



The Consortium of State School Boards Associations Weekly Education Report

FEBRUARY 24, 2025

Jared Solomon, Editor

jsolomon@bosepublicaffairs.com

Della Cronin, Editor

dcronin@bosepublicaffairs.com

Bob Moran, Editor

rmoran@bosepublicaffairs.com

Sarah Lamson, Deputy Editor

slamson@bosepublicaffairs.com

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](#)**

• **[Education Department Cuts \\$350 Million in “Ideological” Spending:](#)**

On February 14, the Department of Education canceled over \$350 million in contracts and grants at Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) and Equity Assistance Centers.

• **[Education Department Cuts \\$600 Million in Teacher Training](#)**

Grants: On Monday last week, the Department of Education (ED) cut over \$600 million in grants to institutions and nonprofits for teacher training programs, stating that they were deemed to promote divisive ideologies.

2. **[Budget and Appropriations Wrap-up](#)**

• **[Impact on State School Board Associations](#)**

3. **[In Brief – Last Week in Washington](#)**

• **[ED Issues Guidance on Race-Based Discrimination in Schools:](#)** On February 14, the Department of Education issued guidance reaffirming the prohibition of race-based discrimination in educational institutions receiving federal funds.

• **[Rep. Luz Rivas Announces House STEM Education Caucus:](#)** It was announced last week that Congresswoman Luz Rivas (D-CA), the only Latina in Congress with a STEM background, was named Co-Chair of the bipartisan

Congressional STEM Education Caucus alongside Congressman Neal Dunn (R-FL).

- **Senate Holds Hearing on Digital Protections for American Youth:** On Wednesday, the Senate Committee on the Judiciary hosted a hearing on “Children’s Safety in the Digital Era: Strengthening Protections and Addressing Legal Gaps.”
- **HELP Committee Advances McMahon as ED Secretary on Party-Line Vote:** On Thursday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee held an Executive Session to vote on the Nomination of Linda McMahon as Secretary of Education for the second Trump administration.

4. **New Publications**

- **Show Me the Way Out: Overcoming Educational Redlining and Strict Residency Restrictions in Missouri’s Public Schools**

Available To All (February 2025)

The report examines how state law and school district policies are used to enforce a system of strict residential assignment, assuring that middle-income and lower-income Missouri families are excluded from the best public schools.

5. **In the News**

- **‘Lifting’ Becomes ‘Leveling’: Companies Reframe DEI Amid Trump Upheaval**

The Washington Post (February 21, 2025)

- **DOJ Wants Nonprofits to Post Bond in Fight Over Funding Freeze**

Bloomberg (February 20, 2025)

- **Trump Moves on Education Coming Fast, But Schools Waiting For Official Guidance**

The Hill (February 20, 2025)

- **U.S. Department of Education’s Statement On Title IX Compliance**

US Department of Education (February 20, 2025)

- **U.S. Department of Education Reduces Federal Overreach in Charter Schools Program**

US Department of Education (February 20, 2025)

- **U.S. Department of Education Updates Guidance on COVID-19 Funding**

US Department of Education (February 19, 2025)

- **How Can Schools Ease Student Concerns About ICE?**

K-12 Dive (February 18, 2025)

- **Tracking Key Lawsuits Against the Trump Administration**

Inside Higher Ed (February 18, 2025)

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

- **Analyzing Litigation on School Use of Transgender Names and Pronouns:**

The Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy Studies will hold a virtual discussion on "Litigation Update: Kluge v. Brownsburg Community School Corporation," focusing on "whether teachers or others can be compelled to use names and pronouns for students who identify as transgender."

Tuesday at 12pm ET

- **Use of Tablets in Early Learning**: New America will hold a virtual discussion on "Tablets and Teaching: When, If, and How in Early Learning."
Tuesday at 3pm ET
- **House Appropriations Subcommittee on Federal Investments in Education**: The House Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee will hold a hearing on "Federal Investments in Elementary Education."
Wednesday at 10:30am ET
- **Budget Season for Schools: What You Need to Know**: The Edunomics Lab at Georgetown University will hold a webinar on this spring's challenging budget season, including how changes in federal funding could impact schools.
Thursday at 1pm ET

