

Washington Update March 22, 2019

Dear Colleagues:

Congress has been in recess this week. They will be back next week with a full agenda and a big push for accomplishments before Easter recess.

1. Secretary DeVos in the Hotseat Next Week Defending Her Budget on Capitol Hill

With the President's budget released, Capitol Hill is now beginning its appropriations work. Step one: scrutinizing the President's budget proposal. Secretary DeVos will testify before the House Labor/HHS/Education Appropriations Subcommittee on Tuesday to be followed by her appearance before the Senate counterpart on Thursday. I'm looking for some fireworks on Tuesday, as this will be the first time for Subcommittee Chair Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) to be questioning the Secretary while holding the gavel as chair. In past years, Sec. DeVos has come in for quite a pummeling from not only Democratic Members of the House, but also Republicans – for matters ranging from “why don't you communicate with us” to defending discriminatory admissions practices in voucher programs.

What questions would you like to see Sec. DeVos answer? Here are a few I'm interested in:

- Your budget proposes to cut \$10 billion in education spending. How will this cut help to address the critical needs of our nation's most disadvantaged students?
- As you may be aware, there is a critical teacher shortage in our nation. How will your budget proposal address the shortage?
- Your budget eliminates the \$2.1 billion Title II ESSA program which provide professional development for teachers. What is your rationale?
- Student debt due to borrowing for college tuition has reached astronomical proportions. How will your budget help those struggling with college debt?

On another note, House leadership has announced that it is looking to begin moving appropriations bills through subcommittees in April. There is talk about packaging several appropriations bills together for floor action, a strategy that proved effective last year. The Congress still needs to raise the existing budget caps in order to avoid deep cuts – and the consensus is that “this will happen” at some point.

Watch the House hearing Tuesday at 10:15:

<https://appropriations.house.gov/legislation/hearings/department-of-education-budget-request-for-fy-2020>

Senate hearing Thursday at 10 AM:

<https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/subcommittees/labor-health-and-human-services-education-and-related-agencies>

<http://blog.nassp.org/2019/03/15/education-suffers-severe-cuts-in-president-trumps-fy-2020-budget/>

2. Ivanka Trump Leads Administration's Push on Higher Education Act Reauthorization

This week the Trump Administration released its proposal to reform the Higher Education Act. Ivanka Trump is spearheading the plan. She said that the goal of the proposal is “to create a more innovative and demand-driven system that is responsive to students, workers, employers and taxpayers.” Priorities of the proposal include simplifying student loan repayment, expanding Pell grants for “short-term, high quality programs” and improving the transparency of student outcomes. The proposal also includes the following:

- Reorient the accreditation process to focus on student outcomes
- Increase innovation in the education marketplace
- Better align education to the needs of the workforce
- Increase institutional accountability
- Support Historically Black Colleges and Universities
- Encourage responsible borrowing (by capping some loans among other things)
- Provide program level earnings and outcome data

Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA), ranking member on the Senate HELP Committee blasted the proposal calling it “a feeble attempt to claim the Trump Administration is helping students by identifying one symptom of rising student debt, while completely ignoring the root cause – that college costs are rising exponentially and most students can’t afford college without taking on massive amounts of debt.” HELP Committee Chair, Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN) said he welcomed the Administration’s proposal as he works with Sen. Murray to develop a reauthorization bill. He hopes to have the bill marked up in the HELP Committee in the spring, to the Senate floor in the summer and on the President’s desk for signature by the end of the year. This is an ambitious timetable, to say the least.

See: <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/secretary-devos-issues-statement-higher-education-act-reform-principles-introduced-during-national-council-american-worker->

[meeting?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=](#)

Comments of Sen. Murray:

<https://www.help.senate.gov/ranking/newsroom/press/murray-white-house-higher-education-proposal-would-end-up-hurting-students-commits-to-working-with-chairman-alexander-to-find-real-and-serious-solutions>

Comments of Sen. Alexander:

<https://www.help.senate.gov/chair/newsroom/press/chairman-alexander-statement-on-white-house-higher-education-reform-proposal>

3. **New Resources for Educators**

- **Education Next**, a scholarly journal published by the **Harvard Kennedy School**, has issued a report which holds that achievement gaps between "the haves and have-nots" are mostly unchanged over the past half century. See: <https://www.educationnext.org/achievement-gap-fails-close-half-century-testing-shows-persistent-divide/>
- **Education Commission of the States and the National Governor's Association** have issued an analysis of "State of the State" addresses by governors finding that at least 36 governors addressed school finance; 35 addressed workforce development issues and at least 26 addressed teacher quality. See: <https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/Governors'-Top-Education-Priorities-in-2019-State-of-the-State-Addresses.pdf>
- **The Learning Policy Institute and the National Association of Secondary School Principals** are out with a new brief offering ways to improve principal retention, particularly in high need schools where turnover is the highest. See: https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/nassp-understanding-addressing-principal-turnover-review-research-brief?utm_source=LPI+Master+List&utm_campaign=3bc64507cb-LPIMC_NASSP_PrincipalTurnover_20190319&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_7e60dfa1d8-3bc64507cb-42318323
- **The National Center for Learning Disabilities** released two new resources designed to help college and university faculty and administrators work with students with

disabilities. NCLD partnered with the American Council on Education and the American Association of University Administrators on the reports. Faculty report <https://www.nclld.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/SASD-Keys-to-Postsecondary-Success-Key-Considerations-for-Higher-Education-Faculty.pdf> Administrators report: <https://www.nclld.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/SASD-Keys-to-Postsecondary-Success-Key-Considerations-for-Postsecondary-Leaders.pdf>

- **Education Commission of the States** has analyzed how all 50 states approach allocating IDEA funds to districts. States differ considerably as federal law dictates minimums but not how the money is distributed. The Report finds 7 key funding mechanisms used by states. See: <https://www.ecs.org/50-state-comparison-k-12-special-education-funding/>

Enjoy your lovely spring weekend! Next week I'll be headed to Capitol Hill with a group of undergraduates from Bucknell University who are studying to be teachers. They want to see just how Washington works. It's always fun to watch their eyes open wide as the curtains part!

See you on twitter @janewestdc

Best,

Jane