



The Consortium of State School Boards Associations Weekly Education Report

JANUARY 14, 2025

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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**
 - **Funding**
 - **What's In Store for Federal Education Dollars:** As President-elect Donald Trump prepares to assume office, he has pledged to eliminate the Department of Education (ED). However, education experts caution that dismantling a federal department is a complex process requiring significant bipartisan support, including a supermajority in the Senate.
2. **Budget and Appropriations Wrap-up**
 - **Impact on State School Board Associations**
3. **In Brief – Last Week in Washington**
 - **119th Congressional Education Panel Updates:** As is the case for every new Congress and change of leadership, the New Year has brought with it changes to both House and Senate education policy authorizing committees and Appropriations Committees.
 - **ED Halts Expansion of TRIO Programs for Undocumented Students:** The Department of Education (ED) has decided against expanding federal TRIO programs to include undocumented high school students, opting instead for technical changes to the programs.
 - **Federal Judge Strikes Down Biden's Title IX Rule:** A federal judge struck down the Biden administration's Title IX rule nationwide on Thursday, deeming it unconstitutional.

- **Brookings Addresses K-12 Student Disengagement, Chronic Absenteeism:**
The Brookings Institution and the Center for Universal Education co-hosted an event on Thursday that explored the interconnected challenges of student disengagement and chronic absenteeism in K-12 education.

4. **New Publications**

- **The Disengagement Gap: Why Student Engagement Isn't What Parents Expect**
Brookings (April 2024)
The report elevates student engagement as an important indicator to not only combat chronic absenteeism but to help young people thrive in school.

5. **In the News**

- **How Trump's Cabinet Picks Could Affect K-12 Schools**
Education Week (January 8, 2025)
- **ACLU Warns Louisiana Superintendents Not to Post Ten Commandments in Classrooms**
K-12 Dive (January 7, 2025)
- **Global Nonprofit Challenges Girls to Solve Real-World Problems With AI**
The 74 (January 6, 2025)
- **Ed Dept Pulls School-Based Medicaid Proposed Rule**
K-12 Dive (January 3, 2025)
- **Jimmy Carter and Education: Highlights of a Long Record on School Policy**
Education Week (December 31, 2025)

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

- **Parents Rights and Their Limits:** AEI will hold a discussion on "What are Parents' Rights, and How Far Do They Go?"
Monday at 9am
- **Safeguarding Student Data for Immigrant and Migrant Students:** Project Unicorn and Council of the Great City Schools will hold a webinar on protecting student data for immigrant and migrant students.
Monday at 1:30pm
- **The Disengaged Teen:** The Brookings Institution will hold a discussion on "The Disengaged Teen: Helping Kids Learn Better, Feel Better, and Live Better."
Tuesday at 11am
- **Senate Judiciary Committee on Attorney General Nominee, Pam Bondi:** The Senate Judiciary Committee will hold a hearing to examine the nomination of Pam Bondi to be Attorney General of the United States.
Wednesday at 9:30am
- **House Education and Workforce Organizing Hearing:** The House Education and the Workforce Committee will hold a meeting to organize for the 119th Congress.
Wednesday at 10:15am
- **Can AI Break Education Technology's Broken Promises:** AEI will hold a discussion on "Education Technology's Broken Promises: Can Artificial Intelligence Break the Cycle?"

Thursday at 4pm

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

- **Senate Floor:** S.5, Laken Riley Act
- **House Floor:**
 - **H.R. 28** – Protection of Women and Girls in Sports Act of 2025 (Sponsored by Rep. Steube / Education and Workforce Committee)
 - **H.R. 33** – United States-Taiwan Expedited Double-Tax Relief Act (Rep. Smith (MO) / Ways and Means Committee)
 - **H.R. 30** – Preventing Violence Against Women by Illegal Aliens Act (Rep. Mace / Judiciary Committee)

8. **Important U.S. House and Senate Links**

9. **About BPAG**

1. COSSBA Policy Priorities

FUNDING

WHAT'S IN STORE FOR FEDERAL EDUCATION DOLLARS?