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

- **Senate floor**
 - Consideration of Daniel Driscoll to be Secretary of the Army
 - Consideration of Jameison Greer to be United States Trade Representative
- **House floor**
 - **H. Con. Res. 14** – Establishing the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2025 and setting forth the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2026 through 2034. (Sponsored by Rep. Arrington / Budget Committee)
 - **H.J. Res. 35** – Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Environmental Protection Agency relating to “Waste Emissions Charge for Petroleum and Natural Gas Systems: Procedures for Facilitating Compliance, Including Netting and Exemptions.” (Sponsored by Rep. Pfluger / Energy and Commerce Committee)
 - **H.J. Res. 20** – Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Department of Energy relating to “Energy Conservation Program: Energy Conservation Standards for Consumer Gas-fired Instantaneous Water Heaters’.” (Sponsored by Rep. Palmer / Energy and Commerce Committee)

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

9. **About BPAG**

1. **COSSBA Policy Priorities**

FUNDING

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT CUTS \$350 MILLION IN “IDEOLOGICAL” SPENDING

On February 14, the Department of Education canceled over \$350 million in contracts and grants at Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) and Equity Assistance Centers. The funds were initially allocated for applied research, technical assistance, and equity training programs. However, the Department **is asserting** that a review found the spending to be “ideologically driven” and not beneficial to student outcomes or taxpayer interests. According to the press release,

the Department plans to reallocate the funds. For over 50 years, RELs have conducted research on how different educational experiences affect student outcomes based on context and demographic groups, according to the Institute of Education Sciences, which oversees the 10 RELs.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT CUTS \$600 MILLION IN TEACHER TRAINING GRANTS

On Monday last week, the Department of Education (ED) cut over \$600 million in grants to institutions and nonprofits for teacher training programs —[Teacher Quality Partnerships and Supporting Effective Educator Development \(SEED\) grants](#)— stating that they were deemed to promote divisive ideologies. In a press release, ED [suggested](#) that the grants were previously used for training on Critical Race Theory, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), social justice activism, anti-racism, and other related topics. “Teacher-prep programs should be prioritizing training that prepares youth with the fundamentals they need to succeed for the future, not wasting valuable training resources on divisive ideologies,” said Department spokeswoman Savannah Newhouse in a statement. The Department stated that many of these programs included recruitment practices based on race and ideological training, leading to the decision to terminate the funding. The decision affects funding for teacher residencies, professional development, and recruitment programs. Critics argue the cuts undermine efforts to address teacher shortages and improve educational equity.

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2. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up

With the House in recess last week, the Senate continued to work on its plan to develop reconciliation legislation. [After the 119th Congress’s first ten-hour vote-a-rama](#), the Senate passed its FY 2025 budget resolution by a vote of 52-48. Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) was the lone Republican “no” vote over objections to the measure’s addition of \$300 billion to the national deficit. While President Donald Trump was appreciative of the chamber’s support for his border agenda and thanked the chamber for its effort, he [made it known](#) that he prefers the House’s approach to supporting his priorities. That effort would address tax cuts that the Senate has left out of its first bill.

Before the House took its one-week break, the House Budget Committee approved an FY 2025 budget resolution that would support one reconciliation bill with trillions of dollars of mandatory spending cuts in conjunction with \$4.5 trillion of tax cuts. In contrast, the Senate resolution sets up a reconciliation bill without tax cuts and with \$340 billion of defense, border security, and energy spending offset with unspecified spending cuts. The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee would be required to identify a number of cuts to contribute to the effort. The Senate would later develop an FY 2026 budget resolution with tax cuts and bigger spending cuts. Senate leaders say they want their FY 2025 budget resolution as a backup plan in case the House cannot pass its version. That scenario has real potential since some Republican moderates object to what will likely be close to \$1 trillion in cuts to Medicaid while their more conservative colleagues object to the resolution’s additions to the deficit.

House Majority Leader Steve Scalise will bring up the House's budget resolution on the floor this week, with the Rules Committee set to consider the measure today. That debate will certainly provide Members and observers more insight into what is possible on both sides of the Capitol as Republican leadership work to support President Trump’s priorities.

How does this impact State School Board Associations?

Ultimately, to create a reconciliation bill that wins the special consideration needed to pass the Senate with only 51 votes, both chambers of Congress will need to pass an identical budget resolution. Cuts to higher education – mostly for student loans, but potentially also for Pell grants and institutional support – seem to be part of both the Senate and House budget resolution’s instructions. Cuts to K-12 education are less likely since those programs are supported by discretionary dollars and will need Democrat votes to pass the Senate.

