

Washington Update September 30, 2017

Dear Colleagues:

This week witnessed another stunning defeat for Republican efforts to repeal Obamacare with disability rights activists flooding Capitol Hill leading the opposition and shutting down a hearing on the bill. But it may not be over....

1. The Big Picture: The Budget and Reconciliation

Once again Senate Republicans could not muster the 50 votes required to defeat Obamacare and thus abandoned their plan for a floor vote this week. Republican leadership quickly pivoted to tax reform as their next priority. The first step is the passage of a new FY 2018 Budget Resolution. The Budget resolution will serve as the vehicle for tax reform and include the reconciliation strategy which enables the Senate to pass a bill with only 50 votes rather than the usual 60.

The House Budget Committee has reported out its version of the Budget Resolution for FY 2018 and it will likely be voted on by the full House next week. It is anticipated that it will pass with most, if not all, Democrats opposing it. The resolution from the committee calls for billions of dollars of cuts in non-defense discretionary spending (the pot which include education) and a particular directive to the House Education and the Workforce Committee to cut \$5 billion, which education advocates believe may be targeted toward cutting student financial aid. The Senate Budget committee released their blueprint today and will likely vote on it next week. It does not include a directive to the Senate HELP Committee to cut funding, a relief to education advocates. Also missing from both proposals is any provision which would promote vouchers or otherwise drive public education dollars to private schools. Republican leaders are working hard to shift the focus of work to tax reform and hope to deliver some sort of victory before the end of the year.

There is continued speculation that Obamacare repeal may be revisited, perhaps by using the FY 2019 Budget proposal. In the meantime, Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA), chair and ranking member of the Senate HELP Committee, have reactivated their efforts to address the shortcomings of Obamacare by shoring up the health insurance markets. With such an impressive history of working and delivering results in a bi-partisan way, this is a hopeful development for a functioning Congress!

MSNBC: Protesters dragged from health care repeal hearing:

<http://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow/watch/protesters-dragged-from-health-care-repeal-hearing-1054878275685>

<https://budget.house.gov/budgets/fy18/>

<https://www.budget.senate.gov/taxreform>

2. **President Trump Issues Directive on STEM Education**

In a somewhat ironic twist, President Trump this week issued a directive requiring a \$200 million investment in STEM education – despite his budget proposal calling for a \$9 billion cut to education programs, many of which support STEM education. The investment will come from existing funds and be targeted by Department “priorities” listed for grant proposals rather than the creation of a separate new grant program with repurposed funds. In addition the Department might issue guidance and technical assistance to implement the initiative. Computer science will be a particular focus with an intention to reach historically underserved populations, including women and minorities. Increasing STEM teachers is also a focus. The directive states: “The Department of Education, therefore, should prioritize helping districts recruit and train teachers capable of providing students with a rigorous education in STEM fields, focusing in particular on Computer Science.”

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/09/25/memorandum-secretary-education>

3. **ESSA: Implementation Unfolds**

With all ESSA state plans now submitted to the Department of Education, ESSA enters a new phase of implementation. There are multiple efforts underway to analyze the plans and gain an understanding of what decisions states are making. Next week the Senate HELP Committee will hold a hearing on ESSA titled “Unleashing State Innovation.” Witnesses include Commissioners of Education from Tennessee, Louisiana and New Mexico. The hearing will likely be very interesting considering that Sen. Murray, ranking Democrat on the Committee (in conjunction with Rep. Bobby Scott, ranking Democrat on the House Education and Workforce Committee) issued sharp criticism of the Department’s review of the plans:

<https://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2017-09-18%20ESSA%20statutory%20requirements%20letter.pdf>

You can view the hearing here on Tuesday at 10 AM:

<https://www.help.senate.gov/hearings/the-every-student-succeeds-act-unleashing-state-innovation>

Future Ed has released a report analyzing the 36 states and DC which have chosen to use chronic absenteeism as an accountability indicator: <https://www.future-ed.org/whos-in-chronic-absenteeism-under-the-every-student-succeeds-act/>

The Advocacy Institute and the National Down Syndrome Congress have joined forces to develop a template for disability advocates to use in analyzing ESSA state plans, and applied that template to multiple plans releasing their own analyses:

<http://www.advocacyinstitute.org/ESSA/ESSA-StateDraftPlanAnalysis.shtml>

Education Reform Now has issued a summary of what, in their view, are the essential equity requirements of ESSA: . <https://edreformnow.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/ESSA-Bright-Lines-Final.pdf>

The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) has issued an analysis of state equity plans under ESSA based on the submissions of the first 16 states and the District of Columbia: http://www.nctq.org/dmsStage/Educator_Equity_Best_Practices

The Center for American Progress released an analysis of the first 16 state and DC ESSA state plan submissions in relation to school accountability : <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/reports/2017/08/04/436963/school-accountability-first-round-essa-state-plans/>

4. More New Reports: Teachers, Teachers, Teachers

The Learning Policy Institute is out with a new report: “Teacher Turnover: Why It Matters and What We Can Do About It.” The report finds that over 100,000 classrooms are filled with underprepared teachers and that number will likely rise. It notes that annual teacher attrition is about 8% and accounts for about 90% of the demand for new teachers. High teacher turnover rates cost over \$20,000 per teacher for every teacher who leaves an urban district. For special education, the turnover rate is 46% higher than that for elementary teachers. See:

<https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/teacher-turnover-report>

The Center for American Progress has two new reports out related to teacher diversity. The first examines the diversity gap across time and state by state.

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/news/2017/09/28/415203/revisiting-persistent-teacher-diversity-problem/>

The second considers the intersection of diversity and selectivity :

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/reports/2017/09/14/437667/america-needs-teachers-color-selective-teaching-profession/>

The Education Commission of the States provides a 50 state analysis of teacher licensing reciprocity – a strategy cited by some as an effective way to address the shortage and criticized by others as promoting “robbing from Peter to pay Paul” and

lowering teacher standards. https://www.ecs.org/ec-content/uploads/Teacher_License_Reciprocity_.pdf

The Southern Regional Education Board's Teacher Preparation Commission has issued a report calling for increased data collection:

<https://www.sreb.org/news/commission-calls-data-systems-improve-teacher-preparation>

Wishing you a great weekend! See you on twitter @janewestdc

Best,

Jane