



## The Consortium of State School Boards Associations Weekly Education Report

**NOVEMBER 17, 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**

- **Senate Confirms Four Assistant Secretaries to Key ED Leadership Posts:** The Senate **confirmed** four nominees to senior leadership positions at the Department of Education: Kimberly Richey as Assistant Secretary for the Office for Civil Rights, Kirsten Baesler as Assistant Secretary for the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education; Dr. David Barker as Assistant Secretary for the Office of Postsecondary Education; and Mary Christina Riley as Assistant Secretary for the Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs.

2. **Budget and Appropriations Wrap-up**

- **Impact on State School Board Associations**

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

- **Cato Institute Examines Rise of Micro-Schools, Alternative Models:** Last week, the Cato Institute **hosted a discussion** featuring Kerry McDonald—adjunct scholar and author of *Joyful Learning*—and policy analyst Colleen Hroncich on the rapid growth of alternative education models in the United States.
- **PPI Panel Explores Framework for Navigating K-12 DEI Debates:** On Thursday, the Progressive Policy Institute's (PPI) **Reinventing America's Schools Project**, in partnership with The 74 Million, hosted a webinar on how K-12 educators can navigate ongoing debates around diversity, equity, and inclusion.

4. **New Publications**

- **Laying the Foundation: Progress on Early Full-Service Community Schools Grant Implementation Activities**

*National Center for Education Evaluation (October 2025)*

This study snapshot charts the progress of Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) grantees in two foundational areas: early activities that grantees must help partner schools complete and partnerships that grantees must finalize with local providers to deliver essential services to children in community schools.

5. **In the News**

- **Indiana AG Sues Indianapolis Public Schools For Hindering ICE Efforts**  
*K-12 Dive (November 7, 2025)*
- **Trump Signs Spending Bill To End Longest Government Shutdown**  
*Roll Call (November 12, 2025)*
- **New Data Shows More Districts Are Adopting AI but Still Need a Coherent Strategy**  
*The 74 Million (November 12, 2025)*
- **With Government Reopened, Will Education Department Staff Return?**  
*Inside Higher Ed (November 12, 2025)*
- **Will Trump Policies Exacerbate The Special Education Teacher Shortage?**  
*K-12 Dive (November 13, 2025)*

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

- **Harnessing Innovation to Help Foster Youth Succeed:** The Campaign for Grade Level Reading will hold a webinar on how technology can support different styles of learning.  
*Tuesday at 3pm ET*
- **Designing for Connection: How Technology Can Power Learning in Homes and Communities:** The House Ways and Means Work and Welfare Subcommittee will hold a hearing on "Leaving the Sticky Notes Behind: Harnessing Innovation and New Technology to Help America's Foster Youth Succeed."  
*Tuesday at 10am ET*
- **Youth Apprenticeship Youth Council Lunch Symposium:** New America's Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship (PAYA) will hold a lunch symposium at New America with the PAYA Youth Council.  
*Tuesday at 11:30am ET*
- **Risks and Benefits of AI Chatbots:** The House Energy and Commerce Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee will hold a hearing on "Innovation with Integrity: Examining the Risks and Benefits of AI Chatbots."  
*Tuesday at 2pm ET*
- **The Urgency for Action: Advocating for Family & Community Engagement:** The National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE) will hold a virtual discussion, on "The Urgency for Action: Advocating for Family & Community Engagement."  
*Wednesday at 1pm ET*

- **From Classroom to Career: Strengthening Skills Pathways Through CTE:**  
The House Education and Workforce Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education will hold a hearing on "From Classroom to Career: Strengthening Skills Pathways Through CTE."  
*Wednesday at 2pm ET*
- **National Assessment Governing Board:** The National Assessment Governing Board will hold its Standing Committee meetings and quarterly Governing Board meeting, November 20-21.  
*Thursday at 9:45am ET*
- **Overcoming Budget Gaps to Prevent Declining Quality of Instruction:**  
Georgetown University's Edunomics Lab will hold a virtual discussion, on "Must budget gaps erode district quality?"  
*Thursday at 1pm ET*
- **Learning and Working in the Age of AI:** The Bipartisan Policy Center holds a virtual discussion, beginning at 1 p.m., on "America's Workforce: Learning and Working in the Age of AI."  
*Thursday at 1pm ET*
- **House Education Committee Member Day:** The House Education and the Workforce Committee will hold a member day hearing.  
*Friday at 9am ET*

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

- **Senate floor:** Consideration of nominations
- **House floor**
  - **H.J. Res. 130** – Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Bureau of Land Management relating to “Buffalo Field Office Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment”.
  - **H.J. Res. 131** – Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Bureau of Land Management relating to “Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program Record of Decision”.
  - **S.J. Res. 80** – Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Bureau of Land Management relating to “National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska Integrated Activity Plan Record of Decision”.
  - **H.R. 5214** – District of Columbia Cash Bail Reform Act of 2025
  - **H.R. 5107** – CLEAN DC Act of 2025
  - **H.R. 3109** – REFINER Act
  - **H.R. 1949** – Unlocking our Domestic LNG Potential Act of 2025
  - **H. Con. Res. 58** – Denouncing the horrors of socialism.
  - **H. Res. \_\_** – Disapproving the behavior of Representative Jesus G. “Chuy” Garcia of Illinois.
  - **H. Res. 581** – Providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 185) to advance responsible policies.

