



# The Consortium of State School Boards Associations Weekly Education Report LAST WEEK IN WASHINGTON

**FEBRUARY 20, 2024**

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*The COSSBA Education Report*, a weekly publication, provides an executive summary of public policy issues affecting American K-12 education and employment. **Please use the bookmarks below to navigate to your area of interest:**

1. **News, Publications, & Updates on COSSBA Policy Priorities**
  - **Child Nutrition**
    - **USDA Food and Nutrition Service Notice on Income Eligibility**  
**Guidelines:** This notice announces the Department's annual adjustments to the Income Eligibility Guidelines to be used in determining eligibility for free and reduced price meals, free milk, and Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer benefits for the period from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025.
2. **Budget and Appropriations Wrap-up**
  - **Impact on State School Board Associations**
3. **In Brief – Last Week in Washington**
  - **STEM Education Coalition Highlights Science Educator Challenges:** On Tuesday, the STEM Education Coalition met on Capitol Hill for a briefing titled, “Challenges for Today’s Science Educators,” to explore issues and policy solutions affecting science educators.
  - **ED Releases Equity Action Plan:** The Department of Education on Wednesday released its 2023 Update to its Equity Action Plan in coordination with the Biden-Harris Administration's whole-of-government equity agenda.
4. **New Publications**

- **Choose to Learn 2024: K-12 Parents Poised to Explore New Educational Options**

*Tyton Partners (February, 2024)*

This report assesses the breadth of preferences from 2,000+ parents for alternative education pathways beyond public school and the barriers these parents face. It highlights the “Open-minded” parent segment, those most likely to take action over the next several years in exploring alternatives for their child.

## 5. **In the News**

- **K-12 Students Learned A Lot Last Year, But They’re Still Missing Too Much School**

*NPR (February 9, 2024)*

- **WA House Passes Fentanyl Education Bill**

*The Seattle Times (February 12, 2024)*

- **States Bet Big on Career Education, but Struggle to Show It Works**

*Youth Today (February 12, 2024)*

- **Biden-Harris Administration Holds First-Ever Interagency Youth Policy Summit: Cultivating Possibilities**

*US Department of Education (February 13, 2024)*

- **Foxx Will Not Seek Another Term as House Education Committee Chair**

*Higher Ed Dive (February 13, 2024)*

## 6. **Weekly Calendar - What’s coming up this week?**

- **Bipartisan Priorities for Helping Families in 2024:** The R Street Institute will hold a virtual meeting on "Bipartisan Priorities for Helping Families in 2024," focusing on reforming tax bills for families, improving telehealth access, and ensuring labor flexibility for working parents.

*February 20 at 10am ET*

- **Scaling Earn and Learn Opportunities:** The Brookings Institution will hold a webinar on "How can we scale earn-and-learn opportunities? Lessons learned from three pioneering states."

*February 21 at 2pm ET*

- **A Bolder Vision for Latino Education:** Latinos for Education will hold a webinar to examine the state of higher education for the Latino community.

*February 21 at 6pm ET*

- **Leveraging ESSER Funds for Afterschool and Summer Learning:** The Afterschool Alliance will hold a webinar on the recently released report “Investments in Student Recovery: A Review of School Districts’ Use of American Rescue Plan Funding to Support Afterschool and Summer Opportunities.”

*February 22 at 2pm ET*

- **Conservative Vision for Improving Early Childhood, K-12, and College:** The American Enterprise Institute holds a book discussion on "Getting Education Right: A Conservative Vision for Improving Early Childhood, K-12, and College."

*February 22 at 3pm ET*

7. [\*\*On The Floor of Congress This Week\*\*](#)
  - The House and Senate are in recess.
8. [\*\*Important U.S. House and Senate Links\*\*](#)
9. [\*\*About BPAG\*\*](#)

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## 1. COSSBA Policy Priorities

### CHILD NUTRITION

#### USDA FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE INCOME ELIGIBILITY NOTICE

[The notice published](#) on February 20 announces the Department of Agriculture's annual adjustments to the Income Eligibility Guidelines to be used in determining eligibility for free and reduced price meals, free milk, and Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer benefits for the period from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025. These guidelines are used by schools, institutions, and facilities participating in the National School Lunch Program (and Commodity School Program), School Breakfast Program, Special Milk Program for Children, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and Summer Food Service Program. Beginning in 2024, they will also be used by States and Indian Tribal Organizations that administer the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children Program. The guidelines are intended to direct benefits to those children most in need and are revised annually to account for changes in the Consumer Price Index.

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## 2. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up

With the Senate out of town last week and the House focused on other matters, there wasn't much news on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 appropriations process. Staff reportedly continue to work through programmatic funding decisions, but larger political issues are looming.

