

Washington Update June 8, 2018

Dear Colleagues:

I had the great pleasure to contribute to AACTE's (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education) Day on the Hill this week! With 150 folks (and 50 were doctoral, Masters and undergraduate students!), the voice of rigorous educator preparation was on the Hill. It was a busy week.

1. Appropriations Bills and Recission Package Moving

The House and Senate continue to move appropriations bills. And the recission package proposed by the Administration (though slightly modified) could come up any day now for a vote in the House. The House also plans to move the first appropriations package on the floor. Three bills will be packaged as a "minibus" and brought to the floor – with 39 amendments expected to be offered. The House has acted on 9 of the 12 appropriations bills so far, with the Labor/HHS/Education bill is one that still awaits. The Senate Appropriations Committee has moved five of their 12 bills to date with the Labor/HHS/Education bill scheduled for the week of June 25.

2. Sec. DeVos Testifies before Senate Labor/HHS/Education Appropriations Subcommittee

On Tuesday Sec. DeVos defended President Trump's FY 2019 budget proposal before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor/HHS/Education. As you may recall, that proposal calls for a \$7.7 billion-- or 11% -- cut from last year's levels for education. The proposal includes a new \$1 billion competitive grant program to expand school choice. Sec. DeVos reiterated her belief that school choice best allows students to have their needs met. Members of the Subcommittee called out a number of programs intended to be eliminated by DeVos as unlikely candidates for that outcome – including the afterschool program, funds for professional development for teachers (ESSA Title II) and Special Olympics.

Chairman Blunt (R-MO) noted that he expected the Administration's proposal to encounter the same fate it encountered last year – namely that virtually all of the recommendations for eliminations and new programs were rejected. He further noted that he intends to produce a bi-partisan bill by the end of the month. Ranking member Patty Murray (D-WA) criticized Sec. DeVos for continuing to prioritize her agenda to privatize education in the U.S. She noted that Sec. DeVos has made it easier for predatory for-profit colleges and loan companies to take advantage of students.

While the hearing did not include the fireworks that the House hearing did, it did raise a red flag which set the stage for the School Safety Commission's public hearing the following day. Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT) asked Sec. DeVos whether or not the commission would look at firearms as they relate to school safety. The Secretary noted that that was not part of the Commission's charge. This comment set off a firestorm on twitter and throughout the education community.

The father of Parkland shooting victim Jamie Guttenberg tweeted at Sec. DeVos "Your comment that the investigation following the shooting death of my daughter and 16 others will not involve guns is surprisingly helpful. You just gave every parent who actually cares about school safety a reason to vote in November."

The Department of education later followed up noting that the Commission will consider age restrictions on the sale of guns.

You can watch the hearing here: <https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/hearings/review-of-the-fy2019-budget-request-for-the-department-of-education>

3 . Commission on School Safety Holds Public Forum without Commissioners!

Much to the surprise of all education watchers, Sec. DeVos announced the day before the Commission's public hearing (which was Wednesday) that she would be leaving on a 10 day "learning" tour to Europe (Switzerland, the Netherlands and the UK) and would not be present at the hearing. As it turns out, none of the four commissioners were present. Rather, staff from the agencies attended to listen to the packed roster of educators, parents and students provide their perspectives. Newly confirmed Deputy Secretary Mick Zais attended in place of Sec. DeVos and chaired the session. Sec. DeVos is focusing on apprenticeship programs and vocational schools on her European tour.

Sec. DeVos's comments at the Senate hearing on Tuesday about not considering guns as a part of the Commission's work set the stage for a protest at the hearing involving the Brady Campaign and others. Co-President of the Million Mom March, Kris Brown said "We're completely round the bend if {DeVos} believes she's somehow going to study and solve gun violence without actually addressing guns." Members of the Brady campaign chanted outside the building: "Betsy, Betsy NRA hack; your plan for school safety is totally wack."

Deputy Secretary Zais made comments to clarify Sec. DeVos's earlier statement during the Commission hearing. He said "There are over 300 million guns in America...The commission will not be looking at ways to confiscate those weapons or abrogate the Second Amendment. But what we will be doing is looking at specific age limits for the purchase of specific kinds of weapons, and we will be examining legal procedures for the confiscation from people with identified mental health issues."

Speakers from multiple national education, civil rights, disability and parent organizations provided statements in addition to students and teachers who had been at schools during a shooting. Many decried the proposal to arm teachers and several called for the continuation of the school discipline guidance, which Sec. DeVos is considering eliminating. Some members of Congress, such as Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL) have stated that the school discipline guidance leads to school violence. There is no evidence to support this claim.