## 8. [Important U.S. House and Senate Links](#)

## 9. [About BPAG](#)

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### 1. **COSSBA Policy Priorities**

#### **SENATE CONFIRMS FOUR ASSISTANT SECRETARIES TO KEY ED LEADERSHIP POSTS**

The Senate confirmed four nominees to senior leadership positions at the Department of Education: Kimberly Richey as Assistant Secretary for the Office for Civil Rights, Kirsten Baesler as Assistant Secretary for the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education; Dr. David Barker as Assistant Secretary for the Office of Postsecondary Education; and Mary Christina Riley as Assistant Secretary for the Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs. The confirmations position the Department to begin implementing a series of policy priorities, including shifts in federal–state roles in K–12 education, reforms to postsecondary programs, and ongoing civil rights enforcement activities. Education Secretary Linda McMahon highlighted the importance of filling these posts, emphasizing the Department’s focus on state-centered education reform, accountability, and safeguarding students’ rights. Each of the newly confirmed leaders brings prior experience in education policy and administration. Richey, a former state and federal education official, returns to the Office for Civil Rights with a stated focus on ensuring students have equal access to educational opportunities. Baesler, previously North Dakota’s state superintendent, has led statewide initiatives related to academic achievement, accountability frameworks, and personalized learning. Barker, an economist and former member of the Iowa Board of Regents, has been involved in higher education governance, cost-control efforts, and related policy issues. Riley, who most recently served on House Education and Workforce Committee staff, also returns to the Department, bringing extensive experience in legislative strategy and congressional engagement.

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### 2. **Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up**

Last week, Congress finally reached a breakthrough to reopen the federal government after a more than forty-day funding impasse. An FY 2026 Continuing Resolution (CR) was passed by the Senate in a 60-40 vote, with eight Democrats joining Republicans, and then swiftly cleared the House by a 222-209 margin. The measure extends funding for most agencies through January 30, 2026, while also providing full-year funding for a few select appropriations bills. In remarks after the Senate vote, Majority Leader John Thune (R-S.D.) said there “are already some discussions” underway with Democrats on associated healthcare tax credits but stressed the need to reopen government and resume agency operations.

With the immediate shutdown crisis averted, attention now turns to the spending bills that remain unresolved—most notably the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education spending bill (Labor-HHS-ED). The risk of relying on yet another short-term CR remains alive: the current CR runs to January 30, 2026, so Congress will need to act before that deadline or risk another shutdown.

Amid this backdrop, quotes from lawmakers illustrate some caution. Senator John Thune (R-SD) said: “We needed to reopen government and move forward; now we’ll engage on the policies.” On the other side, Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT.) called the deal “a disaster” because Democrats

received what he considered to be little in exchange for ending the shutdown. Both remarks reflect a shared recognition that while the shutdown is over, the larger appropriations process and some significant policy matters remain uncompleted. The question now is whether Congress will negotiate full-year funding bills, resort to another CR, or some combined approach.

Looking ahead, the start of the FY 2027 spending cycle can be viewed as being informally launched with the delivery of the State of the Union Address—historically offered in late January or early February. If recent practice holds, one might reasonably expect the address in the first week of February 2026, followed quickly by the Administration’s budget, thereby triggering new FY 2027 budget and appropriations deliberations shortly thereafter. It seems appropriations season is evergreen.

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

The funding hiatus took a significant toll on the U.S. Department of Education (ED). Under its own contingency plan, roughly 95 percent of non-Federal Student Aid staff would have been furloughed after the first week of a funding lapse, leaving as few as 122 full-time employees engaged under “excepted” or “exempt” status. In practical terms, that meant offices handling civil-rights investigations, regulatory guidance, and competitive grant competitions stood largely idle for the duration of the shutdown. Although Pell Grants and student-loan programs continued under prior-year appropriations, the broader functions of ED were severely curtailed—prompting concern among school districts and colleges about delayed funding notifications and compliance oversight.

Some House and Senate staffers suggest that consideration of the Labor-HHS-ED bill (and possibly several other spending bills) could occur this week or before year-end. Reports from staff involved in negotiations hint that education funding levels will ultimately land closer to those proposed in the bipartisan Senate bill—essentially level funding for most programs. Both parties appear open to advancing a package, though differing priorities persist.

