS is a well-known program" she said in a statement. "We're concerned that the secretary is just getting up to speed while the rest of the education community feels the urgency to act to implement practices we already know work."

Sugai emphasized that school climate is only one part of the remedy for preventing mass shootings. A good school climate enables a more rapid response to tragic events, he said.

The Commission, comprised of three Cabinet Secretaries, in addition to DeVos, is expected to release its report at the end of the year.

See: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/education/wp/2018/05/31/at-betsy-devoss-federal-school-safety-commission-meeting-lessons-from-first-graders-on-friendships-and-fist-bumps/?utm_term=.273820bbc0ab

4. Disability Groups Sue Department of Education over OCR Investigation Changes

This week three civil rights groups filed a suit against the Trump Administration over changes to the Education Department's rules for civil right investigations. The groups indicate that the new rules will prevent the bringing of claims on behalf of students experiencing discrimination.

The groups are the National Federation of the Blind, the Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates and the NAACP. Recently the investigatory rules of the Office of Civil Rights at the Department of Education were changed indicating that investigators would dismiss bulk complaints. The rule says they “will be blocked from bringing multiple claims on behalf of their multiple constituents.” The lawsuit alleges that the Administration violated the Administrative Procedures Act in creating this new rule as there was no opportunity for public comment.

The new rule appears to be in response to multiple claims filed about the inaccessibility of websites for people with vision or hearing impairments at academic institutions.

See: <https://nfb.org/blog/2018/05/31/disturbing-developments-department-education>

5. A Long Hot Summer on Capitol Hill Expected

With a long and growing list of “to do’s” the Congress is looking at a packed summer. In fact, Majority Leader Sen. Mitch McConnell announced that the coveted August recess may be truncated or possibly eliminated in order to get work done. Some astute observers believe that this may be a political strategy to keep the many Democratic Senators who are up for re-election in Washington rather than at home campaigning. Of the 35 Senators up for reelection this year, 26 are Democrats, putting the Republicans at a great advantage for holding on to seats.

On the list for the summer are: 1) moving all 12 appropriations bills, 2) passing the controversial farm bill; 3) reauthorizing the National Defense Authorization Act –NDAA and the Water Resources Development Act – WRDA. In addition, the House is rumbling about possibly taking up another DACA bill. And the reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration as well as the National Flood Insurance Program wait in the wings.

As usual, new matters will pop up daily. And in this political climate with elections so pivotal, all bets are off.

6 . New Resources for Educators

- **The National Center for Education Statistics** released a report *Teacher Satisfaction with Salary and Current Job* which reveals that less than half of all public school teachers are satisfied with the size of their pay checks. See: <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018116.pdf>

- **The 74** issued a report *Don't Rate Teaching Schools Based on Student Test Scores*. Published in **Education Next**, the research examines studies which considered rankings of teacher preparation programs based on value added models and determined that the value added models essentially spit out random results. See: <https://www.the74million.org/dont-rate-teaching-schools-based-on-student-test-scores-study-warns/>
- **The Education Trust** is out with *The State of Educational Equity*, an interactive data tool with state by state data on equity measures. See: https://edtrust.org/state_report/
- **The National Center for Education Statistics** issued *Mapping State Proficiency Standards* which considers how the National Assessment of Education Progress defines “proficiency” compared to state proficiency standards. The analysis found that a number of states still consider students proficient when they are performing at a basic or below level, but that states are getting tougher. See: <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/statemapping/>
- **The Hechinger Report** published an opinion piece by former Education Secretary John B. King Jr. and Linda Darling-Hammond, president of the Learning Policy Institute, *We are Not Doing Enough to Support Teacher of Color*. Several remedies are proposed. See: <http://hechingerreport.org/opinion-we-arent-doing-enough-to-support-teachers-of-color/>

I had an amazing trip to Cuba with William and Mary students and faculty. I am still searching for words to describe it.....no luck yet.

Wishing you a wonderful weekend. See you on twitter @janewestdc

Best,

Jane