

Washington Update, December 3, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

It's the end-of-year countdown season for Congress and a lot is at stake! Read on.

1. Congress Races to the Finish Line

On Thursday, just 36 hours before government funding was set to lapse, lawmakers rallied to unite behind a [deal](#) that will keep the government funded at its current levels through February 18th. The House voted 221-212 to approve the measure. The Senate then passed the 11-week stopgap spending bill in a 69-28 vote—sending the measure to the President's desk. The legislation, referred to as a continuing resolution (CR), will prevent a government shutdown while keeping the government funded at levels set nearly one year ago by former President Trump.

While this temporary patch will keep the government open, it could result in federal agencies delaying grant competitions and disbursement of funds. The lack of knowledge about what the full year's level of funding will be, and the February 18 end to the current funding level, can result in hesitancy to commit to yearlong grants as there is no certainty about what the full year's funding amount will be. The current CR could be extended to October 1, 2022, the end of the fiscal year, or new bills could be passed with increased or decreased funding levels for various programs.

With the House having passed its funding bill for education and offering a 35% increase, and the President's budget recommending a 41% increase, advocates are quite keen on shifting to a permanent full year funding bill after February 18.

Next week, Congress will shift gears and face the other item on the “must-do” list -- the debt limit. The current debt limit will be reached by December 15th and without congressional action, the government will not be able to meet its financial obligations. In recent weeks, Republicans have vowed not to help Democrats raise the debt limit. In order to pass it without any Republican support in the Senate, yet another budget resolution would need to be adopted. Given the short time frame, this is very unlikely. Majority Leader Schumer (D-NY) would like to address the debt limit with a traditional bi-partisan vote.

During [testimony](#) before the Senate Banking Committee this week, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen underscored the urgency of the matter. “I cannot overstate how critical it is that Congress address this issue,” Yellen said. “America must pay its bills on time and in full. If we do not, we will eviscerate our current recovery.”

Finally, Congress has two major items on their “want to do” list – both of which could have a significant impact on education funding: passage of the National Defense Authorization Act and the Build Back Better Act. The National Defense Authorization Act is not an appropriations bill, but rather is an authorization bill, which in its current

form authorizes more funding for defense than was proposed in the FY22 appropriations bill passed by the House in the summer. If the appropriations bill ultimately matches the authorization bill we can expect to see cuts across all non-defense discretionary funds—including education. As for the Build Back Better Act, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) said he wants the Senate to pass the Build Back Better Act by Christmas. But with a full agenda between now and then, analysts are skeptical Democrats can get it across the finish line before the new year.

Advocates are keeping a close eye on all of the moving parts in Congress but are especially interested getting an FY22 appropriations bill passed coupled with the Build Back Better Act. While the path remains unclear, it will certainly be a race to the finish line and your voice matters. As both the FY22 appropriations legislation and the Build Back Better Act have historic increases for education funding, now is the time for advocacy. Below we have 3 opportunities for you to raise your voice for education funding. We urge you to participate.

2. Advocacy Action Alerts from AACTE and CEF

Our colleagues at the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) and the Committee for Education Funding (CEF) are calling on education advocates to urge lawmakers to support policies that help ensure our nation's students receive a high-quality education taught by a qualified and diverse educator workforce. Three easy and accessible options for advocacy are outlined below. Special thanks to AACTE and CEF for making such advocacy efforts available for all.

Congress passed the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 1975 to ensure that every child with a disability has access to an education. The legislation called for the federal government to pay 40% of the average per pupil expenditure for special education. However, the federal government has never met that aspiration and current funding is at just 15.7%. Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) and Representative Jared Huffman (D-CA) recently introduced the IDEA Full Funding Act, which would fulfill Congress' commitment to IDEA. ***Urge your Representative and Senators to cosponsor the IDEA Full Funding Act today simply by filling out the form [here](#).***

Congress is currently debating President Biden's Build Back Better Act, which would provide historic investments in families, education and the workforce, including educator preparation programs. While the bill was passed by the House, it is not clear that the Senate will support this extraordinary investment in our nation's educators. But your voice can help ensure that these funds are included in the final legislation. ***Urge your Senators to support funding for educator preparation programs today simply by filling out the form [here](#).***

Each week CEF is providing a sample tweet that can be used or adapted to focus on funding for specific education programs. The following sample tweet could be sent to amplify the important message of supporting the large increases in education funding for FY22 and the Build Back Better Act:

The President, House and Senate have proposed historic increases for education for this fiscal year, but none has yet been enacted. Urge Congress to act now to support education. Learn more by following @edfunding

3. New Resources

- [Educating All Learners](#) is out with a new resource focusing on the use of ESSER funds to prepare and support teachers of students with disabilities.
- [The National Student Clearinghouse](#) released a report highlighting the declining numbers of high school students enrolling in colleges and universities.
- [The National Science Foundation, NIH, Department of Education, and the National Endowment for the Humanities](#) jointly conducted a survey examining the number of doctoral recipients across the country. The report suggests a decline in the number of PhDs earned across disciplines in the US.

We know you join us in sending our condolences to the families and the community of Oxford High School in Michigan as they grieve the devastating loss of life and the senseless violence this week that left four young students dead. We hope that all of our policy makers find the courage to boldly address this ongoing tragedy.

Best wishes to all,

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