



The Consortium of State School Boards Associations Weekly Education Report

MARCH 3, 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**
 - **Broadband Connection and E-Rate**
 - **SCOTUS Rule E-Rate Funding Requests Subject to False Claims Act:** Last Friday, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled in *Wisconsin Bell, Inc. v. United States ex rel. Heath* that funding requests from the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) E-rate program qualify as "claims" under the False Claims Act (FCA) because the federal government contributed to the program through funds collected from enforcement activities and deposited into the U.S. Treasury.
 - **Funding**
 - **House Appropriations Debates Federal Education Investments:** On Wednesday, the House Appropriations Committee held a hearing on federal investments in elementary education, revealing deep partisan divides over school choice, public education funding, and the federal government's role in K-12 education.
2. **Budget and Appropriations Wrap-up**
 - **Impact on State School Board Associations**
3. **In Brief – Last Week in Washington**
 - **ED Releases FAQ on Racial Referencing Dear Colleague:** The U.S. Department of Education late Friday released Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) in connection with its February 14 Dear Colleague Letter (DCL).

- **Democrats Challenge Legality of DOGE Actions with Education**
Department: Last Friday, a coalition of Democratic lawmakers expressed serious concerns about Elon Musk's "Department of Government Efficiency" (DOGE) and its actions within the Department of Education (ED).
- **Senate Examines STEM Ed, Workforce, AI During OSTP Nomination**
Hearing: On Wednesday, the Senate Commerce Committee held a nomination hearing for Michael Kratsios to be Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP).
- **Education Department Launches Anti-DEI Portal for K-12 Schools:** On Thursday, the Department of Education (ED) introduced EndDEI.Ed.Gov, a new public portal that enables parents, students, teachers, and community members to report instances of race or sex-based discrimination in publicly funded K-12 schools.

4. **New Publications**

- **2024 State of Young People Report**
America's Promise Alliance (February 2025)
This new study shows young people have low levels of trust in American institutions and adults and desire greater access to civic education and mental health services.

5. **In the News**

- **Trump suspends the head of 'The Nation's Report Card'**
NPR (February 26, 2025)
- **Federal Agencies Told to Start Planning for Large-Scale Layoffs In Trump Admin Memo**
NBC News (February 26, 2025)
- **Teachers' Union Sues to Block DEI Guidance**
Inside Higher Ed (February 26, 2025)
- **DOGE Said It Cut \$881 Million At the Education Department. The Real Savings Are Much Less.**
USA Today (February 26, 2025)
- **How Schools Can Fight Growing Ransomware Attacks**
eSchool News (February 25, 2025)
- **Education Department Approves More ARP Spending Extensions for Districts**
K-12 Dive (February 25, 2025)
- **After Declaring NAEP Off-Limits, Education Department Cancels Upcoming Test**
The 74 (February 20, 2025)

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

- **House Education and Workforce Subcommittee on Strengthening WIOA:**
The House Education and the Workforce Higher Education and Workforce Development Subcommittee will hold a hearing on "Strengthening WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act): Improving Outcomes for America's Workforce."

Wednesday at 10:15am ET

- **House Appropriations Labor H Subcommittee Member Day**: The House Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee will hold a hearing on "Member Day."

Wednesday at 10:30am ET

- **School Rethink and Personalization, Mastery Learning, and AI**: The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research will hold a virtual discussion on "School Rethink 2.0: Shaping the Future with Personalization, Mastery Learning, and AI."

Wednesday at 4pm ET

- **National Assessment Governing Board**: The Education Department's National Assessment Governing Board will hold a meeting of the Governing Board and its Standing Committees.

Thursday at 8am ET

- **Senate HELP Committee on FDA Nominee**: The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee will hold a markup to vote on the nomination of Martin Makary to be commissioner of Food and Drug Administration.

Thursday at 10am ET

7. **Future Hearings & Events**

- **AI Literacy on National AI Literacy Day**: Google and ISTE will hold a webinar to explore the importance of AI literacy and its role in bridging the digital divide.

