



The Consortium of State School Boards Associations Weekly Education Report

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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. **With Congress on recess through the month of August and the Labor Day holiday, the Ed Report will next publish in September. COSSBA will keep you updated if important news is released. Please use the bookmarks below to navigate to your area of interest:**

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 - **USED Encourages States to Seek ESEA Waivers**: On Tuesday, the Department of Education (ED) issued a Dear Colleague letter to state education officials encouraging states to pursue waivers from federal K-12 education laws.
 - **White House Presidential AI Challenge Engages K-12 Students, Educators**: The White House unveiled its Presidential AI Challenge this week. Established by President Donald Trump's Executive Order 14277 on April 23, 2025, the challenge is designed to inspire K–12 students, educators, and community members to develop AI-powered solutions to real-world problems.
4. **New Publications**

- **Teacher Well-Being, Pay, and Intentions to Leave in 2025**

RAND (June 24, 2025)

This report presents selected findings from the 2025 State of the American Teacher Survey, an annual survey of kindergarten through grade 12 public school teachers across the United States.

5. **In the News**

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K-12 Dive (July 28, 2025)

- **What Will ‘Big, Beautiful’ School Choice Mean for Public Schools?**

K-12 Dive (July 29, 2025)

- **Keeping Girls in STEM: Mental Wellness and Achievement Gap Disparities Grow**

EdTech (July 30, 2025)

- **Trump Admin Seeks to Unleash AI in Schools**

The Hill (July 30, 2025)

- **Penny Schwinn Drops Out of the Running for Ed Department’s Deputy Role**

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FUNDING

SENATE COMMITTEE ADVANCES BIPARTISAN FY 2026 LHHS-ED SPENDING BILL

On Thursday, the Senate Appropriations Committee **held a full committee markup** to consider its draft fiscal year (FY) 2026 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS-ED) appropriations bill. The Committee approved the legislation in a 26–3 vote. In addition to LHHS-ED, the Committee also approved the Defense spending bill. The education spending proposal rejects many of the Trump Administration’s budget requests. Notably, it adds Section 313, requiring the Secretary of Education to distribute formula funds to states on the date they become available for obligation, and Section 314, ensuring that the Department of Education (ED) maintains staffing levels sufficient to meet its responsibilities in a timely manner. The bill provides \$79.0 billion in discretionary funding for ED, maintaining investments in elementary and secondary education grant programs, afterschool and summer learning initiatives, and professional development for educators. It includes a \$50 million increase for Title I-A and preserves the \$2.19 billion allocation for Title II’s Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants. The legislation also proposes modest increases in early childhood development funding, with \$8.8 billion allocated for the Child Care and Development Block Grant and \$12.4 billion for Head Start. It preserves programs like Preschool Development Grants, which were slated for elimination under the President’s budget request. “As the chairman of the Labor-HHS Appropriations Subcommittee, I am proud that Ranking Member Baldwin and I were able to once again craft an effective bill that

maintains provisions critical to the departments our subcommittee oversees,” said Senator Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV). “This bill also continues our bipartisan record by including a number of priorities from both sides of the aisle, such as investments in America’s biomedical research, childcare, and education.” The Senate’s FY2026 LHHS-ED bill must still pass the full chamber and be reconciled with the House before it can be enacted. A copy of the bill text and a summary of its provisions are [available here](#).

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2. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up

On July 31, 2025, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved its fiscal year (FY) 2026 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education spending bill by a bipartisan vote of 26-3. Senate appropriators scheduled action on the bill arguably to convey to the Administration the importance of federal investments in K-12 education in the wake of a temporary withholding of close to \$7 billion in education funds. Rumors of a prospective rescissions bill that would target education programs could have provided additional motivation to schedule the proceeding ahead of the August recess. The markup advanced bipartisan efforts to push back against the President’s proposed FY 2026 budget, which requested deep cuts to the agency and its programs and consolidation of numerous K-12 education funding programs under a new block grant model. Details on what was included in the bill are [further down](#).

Despite Senate Appropriators’ bipartisan success on the LHHS-ED funding bill, it was not included in the three-bill package approved on the Senate floor Friday, meaning the education spending measure won’t be on the Senate floor until September—at the earliest.

Fast forward to Saturday, when much of Friday’s bipartisan goodwill was abandoned. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY) are urging a bipartisan “Big Four” meeting this week with Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD) and House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) to address FY 2026 funding and avoid a government shutdown. Tensions are high as Republicans and Democrats remain divided on certain spending priorities, with the Trump administration pushing unilateral action and threatening further rescissions. Saturday displayed a breakdown in Senate negotiations over nominee approvals and frozen funding, despite a near-deal between Schumer, Thune, and the White House. Negotiations ended with Trump rejecting the compromise and accusing Democrats of extortion. The Senate passed a few nominees before adjourning, but threats of rule changes and continued gridlock suggest a turbulent path ahead for federal funding and governance.