Sec. DeVos's schedule in Europe:

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USED/bulletins/1f5151b>

See: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/06/us/politics/school-safety-commission-guns.html>

For the National PTA's position: <https://www.pta.org/home/advocacy/pta%27s-positions/Individual-Position-Statements/Position-Statement-Gun-Safety-and-Violence-Prevention>

4. House Schedules Hearing on Charter Schools for June 13 10 AM ET

Next Wednesday, June 13, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce will hold a hearing "The Power of Charter Schools: Promoting Opportunity for America's Students" Witnesses have not yet been announced. The hearing begins at 10 AM ET and you can watch live here:

<https://edworkforce.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=402811>

5. What's Happening with the PROSPER Act?!

As you will recall from last week's Washington Update, we are all on alert for the PROSPER Act to possibly be brought to the House floor for a vote. It's still possible!

The PROSPER Act (H.R. 4508) is a bill which reauthorizes the Higher Education Act and eliminates every provision targeted to support teacher candidates, educator preparation and transformative programs, such as residencies. The bill was passed out of the Committee on Education and the Workforce last December with all Republicans supporting it and all Democrats opposing it. Needless to say, it is a totally partisan bill. This bill would exacerbate the current teacher shortage and contribute to the already lowered enrollment in teacher preparation programs around the country.

This week another letter was submitted to Congress from 86 organizations, including the American Association of University Women and the NAACP, opposing the PROSPER Act noting that it would "undo decades of work to protect students from costly, low-quality programs and high-pressure deceptive sales tactics." Another letter was sent from

multiple leaders from religious institutions and organizations supporting what they described as “important protections for religious freedom” in the bill.

The lead sponsor of the bill, Chairwoman Virginia Foxx (R-NC) continues to look for support to bring the bill to the floor, but it appears that she has not yet secured the support she needs. But her efforts will continue so we remain on alert.

This is a good time to let your Representatives know of your concerns with the bill. You can do that by going to AACTE’s advocacy center; just click below. This will be one minute very well spent!!

Click here to register your concerns about the PROSPER Act:
http://advocacy.aacte.org/p/dia/action4/common/public/?action_KEY=25007

6. Senate Leader Cancels most of August Recess!

This week Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) announced that he is cancelling all but the first week of August recess. He indicated that this change is because of “historic obstruction” by Senate Democrats. His plan is to move appropriations bills and continue to confirm the President’s nominees. In addition, he will keep vulnerable Democrats who are up for reelection off the campaign trail. Ten Democrats are up for reelection in states that Trump won, while only one Republican (Dean Heller of Nevada) is up for reelection in a state won by Hillary Clinton. Democrats announced their intention to beat the drum on the issue of health care during the month of August blasting Republicans for increasing costs and declining access.

7. New Resources for Educators

- **The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)** released *The Pre-K-8 School Leader in 2018: A 10-Year Study* revealing that social-emotional learning, mental health, and student poverty are among the top student-related concerns of Pre-K through grade 8 principals. See: <https://www.naesp.org/pre-k-8-school-leader-2018-10-year-study>
- **Ed Week’s Quality Counts** is out with a *Map: Per-Pupil Spending, State by State* which reveals that the state average is \$12, 526 with Vermont holding the top spot at \$20,795 and Utah holding the lowest spot at \$7207. See: <https://www.edweek.org/ew/collections/quality-counts-2018-state-finance/map-per-pupil-spending-state-by-state.html?cmp=eml-enl-eu-news2-rm&M=58509928&U=780070&override=web>

- **National Education Policy Center** is out with *What Might Happen If School Vouchers and Privatization of Schools Were to Become Universal in the U.S.: Learning from a National Test Case—Chile* which concludes that: Evidence indicates that Chile's voucher policy not only failed to meet its objectives, it also elicited several harmful outcomes for middle-class families, disadvantaged students, and the teaching profession.

See: <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/chilean-voucher>

- **The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE)** supported an **Education Talk Radio PreK-12 session** on AACTE's CEEDAR-sponsored Special Education Task Force on Clinical Preparation. *Inclusion and Equity. Mainstreaming Special Ed in the Classroom* features an interview with co-chairs of the Task Force, Dr. Renee Roselle from UCONN and Dr. Deborah Reed from UNF as well as AACTE's Amanda Lester and yours truly. Tune in: <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/edutalk/2018/05/17/inclusion-mainstreaming-special-ed-in-the-classroom>

Wishing you a glorious summer weekend!

See you on twitter @janewestdc

Best,

Jane