March 12 at 12pm ET

- **Shaping the Future of AI in K-12 Education**: *Education Week* will hold a webinar to examine practical insights on how AI is transforming education today and what the future holds.

March 12 at 2pm ET

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

• **Senate floor**

- **Consideration of Linda McMahon** to be Secretary of Education
- **S.9** – Protection of Women and Girls in Sports Act

• **House floor**

- **H.R. 919**: Chronic Disease Flexible Coverage Act
- **H.R. 872**: Federal Contractor Cybersecurity Vulnerability Reduction Act of 2025, as amended.
- **H.R. 856**: Safe and Smart Federal Purchasing Act
- **H.R. 758**: Mail Traffic Deaths Reporting Act of 2025
- **H.R. 1515**: GOOD Act
- **H. Res. 153**: Expressing condolences to the families, friends, and loved ones of the victims of the crash of American Eagle Flight 5342 and PAT 25, and for other purposes.
- **H.J. Res. 42**: 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 for Appliance Standards

- **H.J. Res. 61:** Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Environmental Protection Agency relating to "National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants"
- **S.J. Res. 11:** Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

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

10. **About BPAG**

1. COSSBA Policy Priorities

BROADBAND CONNECTION AND E-RATE

SCOTUS RULES E-RATE FUNDING REQUESTS SUBJECT TO FALSE CLAIMS ACT

Last Friday, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled in *Wisconsin Bell, Inc. v. United States ex rel. Heath* that funding requests from the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) E-rate program qualify as "claims" under the False Claims Act (FCA) because the federal government contributed to the program through funds collected from enforcement activities and deposited into the U.S. Treasury. The decision rejected arguments by AT&T's subsidiary that the E-rate program is privately funded and exempt from the FCA. This ruling could empower schools allegedly overcharged by telecom companies to pursue legal action and may lead to more FCA cases involving FCC broadband funding programs, including E-rate, RDOF (Rural Digital Opportunity Fund), Lifeline, and Rural Healthcare. Justice Elena Kagan's opinion emphasized the Court's narrow focus on Treasury payments, leaving broader questions about the Universal Service Fund's status and the role of the Universal Service Administrative Company open for review in the upcoming *FCC v. Consumers' Research case*. The decision also allows a whistleblower suit against Wisconsin Bell to proceed, alleging overcharging of schools by not offering the lowest corresponding price required under E-rate rules.

FUNDING

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS DEBATES FEDERAL EDUCATION INVESTMENTS

On Wednesday, the House Appropriations Committee **held a hearing** on federal investments in elementary education, revealing deep partisan divides over school choice, public education funding, and the federal government's role in K-12 education. Chair Robert Aderholt (R-AL) criticized the emphasis on social issues over academic fundamentals, advocating for school choice and questioning the effectiveness of increased federal spending. In contrast, Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) defended federal investments as vital for educational equity and criticized proposed budget cuts as threats to public education. Witnesses presented polarized views: Virginia Gentles (Defense of Freedom Institute) and Dr. Lindsey Burke (The Heritage Foundation) argued for reduced federal involvement and increased school choice, emphasizing local control and accountability, while Robert Kim (Education Law Center) stressed the necessity of federal funding for underserved communities and warned against privatization. Witness Starlee Coleman (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools) supported continued federal investment in charter schools to expand educational options. Key debates included the effectiveness of Title I funding and the role of the Department of Education. The hearing also addressed the impact of proposed

budget cuts on special education, civil rights protections, and public school resources. Both parties acknowledged the importance of educational funding but remained divided on the approach, highlighting the ongoing ideological battle over public versus private education models. A comprehensive summary prepared by BPAG is [here](#).

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2. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up

Republican leadership made progress on two budget and appropriations issues last week.