Both chambers are now in recess until September 2.

Meanwhile, the House Appropriations Committee is expected to mark up its version of the education spending bill in early September. Once both chambers pass their bills, any differences in topline funding levels and program provisions will need to be reconciled in conference. With the fiscal year beginning on October 1, 2025, Congress must either pass regular appropriations or pass a continuing resolution by that deadline to avoid a government shutdown, likely triggering intense negotiations through the fall.

How does this impact State School Board Associations?

The Senate education funding bill proposes approximately \$197 billion in discretionary funding across the agencies and programs it supports, a figure that is significantly higher than the House’s

allocation of about \$184.5 billion. The bill allocates \$79 billion in discretionary funding to ED. For K–12 education, the Senate bill offers modest increases: a \$50 million increase each for Title I-A (low-income school formula grants) and IDEA Part B (special education), as well as a \$5 million plus up for the Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP). Most other major K-12 programs—including Impact Aid, Title I-C (migrant education), Title II-A (teacher professional development), Title III (ELL instruction), Title IV-A (Student Support & Academic Enrichment grants), and Title IV-B (21st Century Community Learning Centers program)—are level-funded at FY 2025 levels. The bill rejects the White House’s plan to collapse programs such as Title IV-A and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, among others, into a single block grant that would have been much smaller than the combined funds of the existing programs. The bill preserves stand-alone funding for those initiatives.

While education advocates are still digesting the bill, it does include a new *Sec. 313* that would require the Secretary of Education to provide formula funds to states on the date they become available for obligation. This addition is clearly a response to the recent withholding and ultimate release of federal education funding. Additionally, *Sec. 314* would ensure that staffing levels in ED allow it to perform its obligations in a timely manner.

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3. In Brief – Last Week in Washington

USED ENCOURAGES STATES TO SEEK ESEA WAIVERS

On Tuesday, the Department of Education (ED) issued a [Dear Colleague letter](#) to state education officials encouraging states to pursue waivers from federal K-12 education laws. The letter’s central message is that “the status quo is not working,” a conclusion the administration drew from the “stark reminder” of poor student performance on the 2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The letter urges states to “think creatively” about how to use federal funds to improve academic achievement, strengthen literacy and numeracy, and expand parental decision-making—ultimately aiming to “return education to the States.” The document outlines the legal process for seeking waivers from statutory and regulatory requirements under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This waiver authority has existed—and been used—for decades, but this Administration is overtly encouraging states to explore their use. Applicants must submit a plan identifying the affected federal programs, explaining how the waiver will “advance student academic achievement,” and detailing how its effectiveness will be monitored and evaluated. Before submission, states or local agencies must provide public notice and an opportunity for comment. Approved waivers may remain in effect for up to four years, with the possibility of extension. However, the letter identifies specific ESEA requirements that cannot be waived, including provisions related to funding allocation and distribution, civil rights protections, equitable participation for private school students and teachers, and the rule that federal funds must supplement—not supplant—non-federal funds. The letter concludes by affirming ED’s readiness to assist states and clarifying that the guidance is non-binding and may be revised or revoked at any time.

WHITE HOUSE PRESIDENTIAL AI CHALLENGE ENGAGES K-12 STUDENTS, EDUCATORS

The White House unveiled its [Presidential AI Challenge](#) this week. Established by [Executive Order 14277](#) on April 23, 2025, the challenge is designed to inspire K–12 students, educators, and community members to develop AI-powered solutions to real-world problems. The challenge’s

core mission is to equip young people with foundational AI skills for an increasingly digital future, empower educators to teach these technologies, and connect participants with experts from industry and government. It aims to foster innovation as the nation celebrates its 250th anniversary. Students and educators are encouraged to participate and provided various tracks for doing so. The White House has expressed particular interest in projects that improve school safety, promote healthier eating, support a safer digital future, and help educators design personalized learning plans. All teams must submit a written project summary reflecting on their learning.

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4. New Publications

Teacher Well-Being, Pay, and Intentions to Leave in 2025

RAND (June 24, 2025)

This report presents selected findings from the 2025 State of the American Teacher Survey, an annual survey of kindergarten through grade 12 public school teachers across the United States. The findings focus on teacher well-being and a set of high-interest factors related to teacher retention: sources of job-related stress, pay, hours worked, and teachers' intentions to leave their current jobs. The authors track teachers' reported well-being over time and compare teachers' responses with those of similar working adults.

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5. In the News

Another Lawsuit Challenges ICE Policy Allowing Raids at Schools

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What Will 'Big, Beautiful' School Choice Mean for Public Schools?

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Penny Schwinn Drops Out of the Running for Ed Department's Deputy Role

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6. On The Floor of Congress This Week

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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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8. About BPAG

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- Creating meaningful impact.

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