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

#### **CATO INSTITUTE EXAMINES RISE OF MICRO-SCHOOLS, ALTERNATIVE MODELS**

Last week, the Cato Institute [hosted a discussion](#) featuring Kerry McDonald—adjunct scholar and author of [Joyful Learning](#)—and policy analyst Colleen Hroncich on the rapid growth of alternative education models in the United States. McDonald traced the origins of her work to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. She noted that March 11, 2020, the day the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic, also marked the beginning of widespread school closures that displaced roughly 300 million students worldwide. This abrupt disruption pushed many families to explore new education options, contributing to a more than doubling of the homeschool population and the emergence of pandemic learning pods that later evolved into micro-schools. McDonald highlighted Compass Prep Academy in suburban Georgia—founded by Laura George—as an example of a hybrid school designed for K–12 students who struggled in traditional classrooms. About half of the school’s students previously attended conventional public or private schools. She emphasized that micro-schooling is best understood as a mindset rather than a single model, encompassing homeschool collaboratives, hybrid programs, and formal private schools recognized by the state. Affordability is a central feature of this movement. Data

from the National Micro Schooling Center show that the average micro-school tuition is approximately \$6,500 per year, with three-quarters charging under \$10,000 and only a small percentage exceeding \$20,000. At the same time, more than a dozen states now offer universal school choice, with several providing \$7,000 to \$8,000 per student that families can apply toward micro-school tuition and other innovative learning environments. The conversation also addressed the balance between joy and academic rigor. McDonald argued that high-quality learning environments successfully integrate both, and she noted that many micro-schools are founded by former public school teachers seeking alternatives to standardized approaches. She concluded with optimism that a lasting shift is underway, driven by expanded school choice and growing education entrepreneurship.

### **PPI PANEL EXPLORES FRAMEWORK FOR NAVIGATING K-12 DEI DEBATES**

On Thursday, the Progressive Policy Institute's (PPI) [Reinventing America's Schools Project](#), in partnership with The 74 Million, hosted a webinar on how K–12 educators can navigate ongoing debates around diversity, equity, and inclusion. Moderated by Curtis Valentine, the discussion featured Richard Kahlenberg of PPI's American Identity Project; Dr. Brian Osborne of Lehigh University; and Dr. Paula Stanton of Harford County Public Schools. The panelists explored a proposed shift from traditional DEI frameworks to a model emphasizing “Integration, Equal Opportunity, and Belonging.” The reframed approach focuses on shared American civic identity, providing targeted support without centering group-based outcomes, and fostering environments welcoming to students of all backgrounds and political perspectives. Kahlenberg argued that some DEI trainings have overreached—citing past examples from the Smithsonian and Montgomery County Public Schools that labeled traits such as punctuality or valuing the written word as “white culture.” Dr. Stanton described Harford County's approach within Maryland's eighth-largest district, where she conducts required “anti-bias training” across all 54 schools. Their effort is grounded in student perception data from wellness surveys and in discipline data affecting the district's 38,000 students. Panelists identified four areas where the new framework could guide policy: educator and student trainings; student assignment practices, including socioeconomic-based magnet school lotteries used in districts such as Charlotte-Mecklenburg; hiring and recruitment strategies that better reflect student demographics, such as paraprofessional-to-teacher pipelines; and equity considerations in grading and discipline. Audience polling revealed divided views on DEI—56% said DEI efforts bring people together, while 44% found them divisive—yet nearly 80% supported the proposed Integration, Equal Opportunity, and Belonging model. Dr. Osborne emphasized that terminology changes matter less than maintaining a commitment to addressing opportunity gaps. Dr. Stanton raised concerns about who defines “being American,” noting the complexity of applying shared identity concepts. The panel concluded with discussion of the administration's efforts to restrict resources to districts with DEI policies. Panelists agreed that districts should comply with legal requirements, even as the administration's actions may extend beyond what courts mandate.

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#### 4. New Publications

##### Laying the Foundation: Progress on Early Full-Service Community Schools Grant Implementation Activities

*National Center for Education Evaluation (October 2025)*

This study snapshot charts the progress of Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) grantees in two foundational areas: early activities that grantees must help partner schools complete and partnerships that grantees must finalize with local providers to deliver essential services to children in community schools.