School News Network (January 8, 2025)

As President-elect Donald Trump prepares to assume office, he has pledged to eliminate the Department of Education (ED). However, education experts caution that dismantling a federal department is a complex process requiring significant bipartisan support, including a supermajority in the Senate. While outright elimination is unlikely, changes to funding policies and administration are expected. Federal contributions, though only about eight percent of total K-12 education funding, are vital for programs like special education, Title I funding for at-risk schools, and student enrichment initiatives. Local districts rely heavily on this funding to address the needs of high-need students and special education programs, which remain underfunded despite state contributions. Historically, the federal government has played a limited role in K-12 education, with primary responsibility lying with the states. Experts are advising patience and vigilance, noting that while legislative proposals may incite uncertainty, significant changes would require bipartisan agreement. [Read more.](#)

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2. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up

Last week, Washington, DC, hosted a number of significant events, including the certification of President-elect Donald Trump's election on Monday, January 6th, the pomp and circumstance and ceremonies surrounding President Jimmy Carter's funeral, and a snowstorm that shut down the federal government and area schools for days. In addition to these very public events, House and Senate leadership continue to meet to debate how to tackle President Trump's agenda and their own campaign promises to Republican voters. While those conversations were taking place, advocates and policy wonks faced emails and Zoom calls and the inevitable "circling back" that awaited them post-holidays.

The education advocacy community is gearing up for a challenging year. For starters, the process for conveying priorities and the possibilities for collaboration with the new Administration isn't

as clear as in previous years. President-elect Trump was not eager to enter into traditional agreements with the existing administration to get information about the state of policies and programs and access to email addresses and other infrastructure that would facilitate the receipt of information from stakeholders of every sort. This means that many will have to wait until after the Inauguration to send their transition memos and other communications while the Administration staffs up and navigates cabinet confirmations.

Challenges await on Capitol Hill as well. The election of House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) by a razor-thin margin arguably contributed to his support for the development of one “big beautiful” reconciliation package versus two. He will not be able to corral all 219 Republicans often, and the one bill approach cuts his workload in half. Of course, his Senate colleagues are not necessarily on the same page. Early last week, Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD) was saying he preferred a two-bill approach to enacting the massive Trump agenda. By week’s end, he changed his tune. Acknowledging that Speaker Johnson can only afford to lose one Republican on any bill—and that number will decrease as House Republicans nominated for cabinet positions are confirmed, Senator Thune suggests he is willing to see what the House can pass and then support that effort in the Senate. For education advocates, this means that Congress will be focused on reconciliation and nominations instead of FY 2025 spending. The current continuing resolution expires in mid-March. That isn’t so very far away, and advocates are already bracing for more shutdown drama. They are also gearing up to remind appropriators of the importance of education investments and to combat the cuts proposed by Republicans last year.

Once again, advocates could be managing multiple appropriations processes simultaneously. The new Administration is unlikely to release a budget request before March, meaning meetings with appropriators and their staff could be addressing FY 2025 and FY 2026. The reconciliation package could also include provisions problematic for education advocates. It will almost certainly include provisions that provide tax breaks for vouchers and other non-public education efforts. It could also propose troublesome changes to the tax provisions that govern the operations of not-for-profit entities.

Education advocates’ heads are on swivels. And not just from circling back.

How does this impact State School Board Associations?

The new Congress and the Trump Administration's transition has delayed communication with stakeholders, leaving education advocates uncertain about federal education priorities and funding guidance. Congressional focus on reconciliation packages and cabinet confirmations might divert attention from FY 2025 education funding, further delaying appropriations and creating budget uncertainty. Proposed education cuts, tax breaks for non-public initiatives, and changes to tax provisions could strain public school resources and complicate financial planning. These challenges have education advocates engaging actively to protect funding and address priorities.

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3. In Brief – Last Week in Washington

119TH CONGRESSIONAL EDUCATION PANEL UPDATES

As is the case for every new Congress and change of leadership, the New Year has brought with it changes to both House and Senate education policy authorizing committees and Appropriations

