

Washington Update June 7, 2019

Dear Colleagues:

After a 10-day Memorial Day recess, Congress returned for a brief three-day session and then hit the road again. They will roar back into town next week with a plate full of funding issues to address.

1. Budget and Appropriations: House on the Move!

The House

Democrats are vigorously exercising their hard-won majority in the House by moving rapidly on spending bills for FY 2020. The deadline for funding bills, and the aversion of another government shutdown, is September 30. With Congress out for July 4 week and all of August (unless things change), the pressure is on. By early next week all 12 appropriations bills will have moved through Committee markups and be ready to go to the House floor. House leadership has announced its intent to see all 12 bills passed by the end of June! This is indeed ambitious, but the stars seem to be aligned.

Last year, you will recall, the strategy of pairing the Labor/HHS/Education funding bill with the Defense funding bill was successful in garnering bi-partisan votes, thus avoiding the government shutdown for the Department of Education. This strategy remains in play this year, and looks to be amplified.

Next Wednesday the House has scheduled a single vote on a package of five appropriations bills, including the one with education spending, the Labor/HHS/Education bill, H.R. 2740. Other bills in the package (called a minibus) are Defense, Energy-Water, State-Foreign Operations and Legislative Branch.

The House Rules Committee will first consider the package and make a determination as to what amendments will be in order on the House floor. The deadline for filing amendments was today at 10AM. It looks as if over 60 amendments have been filed for the Labor/HHS/Education bill, with only a few related to education. (See link below.) Note that it appears that if an amendment calls for any sort of increase, a comparable cut to a program in that bill must be offered. Few of the 60 amendments are likely to be approved for actual offering on the floor. However, since the package includes 5 spending bills, there will likely be some amendments to each of the five in the package, which likely means some late nights for legislators. Since the Democrats only need a majority to pass this minibus, it is most likely that it will pass. And then....

The Senate

On to the Senate. The markup for their first appropriations bill is likely to be the end of June. It will probably be the package of the Labor/HHS/Education spending bill and the Defense spending bill. Still in the offing is a final agreement on the budget caps. The House created their own caps, which allowed for generous education spending. The Senate caps will not be so generous. In order for bills to be finalized, the House and Senate must agree on the same budget caps. So, sadly, the funding levels in the House bill serve as high water marks.

Stay tuned for more developments next week!

<https://appropriations.house.gov/sites/democrats.appropriations.house.gov/files/H.R.%202740%20division-by-division%20summary.pdf>

To see the bill text and 60 amendments filed with the House Rules Committee:

<https://rules.house.gov/bill/116/hr-2740>

2. House Bill would Require DC Voucher Program to Comply with IDEA and other Civil Rights Laws

The federal government funds only one voucher program – in the District of Columbia. It is small and has been on the books for years. The voice of advocates outraged that federal dollars could be used for programs which do not have to comply with federal civil rights laws has been heard by House Democrats. One of the House spending bills – Financial Services – includes funding for this program and this year adds language requiring voucher schools to certify that they are complying with IDEA and other federal civil rights laws. This is a first!

This is an issue that has repeatedly come up during the multiple voucher debates over the last two years. We will see if this language remains in the bill as it moves to the Senate.

See pages 63-64:

<https://appropriations.house.gov/sites/democrats.appropriations.house.gov/files/FY2020%20FSGG%20Sub%20Markup%20Draft.pdf>

3. Senate Higher Ed Act Reauthorization Bill: Radio Silence

As you will recall, a draft of a Senate reauthorization bill for the Higher Education Act was expected for circulation by the end of May. That goal has not been met. There has been no further announcement from the HELP Committee, though it seems negotiations, at least among staff, continue. So, as frequently happens, education advocates are in “hurry up and wait” mode! Stay tuned.

4. New Resources for Educators

- **The Institute for Education Sciences** is out with *The Condition of Education 2019* which is chocked full of new data, including the fact that the number of students served under IDEA increased from 6.4 million to 7.0 million between 2011-12 and 2017-8 bringing the percentage of special education students from 13% to 14% of total public school enrollment. See: <https://www.disabilityscoop.com/2019/06/06/nations-schools-more-idea/26733/> and for IES report: <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019144.pdf>

- The conservative **American Action Forum** issued a report indicating that for every 1 percentage-point increase in the growth rate of the portion of a state's population with at least a bachelor's degree, the state's real gross domestic product growth rate increases by about 0.08 percentage points. See: <https://www.americanactionforum.org/daily-dish/economic-benefits-educational-attainment/>
- Americans who live in “fragile communities” are divided on whether all children have access to high quality public schools a **Gallup Poll** reveals: <https://www.niet.org/research-and-policy/show/policy/investing-in-teacher-leadership-a-better-way-to-make-job-embedded-professional-learning-a-reality-in-every-school>
- A new report from **FutureEd** looks at teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and practices in strengthening students' investment in learning. See: <https://www.future-ed.org/teacher-mindsets-how-educators-perspectives-shape-student-success/>
- **The National Institute for Excellence in Teaching** has outlined what district leaders and state and federal policymakers can do to develop and fund school-based teacher leader roles. See: <https://www.niet.org/research-and-policy/show/policy/investing-in-teacher-leadership-a-better-way-to-make-job-embedded-professional-learning-a-reality-in-every-school>

Wishing you a warm and wonderful early summer weekend!

See you on twitter @janewestdc

Best,
Jane