

Washington Update July 26, 2019

Dear Colleagues:

Congress is heading out of town – the House leaving today for a six-week recess and the Senate leaving at the end of next week. With the amazing budget deal headed for the finish line, September promises to be full of appropriations bills, including the education funding bill we've all been waiting for.

1) UNBELIEVABLE: Congress and the White House Make a Deal on 2 Year Budget Caps and Debt Ceiling

In a stunning proactive bipartisan move, the Congress and the White House have agreed to a two-year budget deal. This frees up all lawmakers and the President to focus on the 2020 elections without the threat of a government shutdown. Key features of the deal include:

- The budget caps are raised for both Defense and Non-Defense Discretionary (NDD – where education resides) spending for FY 2020 and FY 2021;
- For NDD, this represents a 4.1%, or \$24.5 billion increase over the current level of spending for FY 2020;
- This \$24.5 billion must be divided between many program areas – education being one of them;
- The budget caps in the deal are lower than the ones used in the House, which enabled robust increases for some education programs;
- If a deal had not been reached, \$126 billion in cuts across the board would have occurred in January, 2020;
- The debt ceiling (maximum amount the federal government can borrow) is raised until July 31, 2021 – well after the 2020 election;

The House passed the budget deal by a vote of 284 to 149. The majority of Republican House members (132) voted against the deal (believing it is too much spending) while 219 Democrats supported the package. Many consider this a great victory for the Democrats and Speaker Pelosi (D-CA).

President Trump has indicated that he supports the deal, paving the way for the Republican-controlled Senate to pass it next week. You will recall that the House has already passed all 12 of its appropriations bills; and the Senate has not acted on any of them, as it was waiting for an agreement on the budget caps. Now that that agreement is complete, Sen. Shelby (R-AL), chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, will begin to set the individual caps for each of the 12 bills. Education advocates are promoting a significant increase for the Labor/HHS/Education appropriations bill. Once the cap is set for that bill, education advocates will work to see increases in individual programs.

September is likely to feature the passage of all 12 appropriations bills. The end of the fiscal year is September 30, 2019, so the pressure will be on to move quickly.

See: https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/trump-urges-republicans-to-support-budget-deal-as-house-prepares-to-vote/2019/07/25/010d6e6a-ae3-11e9-a0c9-6d2d7818f3da_story.html?utm_term=.71c1762d98fe

2) Department of Education to Begin Pilot on Federal Work-Study Program, Including Student Teaching

In May, Sec. DeVos announced a pilot program which will allow some colleges to use Federal Work-Study benefits for off campus employment, including apprenticeships and clinical practice. The \$1 billion Federal Work-Study program provides student aid to colleges to subsidize work for students; critics point out that too little of the work-study funds are targeted to help students with career goals. About 92% of the funding goes to on-campus employment, with 8% going to local nonprofits and 1% going for private sector jobs. The Trump Administration would like to see more students supported in private sector jobs.

The pilot would enable qualifying universities to use funds to support teacher candidates during their student teaching. Letters of interest in the experiment were due to the Department July 8; however, letters can still be submitted and may be considered. See links below for details.

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/05/23/2019-10811/notice-inviting-postsecondary-educational-institutions-to-participate-in-experiments-under-the>

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/05/21/devos-experiment-will-open-work-study-more-private-sector-jobs>

3) Over 40 Democratic Lawmakers Call for Better Data on Seclusion and Restraint in Schools

Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT) and Rep. Don Beyer (D-VA) led a letter to Sec. DeVos urging the Department to implement GAO recommendations for improving data collection on seclusion and restraint by the 2017-18 data collection effort. They request an explanation and timeline for how the recommendations will be implemented by August 5, 2019. GAO noted that the Civil Rights Data Collection had repeatedly published data without “always correcting known reporting errors.” A Department spokesperson said that the Office of Civil Rights is in the midst of making improvements.

See: <https://www.murphy.senate.gov/download/murphy-beyer-letter-to-sec-devos-on-seclusion-and-restraint>

4) New Resources for Educators

- **The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights** released a report: *Beyond Suspensions: Examining School Discipline Policies and Connections to the School-to-Prison Pipeline for Students of Color with Disabilities*. The report finds that students with disabilities are about twice as likely to be suspended as students without disabilities, and that students of color do not commit more disciplinable offenses than their white peers, but receive substantially more school discipline and longer and harsher punishments. See: <https://www.usccr.gov/press/2019/07-23-Beyond-Suspensions-Report-PR.pdf>
- **The Rand Corporation** has issued a report titled *Principal and Teacher Preparation to support the Needs of Diverse Students* finding that 80 percent of educators agreed that their training experiences were relevant and effective, but only about 60 percent agreed that their preservice program prepared them to support the needs of black, Latino and/or low-income students. See: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2990.html
- **The Urban Institute** has issued a report *Charter School Effects on School Segregation* finding that increasing charter schools causes modest increases in segregation. See: <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/charter-school-effects-school-segregation>
- **The National Center on Education Statistics** released a report titled *Crime, Violence, Discipline and Safety in U.S Public Schools* which indicates that 71% of schools reported having at least one violent incident during the 2017-18 school year and about 3,600 incidents nationwide involved the possession of a firearm or explosive device at school. See: <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019061.pdf>

Today is the 29th Anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act! It was such an honor to be at the White House that day. Can you recognize me in the photo below? That was 29 years ago folks!



See you on twitter @janewestdc

Best,
Jane