Committees. For starters, the House Education and the Workforce Committee has undergone a slight rebranding, dropping "the" from its name to become the "House Education and Workforce Committee." As for Committee assignments, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee is taking shape under Chair Bill Cassidy (R-LA) and Ranking Member Bernie Sanders (I-VT). New Republican members include Senators Tim Scott (R-SC), Josh Hawley (R-MO), Jim Banks (R-IN), Mike Crapo (R-ID), and Marsha Blackburn (R-TN). New Democratic HELP members are Senators Andy Kim (D-NJ), Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE), and Angela Alsobrooks (D-MD). On the other side of the Capitol, the 119th House Education and Workforce Committee Republican roster was **announced** Friday morning. New members include Representatives Bob Onder (R-MO), Ryan Mackenzie (R-PA), Michael Baumgartner (R-WA), Mark Harris (R-NC), and Mark Messmer (R-IN). Chairman Tim Walberg (R-MI) also **announced** his senior Committee staff. Ranking Member Bobby Scott (D-VA) has not announced which Democrats will be on the panel. Separately, House Appropriations Committee Chairman Tom Cole (R-OK) **announced** the addition of five new members—Mark Alford (R-MO), Nick LaLota (R-NY), Dale Strong (R-AL), Celeste Maloy (R-UT), and Riley Moore (R-WV); Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (NY) announced new Democratic appointments, including Representatives James Clyburn (D-SC), Mike Levin (D-CA), and Madeleine Dean (D-PA). Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro **will continue to serve as ranking member**. As for Senate Appropriations, the Committee roster released by Senate Majority Leader John Thune (SD) is **here** and Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (NY) is **here**.

ED HALTS EXPANSION OF TRIO PROGRAMS FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

The Department of Education (ED) **has decided against** expanding federal TRIO programs to include undocumented high school students, opting instead for technical changes to the programs. TRIO is a set of federal outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. Proposed regulations from the Biden administration would have allowed programs like Upward Bound and Talent Search to support an additional 50,000 disadvantaged students annually, regardless of immigration status. However, citing the need for further study and concerns about administrative burdens, ED withdrew the proposed changes. Advocacy groups and TRIO directors **expressed disappointment**, noting the potential benefits for nearly 100,000 undocumented students graduating annually. Opposition from Republican lawmakers, who argued the expansion would stretch funding and provoke political backlash, added to the contentious nature of the proposal. Despite a TRIO advisory committee's support for the expansion, ED officials concluded the proposed rule was too narrow and risked creating confusion among grantees managing multiple TRIO programs.

FEDERAL JUDGE STRIKES DOWN BIDEN'S TITLE IX RULE

A federal judge **struck down** the Biden administration's Title IX rule nationwide on Thursday, deeming it unconstitutional. Introduced in April 2023, the rule extended protections against discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation for LGBTQI+ students and employees at federally funded schools and colleges. However, it faced immediate legal challenges and was blocked in 26 states before being entirely vacated by the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Kentucky. Tennessee Attorney General Jonathan Skrmetti, one of the challengers, welcomed the ruling, criticizing the administration's efforts as unconstitutional and expressing optimism about the potential for new Title IX regulations under a future Trump administration. National Women's Law Center President and CEO Fatima Goss Graves **decried the decision**,

saying, in part, “Today’s decision displays extraordinary disregard for students who are most vulnerable to discrimination and are in the most need for federal protections under the Title IX rule.” The decision to strike down the Biden administration’s Title IX rule removing protections for LGBTQI+ students and employees could introduce significant challenges for K-12 and higher education. The ruling creates policy ambiguity and might burden schools with navigating conflicting state and federal expectations. It also signals potential future instability under shifting federal administrations, making it harder for schools to maintain consistent, inclusive environments.

BROOKINGS ADDRESSES K-12 STUDENT DISENGAGEMENT, CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

The Brookings Institution and the Center for Universal Education co-hosted an event on Thursday that explored the interconnected challenges of student disengagement and chronic absenteeism in K-12 education. An expert panel, moderated by award-winning journalist Jenny Anderson, discussed findings from [a report](#) revealing a significant mismatch between students’ self-reported engagement levels and parents’ perceptions, with many parents unaware of the depth of disengagement. Chronic absenteeism, defined as missing 10 percent of the school year, has surged post-pandemic, particularly among students in low-income districts. This issue is associated with lower academic performance and long-term negative outcomes. The discussion emphasized the importance of addressing systemic factors, including outdated school designs and practices that fail to engage students. Panelists shared strategies such as promoting student autonomy, reimagining school schedules, integrating project-based learning, and strengthening family-school relationships. Successful case studies highlighted the role of community involvement and innovative learning models, like a North Dakota high school’s interdisciplinary [“studio model,”](#) which tailored education to students’ interests and skills. Recommendations included fostering a culture of relevance and purpose in schools, increasing parent awareness, and leveraging extracurricular activities to maintain student interest. Long-term systemic redesign was advocated alongside immediate interventions to address current attendance crises. The event concluded with a call for collaboration among educators, policymakers, and families to prioritize engagement and reimagine education in ways that better support students’ diverse needs and aspirations. A recording of the event is [here](#).

