

Washington Update December 20, 2019

Dear Colleagues:

This will be my final blog for 2019. As I wrap up and as you wrap up, Congress has wrapped up too – with all 12 appropriations bills completed. I think we all need some respite and I'm hoping that for you! A little R and R with family and friends goes a long way!

1. Congress Delivers a Big Christmas Present – and On Time!

In the midst of the partisan impeachment brawl, Republicans and Democrats in the House and the Senate came together to have bipartisan votes in both bodies to pass two packages of funding bills which will keep all of the federal government running. The bills represent \$1.4 trillion in spending for FY 2020 and they cover spending through September 30, 2020. President Trump has indicated that he will sign the bills today, thus preventing another government shutdown.

Some key points about the education portion of the bill:

- It adds \$1.3 billion in spending for education over FY 2019.
- The Department of Education's budget now totals \$72.8 Billion.
- Virtually no program received a cut in funding and many received substantial increases.
- The largest increases went to Title I (\$450 million) and IDEA Part B (\$400 million).
- Related programs in HHS received large increases as well, for example Head Start has a \$500 million increase.
- A new Social Emotional Learning initiative received \$123 million.
- Many minority serving institutions in higher education received considerable increases including an \$11 million increase for HBCU graduate institutions.
- For the first time in years funding for research on gun violence prevention is provided at \$25 million (for CDC and NIH).

Some funding levels for key education programs:

Program	2019 Funding	2020 Funding	Increase	
Title I ESEA	\$ 15.86 B	\$ 16.31 B	\$ 450 M	*
Title II ESEA	\$ 2.056 B	\$ 2.132 B	\$ 76 M	*
IDEA Part B	\$ 12.364 B	\$ 12.764 B	\$ 400 M	*
IDEA Personnel Prep	\$ 87 M	\$ 89.7 M	\$ 2.7 M	*
Special Ed Research - IES	\$ 56 M	\$ 57 M	\$ 1 M	*
IES Total	\$ 615 M	\$ 623 M	\$ 8 M	*
Teacher Quality Partnership	\$ 43 M	\$ 50 M	\$ 7 M	*

Students with ID in Higher Ed	\$ 12 M	\$12 M	0	
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*Numbers are rounded

There is some very interesting report language included in the bill in the areas of teacher shortages, civil rights data collection, homeless and foster youth.

The report language about the teacher shortage is as follows:

“GAO Report on Teacher Shortages.—The agreement requests GAO provide a report to the Committees on trends and factors contributing to school districts challenges with teacher recruitment and retention. The report should include a review and analysis of challenges recruiting and retaining special education teachers, paraprofessionals and teacher aides; the extent to which licensure requirements are waived or modified to address shortages; and geographic and demographic characteristics of districts facing the greatest challenges or shortages, including rural and urban areas. The report shall examine ways to improve the effectiveness of current Federal policy in preventing and responding to teacher shortages as well as make recommendations on potential Federal interventions to improve teacher recruitment and retention.”

Text of the Labor/HHS/Education appropriations bill:

<https://docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20191216/BILLS-116HR1865SA-RCP116-44.PDF>

Report language for the Labor/HHS/Education appropriations bill:

<https://appropriations.house.gov/sites/democrats.appropriations.house.gov/files/HR%201865%20-%20Division%20A%20-%20LHHS%20SOM%20FY20.pdf>

Press release from Senate Appropriations Committee:

<https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/LaborHHS%202020.pdf>

Press release from the House Appropriations Committee:

<https://appropriations.house.gov/sites/democrats.appropriations.house.gov/files/Domestic%20Priorities%20and%20International%20Assistance%20Appropriations%20Minibus%20summary.pdf>

2. Morale at Department of Education Reported to be Among the Lowest in Federal Agencies

The annual survey by the Office of Personnel Management which measures morale in federal agencies reveals an overall half point decline since 2019, the first drop since 2014. With President Trump’s desire to shrink the federal workforce and new policies, such as the elimination of teleworking at the Department of Education, this may not be surprising.

An analysis by Partnership for Public Service and Boston Consulting Group reports that the Department of Education received the very lowest score among mid-sized federal agencies. For the fourth year there was a decline in employee engagement. The Institute of Education Sciences witnessed the largest drop in morale, declining 14 points. The decline was reported to be driven by decreases in how employees measure effectiveness of senior leaders.

See: <https://www.politico.com/news/agenda/2019/12/17/government-morale-trump-federal-administration-084835>

3. State Teachers of the Year Announced

Every year the Council for Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) announces the teacher of the year for every state. Eventually one teacher will be chosen from this group to be the National Teacher of the Year. The goal of the program is to elevate the voices of teachers so that they are engaged in state and national policy conversations.

This year's group includes 24 high school teachers, 15 middle school teachers and 16 elementary school teachers. Among the luminaries who hold this title is Rep. Jahana Hayes (D-CT), who entered politics and won her first term in the last election cycle. She now sits on the House Committee on Education and Labor, where she brings a strong teacher voice to policy making. This year's National Teacher of the Year is Rodney Robinson from Virginia, who teaches at a juvenile detention center in Richmond. He is a powerful voice. You can follow him on twitter @RodRobinsonRVA

The National Teacher of the Year for 2020 will be announced in the spring. Check out the awardees and see who is from your state!

See: <https://ccsso.org/blog/introducing-2020-state-teachers-year>

4. New Resource for Educators

- **The National Student Clearinghouse** is out with report showing overall college enrollment is down for the 8th year in a row, with a decrease of 1.3%, or over 231,000 students. Florida had the largest decrease. While all types of institutions had decreases, the largest drops (by percentage) were at four-year for-profit colleges and community colleges. See: <https://nscresearchcenter.org/current-term-enrollment-estimates-2019/>

I'm off to Manhattan to visit my brother and his wife for the holidays. I'm excited that I will finally see Hamilton and also will take in Chris Botti (fab jazz trumpeter) at the Blue Note. And of course, you can't beat the decorations at Rockefeller Plaza.

And a big shout out to the very same brother, Dr. Thomas West, who manages my website and posts these blogs every week! It's great to have such a smart kind brother 😊.

Wishing you all the very best for a joyous holiday! Looking forward to the next decade with you!

Jane