

Washington Update June 21, 2019

Dear Colleagues –

Today makes summer official! I'm off to VCU for the final seminar of an amazing group of doc students (you know who you are!!!) and then on to the Outer Banks for some fun in the sun with my cousins. The House has certainly given us something to celebrate as summer begins!

1. Massive Spending Bill Passes House with Large Increases for Education!

Education advocates are taking a moment to rejoice in a funding bill (H.R. 2740) that passed the House this week (with a vote count of 226-223) calling for a record high level of spending for the Department of Education bringing total investments to \$75.9 billion. Big winners in the bill include Title I, special education and social emotional learning. Notably, the bill cuts funding for charter schools by 10%.

Rep. Bobby Scott (D-VA), chair of the Committee on Education and Labor, said “Notably, as Americans across the country demand greater support for education, this bill provides record levels of funding for our public schools.”

The rejoicing is tinged with the knowledge that this is as good as it will get for education spending. Unfortunately, the Senate will not have numbers this high, as the budget caps, which are yet to be determined, will undoubtedly require lower figures. And the Trump Administration has indicated that it would veto this bill.

But the House is close to meeting its goal of passing all 12 spending bills before the July 4 recess. The minibus that passed the House this week includes 4 of those bills (one includes education spending). Minibus #2, which is under debate now includes another 5 bills. Minibus # 3 will include two bills, leaving only the Homeland Security funding bill for consideration. Because of controversies over funding the wall at the Mexican border and other immigration matters, the Homeland Security bill is considered too hot to handle, so time will tell how this pans out.

The focus now turns to the Senate where Appropriations chair Sen. Richard Shelby (R-AL) has indicated that they will begin moving bills in July. But that pesky budget deal lurks around the corner (see below).

See: http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2019/06/education-funding-increase-unions-advocates-house-approves.html?utm_source=feedblitz&utm_medium=FeedBlitzRss&utm_campaign=campaignk-12

See CEF charts on individual education program funding, not yet updated from Committee passage of bill: <https://cef.org/wp-content/uploads/CEFs-FY-2020-Funding-Table-Presidents-5.13.19-budget-amendment.pdf>

2. Lack of Agreement on Budget Caps Threatens Government Shutdown in the Fall

Eight years ago, the Congress passed a budget law which requires automatic spending cuts (called “sequesters”) unless the Congress acts to override those potential cuts. These budget caps which are currently in place would require a \$71 billion reduction in military spending and a \$55 billion cut in non-defense spending in FY 2020, which begins October 1, 2019. Leaders of the Senate, the House and the White House have been meeting in an effort to agree on the new spending caps, however progress does not appear imminent. The Democratic controlled House ignored the current budget caps and created their own caps, thus allowing big increases in spending. However, these will not hold unless the Senate agrees to them, and it will not, as the caps are far higher than the Republican controlled Senate or the White House would abide. Thus, the standoff.

Also in the mix, is the looming debt ceiling increase. This is a situation whereby the government is about to go beyond its allowed borrowing authority to pay its bills. Without action, the government cannot continue to function. Whereas raising the debt ceiling used to be a routine affair which occurred without so much as a mention, it has in recent years become an opportunity to bring Washington to a halt and make demands that might not be otherwise heard.

At the latest White House meeting, Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin offered the following deal to Congressional leaders:

- Take the sequester off the table (i.e. no new funding cuts)
- Pass a one-year continuing resolution (i.e. same levels of funding as last year)
- Pass a one-year debt ceiling extension

Of course, President Trump is always a wild card. You will recall that last year he changed his mind multiple times about signing funding bills, resulting in the end in a long government shutdown.

In order to keep things moving, Sen. Shelby, chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, has indicated that if no deal is reached with the White House by July 1, the Senate will create their own budget caps (a process called “deeming”) and move ahead with their 12 spending bills, just as the House has done. Stay tuned!

3. OECD Issues International Report on Teacher Satisfaction

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECE) released the results of the most recent Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) this week. Teachers and principals in 49 education systems, including the U.S., were asked about their job satisfaction, practice and working conditions. Over 150,000 teachers in lower secondary grades and 9000 principals participated in the survey. Peggy Carr of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), which conducted the US portion of the survey, noted that the report provides “a window on how U.S. teachers and principals and their working and learning environments compare internationally.”

Among the key findings:

- 2/3 of teachers are female; 52% of principals are male
- U.S. teachers in these grades have fewer average years of teaching experience (15 years) than their international colleagues (17 years)
- Over half of U.S. lower secondary teachers have a Masters whereas 41% of their global peers have a Masters
- 90% of U.S. teachers are satisfied with their jobs, in line with the rest of the world
- 36% of U.S. teachers think that society values the teaching profession – similar to the global average but less than high performing systems like Finland and Shanghai where over half of teachers believe society values the teaching profession
- Most teachers around the world feel well prepared in content and pedagogy, but only about half feel prepared to teach in a multicultural, multi-lingual or mixed-ability classroom.
- U.S. teachers believe increasing teacher pay (69.4%) is more important than reducing class size (57.4%)

See: <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/talis/>

See: <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/talis/talis2018/>

4. New Resources for Educators

- **The Annie E. Casey Foundation** has released the 30th edition of the *KIDS Count Data Book*. The news is not good, including:
 - Over 4 million 3 and 4 year olds, over half of the nation's children in that age group, were not in school in 2016 -- the same as 2011;
 - In 2017, 67% of public school eighth graders were not proficient in math -- the same as 2009;
 - African American, American Indian and Latino students fail to graduate from high school on time at rates far greater than their white peers.See: <https://www.aecf.org/resources/2019-kids-count-data-book/>
- **Rand Corporation** released a report on *The Principal Pipeline* funded by the **Wallace Foundation**. It found that students performed up to 6 points above the median percentile on state tests in schools that implemented a program intended to improve the skills of school leaders. The study includes analyses of school climate, principal retention, teacher turnover and parent satisfaction. See: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2666.html
- **The Government Accountability Office (GAO)** issued a report on **Department of Education data on seclusion and restraint** finding that the Department has repeatedly

published such data without “always correcting known reporting errors.” Data comes from the Civil Right Data Collection (CRDC) which is gathered every two years. See: <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-19-551R> Comments by DeLauro and Murray: <https://delauro.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/delauro-murray-statement-federal-data-how-often-students-are-secluded-or>

- **ProPublica** analyzed the strong relationship between **Teacher for America and the Charter School movement** finding that the Walton Foundation was paying charter schools \$6000 for every TFA teacher they hired. See: <https://www.propublica.org/article/how-teach-for-america-evolved-into-an-arm-of-the-charter-school-movement>

Wishing you a wonderful weekend.

See you on twitter @janewestdc

Best regards,
Jane