

Washington Update September 8, 2017

Dear Colleagues:

Welcome to fall! In usual form, Congress has pushed much of its business into a handful of legislative days before the Sept. 30 end of the fiscal year. The agenda is packed and moving fast.

1. President Trump Joins Democrats to Move Comprehensive Funding Package and More

In a surprise and unanticipated move President Trump aligned with Democratic leaders in the Congress to package three “must do” initiatives and move them quickly. With pressure from the need to provide relief to hurricane victims, this unlikely coalition agreed on packaging over \$15 billion of hurricane relief with a temporary stop-gap funding bill to keep the government open and a provision to raise the debt ceiling. The legislation was adopted by the House with a vote 316-90 and the Senate 80-17. It runs through December 8. Funding for education programs will continue for now at their current levels.

Congress returned from summer recess facing both the debt ceiling and passing a funding bill to keep the government alive into the next fiscal year -- both always challenging to pass and usually political footballs. Passage of this bill takes the pressure off for a few months and gives Democrats the upper hand in negotiations that will be needed to carry the government forward after December 8.

<http://www.politico.com/story/2017/09/08/house-passes-disaster-aid-package-debt-ceiling-increase-stopgap-spending-242486>

https://www.washingtonpost.com/powerpost/house-set-to-vote-today-on-harvey-aid-package-that-would-also-raise-debt-ceiling/2017/09/08/728ddce8-9494-11e7-8754-d478688d23b4_story.html?utm_term=.a82e9ef44b3b

2. Senate Committee Passes Education Funding Bill

On September 7, the Senate Appropriations Committee adopted a Labor/HHS/Education spending bill for FY 2018. Funding levels for education are more generous than those in the House bill and virtually all of President Trump’s proposals were rejected. While there is a slight increase in education spending over the FY 2017 level, that was accomplished by utilizing funds from the Pell surplus – a move that worries many education advocates.

Below are some comparisons of funding for education programs for FY 2017, President Trump’s proposal and the House and Senate FY 2018 Committee bills. The next step in the process comes as the December 8 deadline approaches when new funding bills must be passed.

	FY 2017	Trump Request	House Com. Bill	Senate Com. Bill
Title I	\$15.46B	\$14.88B	\$15.46B	\$15.48B
Title II	\$2.06B	0	0	\$2.06B
IDEA Part B	\$12 B	\$11.9 B	\$12.2B	\$12B
IDEA State Personnel Dev.	\$39M	\$42M	\$39M	\$39M
IDEA Personnel Prep	\$84M	\$84M	\$84M	\$84M
Higher Ed program for students with ID	\$12M	\$12M	\$12M	\$12M
Teacher Quality Partnership	\$43M	0	0	\$38M

IES Total	\$605M	\$617M	\$605M	\$600M
Special Ed Research (subset of IES)	\$54M	\$54M	\$54M	\$54M

3. Full House Considers Package of 8 Funding Bills, Including Education

Despite the pressure of September 30 being relieved by the passage of the short term funding bill, the House is considering a package of 8 appropriations bills, called a “minibus.” The remaining 4 appropriations bills have already been adopted by the House. Passage of this minibus would give the House bragging rights that they have completed their business in regular order and in a timely fashion. Beyond that, it is not clear what the impact would be as the Senate is way behind the House and some appropriations bills that have progressed are at vastly different spending levels than those in the House. In addition the House bill exceeds the budget cap for defense spending by over \$70 billion which would require a change to the Budget Act for passage.

The House will consider hundreds of amendments to the minibus next week over several days. One which is troubling to educators is a proposal by Rep. F. Rooney (R-FL) to cut one third of the funding for the Institute of Education Sciences. The House is expected to consider the education portion of the bill in the middle of the week.

4. Five Past Secretaries of Education Urge Congress to Enact DACA

President Trump generated an outpouring of opposition from all corners of the education world when he called for the end to DACA – the executive order that allows undocumented immigrants who were brought to the US as children to remain in the country. Higher education

organizations have been particularly vocal in their concerns and education groups are urging Congress to act swiftly – before the 6 month deadline – to enact DACA, or something similar, into law.

Five past Secretaries of Education joined to write a letter to Congress calling for a legislative fix. Secretaries John King, Arne Duncan and Richard Riley from the Democratic side and Secretaries Margaret Spellings and Rod Paige from the Republican side noted that “Terminating DACA administratively without a legislative solution would cause hundreds of thousands of young immigrants to lose their jobs, their legal status and their protection from deportation.”

They further added, “DACA was always a temporary fix, a band-aid designed to hold until Congress acted. That time has come. As you well know, bipartisan legislation known as the DREAM Act has been introduced every Congress since 2001 to address this issue. The DREAM Act would create a path for these young Americans to earn legal status and eventually citizenship, like generations of hardworking immigrants before them.”

5. Have We Lost Sight of Education as the Cornerstone of Democracy?

A recent article in the Atlantic Magazine by Erika Christakis argues that our debate about education has become more of a debate about a private consumable than a public good. She says “I am more concerned with how the current discussion has ignored public schools’ victories, while also detracting from their civic role.” She believes our lost faith in public education has led us to false. A certified public school teacher herself, Christakis holds we are suffering from neglecting instruction in democracy in our schools. Read this thoughtful article here: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/10/the-war-on-public-schools/537903/>

Cheers for a great weekend.

Let me know if you have questions.

See you on twitter @janewestdc

Jane