It has been reported that House Republicans expect a large number of their members to oppose the final FY 2024 spending bills based on funding levels and their expectation that policy riders they supported will be stripped out of final products. There is an assumption that once the bills do make it to the floor—whenever and in whatever form—that Speaker of the House Mike Johnson (R-LA) will have to rely on Democrats to pass the bill. The inclusion of earmarks could make voting for the bills easier for some members. House appropriators included more than 4,700 earmarks in their own funding bills, totaling almost \$7.4 billion. In the Senate, appropriators accepted more than 3,700 earmarks, totaling \$7.7 billion. Those dollars could be important to various members of Congress who want to bring federal dollars home during an election year.

The headline-making issue that is taking time and effort away from the spending debate in both chambers is the foreign aid/border security supplemental appropriations bill. Speaker Johnson says he won't bring the Senate-passed \$95 billion foreign aid supplemental to the House floor, leaving members looking for alternative ways to vote on aid for Israel, Ukraine, and Taiwan. A bipartisan group of eight House centrists are pulling together an alternative package. It remains to be seen what kind of support that proposal might win when the House returns.

Both chambers will be back in session the week of February 26<sup>th</sup>. Because of the House’s vote to impeach Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, the Senate will be preparing for an impeachment trial. The House returns on February 28<sup>th</sup>. Two days later—March 1<sup>st</sup>—funding will expire for four of the twelve spending bills. March 8<sup>th</sup> is the expiration date for the remaining eight. When asked by a reporter this week whether he was concerned Congress would have to pass another short-term bill because of the impeachment trial, Speaker Johnson said, “We’ll have time. I think we’ll have time to get it done.” His Speakership has come under criticism from his own caucus this week, in part because his recent predictions regarding success for the House Republican agenda have not been very accurate. Time will tell if he is correct about the spending bills.

### **How does this impact State School Board Associations?**

Education advocates continue to remind allies on Capitol Hill of the importance of investing in various programs, knowing that even their best of friends are facing difficult decisions. Staff this week will continue working to resolve FY 2024 spending before the two March deadlines. That task is looking increasingly daunting, and there is unlikely to be much more news on progress until next week.

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### **3. In Brief – Last Week in Washington**

#### **STEM EDUCATION COALITION HIGHLIGHTS SCIENCE EDUCATOR CHALLENGES**

On Tuesday, the STEM Education Coalition met on Capitol Hill for a briefing titled, “Challenges for Today’s Science Educators,” to explore issues and policy solutions affecting science educators. The event featured an expert panel, including Dr. Heidi Schweingruber, director for the Board on Science Education at the National Academies of Science; Leslie Brooks, Afterschool STEM Hub manager at the Afterschool Alliance; Kimberly Hughes, director of the UTeach Institute at the University of Texas at Austin; Dr. Florentia Spires, STEM instructional leader for Prince George’s County in Massachusetts; and STEM Education Coalition Executive Director James Brown. During the discussion, Schweingruber highlighted the key issues in science education, underscoring a lack of elementary science teaching, inequitable access to advanced coursework, and a shortage of STEM teachers. She further outlined several policy actions to improve science outcomes, such as establishing local alliances and increasing science testing intervals. Brooks highlighted the opportunities afterschool STEM learning programs offer, giving students chances to follow their own interests with the “freedom to fail.” Brooks recommended additional research and funding for afterschool science education to increase staff recruitment and retention. Hughes explained her work with the UTeach Institute, an effort to recruit high-quality STEM teachers from non-educational backgrounds. She cited data demonstrating that 30 percent of underrepresented minorities attend K-12 schools that lack chemistry, biology, or physics, while 35 percent lack certified teachers. She emphasized the need to provide a new talent pool of qualified STEM educators by allowing STEM majors to try teaching before they graduate. Spires discussed her own experience as a STEM and computer science educator. She advocated for increasing diversity among STEM educators to improve inclusivity and furthering elementary science education. Spires expressed that these efforts are key to improving student engagement in science. Brown concluded the briefing by asking the panel to elaborate on other subjects that might compete against science education. The panel

generally responded that math and reading often take priority, as those subjects are consistently tested.

## **ED RELEASES EQUITY ACTION PLAN UPDATE**

The Department of Education (ED) on Wednesday released its [2023 Update](#) to its [Equity Action Plan](#) in coordination with the Biden-Harris Administration's whole-of-government equity agenda. This Equity Action Plan is part of ED's efforts to implement the President's Executive Order on "[Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through The Federal Government](#)." The 2023 Equity Action Plan outlines five areas of focus, which include, 1) Improving college access, affordability, and degree completion for underserved students; 2) Implementing "Maintenance of Equity" requirements; 3) Addressing inequities faced by justice-impacted individuals by expanding access to postsecondary learning opportunities; 4) Advancing equity in and through career and technical education; and 5) Increasing mental health resources with an emphasis on underserved communities. "The Department believes that our nation's future is brighter when we provide every student and every community with equitable access to an academically rigorous, well-rounded education in a safe and inclusive school," ED's press release states. "We are answering President Biden's call to prioritize equity across government by working intentionally to ensure our policies, grants, and programs address longstanding disparities in education still faced by underserved students, families, and communities." As ED continues this work, updates will be posted [here](#).