First, with only Republican support, the House approved a fiscal year (FY) 2025 budget resolution that requires instructed committees to report legislation by March 27 that will make deep cuts in mandatory spending to help offset the \$4.5 trillion cost of extending tax cuts to the very wealthy. The budget resolution is guidance for Congress and does not get signed into law. To have fast-track protections for a reconciliation bill that would have the spending cuts and tax cuts, both the House and Senate need to pass the same budget resolution. Week before last, the Senate passed its budget resolution without the tax cuts and without specifying the size of the other committees spending cuts. House and Senate Republicans will need to resolve disagreements on how to extend the tax cuts in the budget resolution before they get reconciliation protection for the resulting bill.

The second newsworthy front is that there has been progress on resolving FY 2025 spending. Congressional leadership seems to be amenable to pursuing a continuing resolution (CR) to fund the federal government through the remainder of the fiscal year. The plan will have some complicated politics, as Republicans reportedly want any such measure to codify some of DOGE's activities, and Democrats will want some assurances that the White House will respect Congress's power of the purse. There will also have to be agreement to remove any requirements for across-the-board cuts that were part of the *Fiscal Responsibility Act*. That statute said that any appropriations bill that was ultimately funded via a CR would be subject to cuts. Since all bills would be funded via a CR under this approach, Republicans will want to avoid cuts to defense spending and Democrats will want to save domestic investments, including education, from any reductions. Regardless, the negotiations will be precarious and arguably vulnerable to any tweets from friends of the White House.

In other news, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) continues to try to shrink the federal workforce and last week sent a 7-page [memo](#) requiring government agencies to submit plans for "large-scale reductions in force (RIFs)" and agency reorganization plans by March 13. The stated goal is better service and increased productivity, a smaller federal workforce, reductions in federally-held properties and lower costs. Agencies are to "focus on the maximum elimination of functions that are not statutorily mandated." By April 14, agencies must submit a plan for implementation by September 30 that includes a new organizational structure, review of all employees' performance records, any moves from the Washington, DC area to areas of the country with lower costs, areas for future large-scale RIFs, any components to be spared, and explanation of how all these changes will improve services for Americans. The order excludes positions necessary for law enforcement, border security, national security, immigration enforcement, and public safety. The memo talks about changing collective bargaining agreements and regulations and acknowledges there will be some "congressional engagement" but doesn't address laws that would need to be changed, such as eliminating the Department of Education or other agencies created by statute.

Much of this will be discussed at tomorrow's State of the Union Address. President Donald Trump will address the Nation and will certainly tout the Administration's actions to date and lay out plans for at least the next year. It will be interesting to see who is in the galley, for sure.

How does this impact State School Board Associations?

The House budget resolution calls for the Education and Workforce Committee to produce savings worth at least \$330 billion over ten years – cuts that will mostly come from student loan programs. Instructions to the Ways and Means Committee could include cuts to higher education tax credits, deductibility of student loan interest payments and scholarship income, and increased taxation of college endowments. The many steps Congress still needs to take to pass a reconciliation bill are on a fast track. They won't happen immediately, but authorizing committees will be expected to complete their work quickly. The House and Senate will eventually have to negotiate their respective approaches to reconciliation, but, for now, advocates will be watching the committees in both chambers as they deliberate how to produce savings.

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3. In Brief – Last Week in Washington

ED DEPARTMENT RELEASES FAQ ON RACIAL PREFERENCING DEAR COLLEAGUE

The Department of Education released [FAQs](#) related to its [February 14 Dear Colleague Letter](#) (DCL), which directs federally funded educational institutions to stop using race-based preferences and stereotypes in admissions, hiring, scholarships, and other programs. The FAQs clarify compliance with Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act*, the Equal Protection Clause, and the *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* ruling. Key topics addressed include race-based student separation, the legality of DEI programs, race-related essay prompts in admissions, OCR's approach to investigating covert discrimination, and enforcement actions for noncompliance. More information is [here](#).