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3. In Brief – Last Week in Washington

ED ISSUES GUIDANCE ON RACE-BASED DISCRIMINATION IN SCHOOLS

On February 14, the Department of Education issued guidance reaffirming the prohibition of race-based discrimination in educational institutions receiving federal funds. Citing Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act* and the Supreme Court's 2023 decision in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*, the Department clarifies that race cannot be used in admissions, in addition to hiring, financial aid, or other school activities. The guidance emphasizes that race-neutral policies must not serve as proxies for racial preferences, warning institutions of potential loss of federal funding for non-compliance. “With this guidance, the Trump Administration is directing schools to end the use of racial preferences and race stereotypes in their programs and activities—a victory for justice, civil rights laws, and the Constitution,” said Acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Craig Trainor. He continued, “For decades, schools have been operating on the pretext that selecting students for ‘diversity’ or similar euphemisms is not selecting them based on race. No longer. Students should be assessed according to merit, accomplishment, and character—not prejudged by the color of their skin. The Office for Civil Rights will enforce that commitment.” The directive applies to K-12 schools and higher education institutions receiving federal aid, and schools have until March 1, 2025, to comply before investigations begin. According to a School Superintendents Association (AASA) blog post, legal experts are advising districts to review policies and consult with counsel, as federal and state laws vary, and they are warning against panic or self-censorship, emphasizing that not all diversity-focused programs are illegal. Policies explicitly using race for admissions or hiring are most at risk, but race-neutral approaches designed to enhance diversity are less likely to violate the law. AASA also notes that while the guidance threatens funding cuts, the enforcement process is complex, requiring investigations, findings of violations, and opportunities for schools to resolve issues voluntarily before funding is impacted.

REP LUZ RIVAS ANNOUNCES HOUSE STEM EDUCATION CAUCUS

It was announced last week that Congresswoman Luz Rivas (D-CA), the only Latina in Congress with a STEM background, was named Co-Chair of the bipartisan Congressional STEM Education Caucus alongside Congressman Neal Dunn (R-FL). According to the press release, Rivas aims to expand STEM opportunities for all students, particularly girls and underserved communities, to address challenges like AI, climate change, and medical research. Congressman Dunn also emphasized the importance of a STEM-educated workforce for America's economic future and national security. The Congressional STEM Education Caucus advocates for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education at all levels. It also provides a platform for Congress members, stakeholders, and advocates to address key STEM issues, including workforce

development, leadership in emerging technologies like AI and cybersecurity, and enhancing America's global competitiveness for future generations.

SENATE HOLDS HEARING ON DIGITAL PROTECTIONS FOR AMERICAN YOUTH

On Wednesday, the Senate Committee on the Judiciary hosted a hearing on “Children’s Safety in the Digital Era: Strengthening Protections and Addressing Legal Gaps.” The consensus-driven hearing focused on the broad bipartisan support garnered from across the Committee – and the entire Senate – on several key pieces of legislation during the last Congress. Senators from across the aisle highlighted the [Kids Online Safety Act](#) (KOSA), which passed the Senate 93-1 during the 118th Congress, and their disappointment in House Leadership for failing to support KOSA and other related legislation. Several members of the Judiciary Committee took pride in championing bills to address online protections for minors, including the [PROTECT Act](#), [NO FAKES Act](#), [COPPA 2.0](#), [SCREEN Act](#), and [Take It Down Act](#). The hearing featured a panel of witnesses largely in agreement over the need to prioritize greater online protections for minors. This included Carrie Goldberg, a lawyer who specializes in advocating for victims of digital sexual abuse; John Pizzuro, CEO of RAVEN and a former law enforcement official; Stephen Balkam, Founder and CEO of the Family Online Safety Institute; and Professor Mary Graw Leary of Catholic University of America Columbus Law School. Notably, Mr. Brandon Guffy, a Representative in the South Carolina State House, was invited to deliver testimony on the loss of his son due to online sexual exploitation – a gripping and heartbreaking story to which every Senator commended Mr. Guffy for his strength in sharing. With very little disagreement between witnesses and members of the Committee, the bulk of the hearing was spent discussing unpassed legislation, particularly KOSA, from the 118th Congress that should be re-prioritized this year and potential changes to Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. While pointing out some minor differences in how legislative texts could be altered, nearly every Senator agreed that Section 230 has become far too wide-reaching of a protection for Big Tech and has failed to safeguard young Americans from the dangers of online threats. A full recording of the hearing and written testimony can be found [here](#).