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4. New Publications

The Disengagement Gap: Why Student Engagement Isn’t What Parents Expect

Brooking Institute (January 2025)

The report elevates student engagement as an important indicator to not only combat chronic absenteeism but to help young people thrive in school. By sharing insights on both students’ and parents’ perspectives on their learning experiences, *Brookings* aims to help focus the education conversation on how parents and educators can better understand student engagement, more accurately assess students’ engagement in school, and ultimately help improve it.

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5. In the News

How Trump’s Cabinet Picks Could Affect K-12 Schools

Education Week (January 8, 2025)

[ACLU Warns Louisiana Superintendents Not to Post Ten Commandments in Classrooms](#)
K-12 Dive (January 7, 2025)

[Global Nonprofit Challenges Girls to Solve Real-World Problems With AI](#)
The 74 (January 6, 2025)

[Ed Dept Pulls School-Based Medicaid Proposed Rule](#)
K-12 Dive (January 3, 2025)

[Jimmy Carter and Education: Highlights of a Long Record on School Policy](#)
Education Week (December 31, 2025)

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THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

6. Weekly Calendar

Monday, January 13, 2025

Webinar: Parents Rights and their Limits

Subject: AEI will hold a discussion on "What are Parents' Rights, and How Far Do They Go?"

Participants: Christine Gottlieb, assistant professor of clinical law, New York University; Elizabeth Kirk, codirector, Center for Law & the Human Person, The Catholic University of America; Walter Olson, senior fellow, Cato Institute; James C. Phillips, constitutional government initiative director, Wheatley Institute; and Adam J. White, senior fellow, American Enterprise Institute.

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

Webinar: Safeguarding Student Data for Immigrant and Migrant Students

Subject: Project Unicorn and Council of the Great City Schools will hold a webinar on protecting student data for immigrant and migrant students.

Time: 1:30 p.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

Tuesday, January 14, 2025

Webinar: The Disengaged Teen

Subject: The Brookings Institution will hold a discussion on "The Disengaged Teen: Helping Kids Learn Better, Feel Better, and Live Better."

Participants: Rebecca Winthrop, director, Center for Universal Education. Brookings; Timothy Knowles, president, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching; Tamara Willis, superintendent, Susquehanna School District; and Angel Felix, student, Clemson University.

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

Wednesday, January 15, 2025

Hearing: Senate Judiciary on Attorney General Nominee, Pam Bondi

Subject: The Senate Judiciary Committee will hold a hearing to examine the nomination of Pam Bondi to be Attorney General of the United States.

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Contact: Live stream available [here](#).

Hearing: House Education and Workforce Organizing Hearing

Subject: The House Education and the Workforce Committee will hold a meeting to organize for the 119th Congress.

Time: 10:15 a.m.

Contact: Live stream available [here](#).

Thursday, January 16, 2025

Webinar: Can AI Break Education Technology's Broken Promises?

Subject: AEI will hold a discussion on "Education Technology's Broken Promises: Can Artificial Intelligence Break the Cycle?"

Participants: Daisy Christodoulou, director of education, No More Marking; Alex Baron, director of academic strategy, E.L. Haynes Public Charter School; Robert Pondiscio, senior fellow, AEI; and Arman Jaffer, CEO, Brisk Teaching.

Time: 4:00 p.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

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7. On The Floor of Congress This Week

Senate Floor:

S.5, Laken Riley Act

House Floor:

H.R. 28 – Protection of Women and Girls in Sports Act of 2025 (*Sponsored by Rep. Steube / Education and Workforce Committee*)

H.R. 33 – United States-Taiwan Expedited Double-Tax Relief Act (*Rep. Smith (MO) / Ways and Means Committee*)

H.R. 30 – Preventing Violence Against Women by Illegal Aliens Act (*Rep. Mace / Judiciary Committee*)

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

[U.S. House and Senate 2025 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](#)

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[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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