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#### 5. In the News

##### Indiana AG Sues Indianapolis Public Schools For Hindering ICE Efforts

*K-12 Dive (November 7, 2025)*

##### Trump Signs Spending Bill To End Longest Government Shutdown

*Roll Call (November 12, 2025)*

##### New Data Shows More Districts Are Adopting AI but Still Need a Coherent Strategy

*The 74 Million (November 12, 2025)*

##### With Government Reopened, Will Education Department Staff Return?

*Inside Higher Ed (November 12, 2025)*

##### Will Trump Policies Exacerbate The Special Education Teacher Shortage?

*K-12 Dive (November 13, 2025)*

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### THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

#### 6. Weekly Calendar

##### **Tuesday, November 18, 2025**

##### **Hearing: Harnessing Innovation to Help Foster Youth Succeed**

**Subject:** The House Ways and Means Work and Welfare Subcommittee will hold a hearing on "Leaving the Sticky Notes Behind: Harnessing Innovation and New Technology to Help America's Foster Youth Succeed."

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

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

##### **Event: Youth Apprenticeship Youth Council Lunch Symposium**

**Subject:** New America's Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship (PAYA) will hold a lunch symposium at New America with the PAYA Youth Council.

**Time and Location:** 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

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

**Hearing: Risks and Benefits of AI Chatbots**

**Subject:** The House Energy and Commerce Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee will hold a hearing on "Innovation with Integrity: Examining the Risks and Benefits of AI Chatbots."

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

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

**Wednesday, November 19, 2025****Event: The Urgency for Action: Advocating for Family & Community Engagement**

**Subject:** The National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE) will hold a virtual discussion, on "The Urgency for Action: Advocating for Family & Community Engagement."

**Participants:** George Otero, NAFSCE; and Anne Henderson, NAFSCE.

**Time:** 1:00 p.m.

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

**Hearing: From Classroom to Career: Strengthening Skills Pathways Through CTE**

**Subject:** The House Education and Workforce Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education will hold a hearing on "From Classroom to Career: Strengthening Skills Pathways Through CTE."

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

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

**Thursday, November 20, 2025****Agency Meeting: National Assessment Governing Board**

**Subject:** The National Assessment Governing Board will hold its Standing Committee meetings and quarterly Governing Board meeting, November 20-21.

**Time:** 9:45 a.m.

**Contact:** Registration and more information [here](#).

**Webinar: Overcoming Budget Gaps to Prevent Declining Quality of Instruction**

**Subject:** Georgetown University's Edunomics Lab will hold a virtual discussion, on "Must budget gaps erode district quality?"

**Time:** 1:00 p.m.

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

**Webinar: Learning and Working in the Age of AI**

**Subject:** The Bipartisan Policy Center holds a virtual discussion, beginning at 1 p.m., on "America's Workforce: Learning and Working in the Age of AI."

**Participants:** Peter Beard, vice president, US Chamber of Commerce Foundation; Josh Connolly, senior manager of US policy and economic graph, LinkedIn; Justin Ladner, senior labor economist, SHRM; Rosmary Lahasky, vice president of US government relations, Pearson; and Cheryl Oldham, executive vice president of human capital, Bipartisan Policy Center.

**Time:** 1:00 p.m.

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

**Friday, November 21, 2025****Hearing: House Education Committee Member Day**



**Subject:** The House Education and the Workforce Committee will hold a member day hearing.

**Time:** 9:00 a.m.

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

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## 7. On The Floor of Congress This Week

### Senate Floor:

Consideration of nominations

### House Floor:

**H.J. Res. 130** – Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Bureau of Land Management relating to “Buffalo Field Office Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment”. (*Sponsored by Rep. Hageman / Natural Resources Committee*)

**H.J. Res. 131** – Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Bureau of Land Management relating to “Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program Record of Decision”. (*Sponsored by Rep. Begich / Natural Resources Committee*)

**S.J. Res. 80** – Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Bureau of Land Management relating to “National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska Integrated Activity Plan Record of Decision”. (*Sponsored by Sen. Sullivan / Natural Resources Committee*)

**H.R. 5214** – District of Columbia Cash Bail Reform Act of 2025 (*Sponsored by Rep. Stefanik / Oversight and Government Reform Committee*)

**H.R. 5107** – CLEAN DC Act of 2025 (*Sponsored by Rep. Clyde / Oversight and Government Reform Committee*)

**H.R. 3109** – REFINER Act (*Sponsored by Rep. Latta / Energy and Commerce Committee*)

**H.R. 1949** – Unlocking our Domestic LNG Potential Act of 2025 (*Sponsored by Rep. Pfluger / Energy and Commerce Committee*)

**H. Con. Res. 58** – Denouncing the horrors of socialism. (*Sponsored by Rep. Salazar / Financial Services Committee*)

**H. Res. \_\_\_\_** – Disapproving the behavior of Representative Jesus G. “Chuy” Garcia of Illinois. (*Sponsored by Rep. Perez / Ethics Committee*)

**H. Res. 581** – Providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 185) to advance responsible policies.  
(Sponsored by Rep. Massie / Rules 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](#)

[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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