HELP COMMITTEE ADVANCES MCMAHON AS ED SECRETARY ON PARTY-LINE VOTE

On Thursday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee held an Executive Session to vote on the Nomination of Linda McMahon as Secretary of Education for the second Trump administration. Chair Bill Cassidy (R-LA) expressed his excitement at having a collaborator in Ms. McMahon who will work with the Committee to empower parents and families. “Throughout the nomination process, Ms. McMahon demonstrated a strong vision for the Department of Education. She committed to empowering parents and returning power to states and local communities, which... are best equipped to address students’ needs,” Cassidy stated in his opening remarks. He continued by applauding McMahon’s “determination to uphold the true meaning of Title IX, ensuring fairness for women and girls on the field and in the classroom.” Ranking Member Bernie Sanders (I-VT) used his opening remarks to warn about the dangers of Mrs. McMahon’s leniency to orders from the Trump administration, taking umbrage with her openness to abolishing the Department of Education. Before voting, Senator Maggie Hassan (D-NH) was given the floor to express opposition to Ms. McMahon’s nomination and her hope for a stronger, not weaker, Department of Education to support American students. Linda McMahon’s nomination was advanced out of the Senate HELP Committee on a 12-11 party-line vote. The full Senate will vote to confirm her soon. A full recording of the nomination vote can be found [here](#).

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4. New Publications

Show Me the Way Out: Overcoming Educational Redlining and Strict Residency Restrictions in Missouri's Public Schools

Available To All (February 2025)

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'Lifting' Becomes 'Leveling': Companies Reframe DEI Amid Trump Upheaval

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THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

6. Weekly Calendar

Tuesday, February 25, 2025

Webinar: Analyzing Litigation on School Use of Transgender Names and Pronouns

Subject: The Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy Studies will hold a virtual discussion on "Litigation Update: Kluge v. Brownsburg Community School Corporation," focusing on

"whether teachers or others can be compelled to use names and pronouns for students who identify as transgender."

Participants: Miles Coleman, partner, Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP; and David Cortman, senior counsel and vice president of U.S. litigation, Alliance of Defending Freedom.

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

Webinar: Use of Tablets in Early Learning

Subject: New America will hold a virtual discussion on "Tablets and Teaching: When, If, and How in Early Learning."

Participants: Beth Williams, second grade teacher, Bertschi School; Amy Turcotte, early childhood tech coach, Project Eagle Head Start; Rachel Giannini, founder, Show and Tell Me More; Lydia Carlis, chief learning and impact officer, Acelero Learning; Elise Franchino, program manager, Learning Sciences Exchange.

Time: 3:00 p.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

Wednesday, February 26, 2025

Hearing: House Appropriations Subcommittee on Federal Investments in Education

Subject: The House Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee will hold a hearing on "Federal Investments in Elementary Education."

Witnesses: Robert Kim, executive director, Education Law Center; Starlee Coleman, president and CEO, National Alliance for Public Charter Schools; Virginia Gentles, director, Defense of Freedom Institute for Policy Studies; and Lindsey Burke, director, Heritage Foundation Center of Education Policy.

Time: 10:30 a.m.

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

Thursday, February 27, 2025

Webinar: Budget Season for Schools: What you Need to Know

Subject: The Edunomics Lab at Georgetown University will hold a webinar on this spring's challenging budget season, including how changes in federal funding could impact schools.

Time: 1:00 p.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

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7. On The Floor of Congress This Week

Senate Floor:

- Consideration of Daniel Driscoll to be Secretary of the Army
- Consideration of Jameison Greer to be United States Trade Representative

House Floor:

- **H. Con. Res. 14** – Establishing the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2025 and setting forth the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2026 through 2034. (*Sponsored by Rep. Arrington / Budget Committee*)
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8. Links for Up-to-Date Information on Hearings, Legislation, and Events

[U.S. House and Senate 2024 Schedule](#)

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

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

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

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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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