DEMS CHALLENGE LEGALITY OF DOGE ACTIONS WITH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Last Friday, a coalition of Democratic lawmakers [expressed](#) serious concerns about Elon Musk's "Department of Government Efficiency" (DOGE) and its actions within the Department of Education (ED). They note that DOGE has ordered the termination of federal education research, evaluation, statistics, and technical assistance projects managed by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). Additionally, the lawmakers criticize the [firing of the Education Inspector General](#), [the dismissal of staff](#), and the placement of others on administrative leave, suggesting these actions aim to undermine the Department's capacity to manage federal education programs effectively. They also accuse DOGE of lacking transparency, contradicting Musk's claims of openness. In the letter, lawmakers urge for clarity on the decision-making process, the impact of [contract terminations](#), and the potential implications for education research, student data, and evidence-based educational reforms. Specifically, the letter outlines a list of 27 questions that the lawmakers are requesting DOGE answer to explain the terminated contracts associated with the IES and calls for explanation of cuts for federal equity-assistance centers, which advise schools on meeting obligations under civil rights laws; and regional education laboratories, which pilot and research strategies to improve student outcomes. "The lack of information about and apparent disregard for careful planning and consideration for sweeping terminations of contracts and firing

of staff is alarming,” the letter states. It was signed by 86 lawmakers, including ranking members of the House and Senate committees that oversee education.

SENATE EXAMINES STEM ED, WORKFORCE, AI DURING OSTP NOMINATION HEARING

On Wednesday, the Senate Commerce Committee held a nomination hearing for Michael Kratsios to be Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). The hearing also examined the nomination of Mark Meador to be a Federal Trade Commissioner. Discussion with Mr. Kratsios focused on STEM workforce development, the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in education, and federal research funding. Senators expressed concerns about U.S. investment in STEM education and the scientific workforce, particularly in response to China's growing dominance in AI and quantum computing. Kratsios emphasized that workforce development is a key pillar of OSTP's technology strategy and highlighted government-funded grants, fellowships, and training programs as essential for maintaining U.S. competitiveness. He also acknowledged concerns about recent workforce reductions in federal science agencies, pledging that OSTP would work to align policy with national STEM priorities. AI's potential to personalize learning, as well as its risks related to privacy and misinformation, was also discussed. Kratsios indicated that OSTP would collaborate with agencies like the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to establish best practices for AI deployment in education. Senators questioned whether the administration would sustain robust federal funding for STEM education and research. Kratsios affirmed the importance of long-term investment but noted that budget decisions would be determined through the administration's budgetary process. The hearing also addressed the role of federal testbeds in advancing science and technology, emphasizing the need for students and researchers to have access to state-of-the-art resources.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT LAUNCHES ANTI-DEI PORTAL FOR K-12 SCHOOLS

On Thursday, the Department of Education (ED) introduced [EndDEI.Ed.Gov](#), a new public portal that enables parents, students, teachers, and community members to report instances of race or sex-based discrimination in publicly-funded K-12 schools. Through the platform, users can provide an email address, the name of the student's school or district, and detailed descriptions of the situation the user found concerning, and the ED will review these submissions to identify areas that may require investigation. Tiffany Justice, Co-Founder of Moms for Liberty, stated in the ED's press release that the platform empowers parents who have sought a return to traditional education focused on reading, writing, and math, rather than controversial topics. She stated, “This webpage demonstrates that President Trump's Department of Education is putting power back in the hands of parents.” According to some reporting, it is not immediately clear how the submission platform aligns with the formal process of filing a civil rights complaint through the ED's Office for Civil Rights. The move follows announcements from last month that the ED was eliminating initiatives around diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).

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4. New Publications

2024 State of Young People Report

America's Promise Alliance (February 2025)

This new study shows young people have low levels of trust in American institutions and adults and desire greater access to civic education and mental health services.

