

Washington Update January 10, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

Happy New Year! Welcome to the new decade and the second session of the 116th Congress. Can we even imagine what it holds for us? One thing we do know – our advocacy on behalf of equity and education will only amplify!

1. Funding Cycle for 2021: On Schedule?

With the ink barely dry on the FY 2020 funding packages, the budget cycle for FY 2021 is already on the horizon. The Trump Administration announced this week that it intends to release its Budget Proposal for FY 2021 on February 10, thus getting the cycle moving on time. The release of the proposal will be followed by hearings in House and Senate Appropriations committees and months of deliberation.

With the passage of a two-year budget agreement last year, the top line figures for FY 2021 are already in place; however only \$5 billion new dollars are available for all Non-Defense Discretionary (NDD) spending, of which education is a small part. For comparison's sake, last year \$25 billion new dollars were available for NDD! Determining how to divvy up that new \$5 billion and what portion education will ultimately receive, if any, is on the docket. Prognosticators think that the best-case scenario for education spending may be the same levels as last year. (OUCH)

Of course, this is an election year and the possibility of derailing the standard appropriations process is big. As Sen. Richard Shelby (R-AL), chair of the Appropriations Committee, noted "...this is an election year. More than likely we will go through our regular order, which is holding hearings, markups, and hopefully move from there and probably move to the floor. And what will happen then, I don't know."

2. Department of Education Announces Finance Study of Federal Education Spending

For the first time in almost a decade, the Department of Education will be conducting a study to scrutinize how school districts are spending federal education funds. Four hundred school districts will be analyzed in relation to five key federal programs: Part A of Titles I, II, III and IV of ESSA and Title I, Part B of IDEA.

ESSA allows for considerable flexibility in the utilization of federal funds, so a portion of the data collection is intended to understand the choices being made about how to employ that flexibility. Data collection will begin in May and gear up in September. The study will include nine site visits to school districts.

Comments on the study are due to the Department on February 24.

Federal Register announcement:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/12/26/2019-27754/agency-information-collection-activities-comment-request-study-of-district-and-school-uses-of>

3. New Member of Senate HELP Committee

Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Chair of the Senate HELP Committee, announced that Sen. Kelly Loeffler (R-GA) will be joining the Committee, replacing Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-GA), who resigned late last year due to health concerns. Sen. Loeffler is a wealthy finance executive.

See: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/02/us/loeffler-kemp-trump.html>

4. New Resources for Educators

- **The Education Commission of the States** is out with a new report on dual enrollment. It includes a focus on states which are utilizing this strategy as an incentive to become a teacher: <https://www.ecs.org/dual-enrollment-access/>
- **Insider Higher Education** offers ten predictions about higher education: https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/leadership-higher-education/ten-higher-education-predictions-new-decade?utm_source=Inside+Higher+Ed&utm_campaign=89a28b379d-DNU_2019_COPY_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1fcbc04421-89a28b379d-197480517&mc_cid=89a28b379d&mc_eid=bd909deba0
- **Education Dive** dishes up K-12 Trends to watch for in 2020: <https://www.educationdive.com/news/5-k-12-trends-to-watch-in-2020/568720/>
- **IES Director Mark Schneider** offers a year-end review and a glimpse ahead. Spoiler alert: look for new initiatives on reading instruction and a revised communication style dubbed “Short sentences. Strong verbs.” Schneider invites comments: <https://ies.ed.gov/director/remarks/1-8-2020.asp>
- **The Education Trust** is out with a new report documenting unequal access of Black and Latino students to advanced coursework: <https://edtrust.org/resource/inequities-in-advanced-coursework/?emci=8049ba19-5e31-ea11-a1cc-2818784d084f&emdi=d47d5a4f-6f31-ea11-a1cc-2818784d084f&ceid=131811>

I'll be roaming the Hill next week with ten fabulous special education doctoral students who are coming to town for our sixth annual HECSE Short Course in Education Policy and Politics. I

call it “parting the curtains,” as the goal is to get a bird’s eye view of the policy making process with the real people who are behind the wheel. It is always invigorating! Washington Update will be back January 24.

See you on twitter @janewestdc

At the best,

Jane