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## **4. New Publications**

### **[Choose to Learn 2024: K-12 Parents Poised to Explore New Educational Options](#)**

*Tyton Partners* (February 15, 2024)

This report assesses the breadth of preferences from 2,000+ parents for alternative education pathways beyond public school and the barriers these parents face. It highlights the "Open-minded" parent segment, those most likely to take action over the next several years in exploring alternatives for their child.

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## **5. In the News**

### **[K-12 Students Learned A Lot Last Year, But They're Still Missing Too Much School](#)**

*NPR* (February 9, 2024)

### **[WA House Passes Fentanyl Education Bill](#)**

*The Seattle Times* (February 12, 2024)

### **[States Bet Big on Career Education, but Struggle to Show It Works](#)**

*Youth Today* (February 12, 2024)

### **[Biden-Harris Administration Holds First-Ever Interagency Youth Policy Summit: Cultivating Possibilities](#)**

*US Department of Education* (February 13, 2024)

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## THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

### 6. Weekly Calendar

#### Tuesday, February 20, 2024

**Webinar: Bipartisan Priorities for Helping Families in 2024**

**Subject:** The R Street Institute will hold a virtual meeting on "Bipartisan Priorities for Helping Families in 2024," focusing on reforming tax bills for families, improving telehealth access, and ensuring labor flexibility for working parents.

**Participants:** Sabrina Schaeffer, vice president of public affairs, R Street Institute; Tim Carney, senior fellow, American Enterprise Institute; Courtney Joslin, resident fellow, R Street Institute's Project for Women and Families; and Jacob Bastian, assistant professor of economics, Rutgers University.

**Time:** 10:00 a.m.

**Registration:** Register [here](#).

#### Wednesday, February 21, 2024

**Webinar: Scaling Earn and Learn Opportunities**

**Subject:** The Brookings Institution will hold a webinar on "How can we scale earn-and-learn opportunities? Lessons learned from three pioneering states."

**Participants:** Josh Laney, director, Alabama Office of Apprenticeship; Marie Mackintosh, President and CEO of EmployIndy; Annelies Goger, fellow, Brookings Metro; and Ryan Gensler, executive vice president, CareerWise USA.

**Time:** 2:00 p.m.

**Registration:** Register [here](#).

**Webinar: A Bolder Vision for Latino Education**

**Subject:** Latinos for Education will hold a webinar to examine the state of higher education for the Latino community.

**Participants:** Rep. Joaquin Castro (D-TX); Amanda Fernandez, CEO, Latinos for Education; and Suzanne Gamboa, senior reporter, NBC News.

**Time:** 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

**Registration:** Register [here](#).

#### Thursday, February 22, 2024

**Webinar: Leveraging ESSER Funds for Afterschool and Summer Learning**

**Subject:** The Afterschool Alliance will hold a webinar on the recently released report "Investments in Student Recovery: A Review of School Districts' Use of American Rescue Plan Funding to Support Afterschool and Summer Opportunities."

**Time:** 2:00 p.m.

**Registration:** Register [here](#).

## **Event: Conservative Vision for Improving Early Childhood, K-12, and College**

**Subject:** The American Enterprise Institute holds a book discussion on "Getting Education Right: A Conservative Vision for Improving Early Childhood, K-12, and College."

**Participants:** Matthew Continetti, director of domestic policy studies, AEI; Aimee Rogstad Guidera, Virginia Education Secretary; Frederick Hess, director of education policy studies, AEI; Michael McShane, adjunct fellow, AEI; Ian Rowe, senior fellow, AEI; and Ramesh Ponnuru, nonresident senior fellow, AEI.

**Time and Location:** 3:30 p.m.; AEI, 1789 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Auditorium.

**Registration:** Register [here](#).

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## **7. On The Floor of Congress This Week**

The House and Senate are in recess.

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## **8. Links for Up-to-Date Information on Hearings, Legislation, and Events**

[U.S. House and Senate 2023 Schedule](#)

[U.S. Department of Education](#)

[U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions](#)

[U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor](#)

[U.S. Senate Budget Committee](#)

[U.S. House Budget Committee](#)

[Congressional Budget Office](#)

[Federal legislative information](#)

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## **9. About BPAG**

**Bose Public Affairs Group** is a full-service government affairs and public relations consulting firm that has built a reputation for producing results. We partner with clients committed to excellence in education and other social services to achieve policy and advocacy success by:

- leveraging our expertise and passion;
- strategizing intelligent solutions; and,
- Creating meaningful impact.

Our team includes long-term insiders in education policy from Pre-K through higher education, innovative thinkers and savvy strategists that provide a comprehensive array of customized client services. We have the knowledge, skills, and relationships that are necessary for successful advocacy at all levels. From grassroots to grass tops and everything in between, our broad-based legislative practice approaches every project with the same degree of determination and professionalism. BPAG provides expertise in a variety of services:

- Government Relations
- Research and Analysis
- Advocacy Training
- Association Management
- Strategic Communications
- Policy Events

For more information, please visit our [website](#).

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