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5. In the News

Trump suspends the head of 'The Nation's Report Card'

NPR (February 26, 2025)

Federal Agencies Told to Start Planning for Large-Scale Layoffs In Trump Admin Memo

NBC News (February 26, 2025)

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Inside Higher Ed (February 26, 2025)

DOGE Said It Cut \$881 Million At the Education Department. The Real Savings Are Much Less.

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Federal Workers Return to Offices Amid Threat From Elon Musk

Hays Post (February 25, 2025)

How Schools Can Fight Growing Ransomware Attacks

eSchool News (February 25, 2025)

Education Department Approves More ARP Spending Extensions for Districts

K-12 Dive (February 25, 2025)

After Declaring NAEP Off-Limits, Education Department Cancels Upcoming Test

The 74 (February 20, 2025)

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THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

6. Weekly Calendar

Wednesday, March 5, 2025

Hearing: House Education and Workforce Subcommittee on Strengthening WIOA

Subject: The House Education and the Workforce Higher Education and Workforce Development Subcommittee will hold a hearing on "Strengthening WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act): Improving Outcomes for America's Workforce."

Time: 10:15 a.m.

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

Hearing: House Appropriations Labor H Subcommittee Member Day

Subject: The House Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee will hold a hearing on "Member Day."

Time: 10:30 a.m.

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

Webinar: School Rethink and Personalization, Mastery Learning, and AI

Subject: The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research will hold a virtual discussion on "School Rethink 2.0: Shaping the Future with Personalization, Mastery Learning, and AI."

Participants: Kristen DiCerbo, chief learning officer, Khan Academy; John Bailey, nonresident senior fellow, AEI; Scott Ellis, CEO, Mastery Track; Beth Rabbitt, CEO, Learning Accelerator; and Michael Horn, co-founder, Clayton Christensen Institute

Time: 4:00 p.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

Thursday, March 6, 2025

Agency Meeting: National Assessment Governing Board

Subject: The Education Department's National Assessment Governing Board will hold a meeting of the Governing Board and its Standing Committees.

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Contact: Register and full agenda [here](#).

Hearing: Senate HELP Committee on FDA Nominee

Subject: The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee will hold a markup to vote on the nomination of Martin Makary to be commissioner of Food and Drug Administration.

Time: 10:00 a.m.

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

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7. Future Hearings and Events

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

Webinar: AI Literacy on National AI Literacy Day

Subject: Google and ISTE will hold a webinar to explore the importance of AI literacy and its role in bridging the digital divide.

Participants: Joseph South, ISTE; Jennie Magiera, Google; and Sallie Holloway, Gwinnett County Public Schools.

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

Webinar: Shaping the Future of AI in K-12 Education

Subject: EducationWeek will hold a webinar to examine practical insights on how AI is transforming education today and what the future holds.

Participants: Neil Wetherbee, superintendent, Northport Public Schools; Michael Lubelfeld, superintendent, North Shore District 112; Adrienne Usher, assistant superintendent, Bullitt County Public Schools; Caitlin Wlezien, instructional technology coordinator, Wood Dale School District 7; and Kendall Hunter, director of marketing, Otus.

Time: 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

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8. On The Floor of Congress This Week

Senate Floor

- Consideration of Linda McMahon to be Secretary of Education
- S.9 – Protection of Women and Girls in Sports Act

House Floor

- **H.R. 919:** Chronic Disease Flexible Coverage Act
- **H.R. 872:** Federal Contractor Cybersecurity Vulnerability Reduction Act of 2025, as amended.
- **H.R. 856:** Safe and Smart Federal Purchasing Act
- **H.R. 758:** Mail Traffic Deaths Reporting Act of 2025
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- **H. Res. 153:** Expressing condolences to the families, friends, and loved ones of the victims of the crash of American Eagle Flight 5342 and PAT 25, and for other purposes.
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- **S.J. Res. 11:** Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

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9. 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](#)

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

[Congressional Budget Office](#)

[Federal legislative information](#)

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10. 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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