



February 21, 2022 – Federal News and Information

BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS

On Friday afternoon, President Joe Biden signed a continuing resolution (CR) that will fund government activities at current spending levels through March 11. It is the third CR that has supported government operations in FY 2022, which started October 1, 2021. Ultimately, the bill passed the Senate easily.

Meanwhile, appropriations leaders continue negotiations to fill in the tentative framework they have for FY 2022 appropriations. While topline spending numbers have not been shared publicly, it has been reported that the chairs of the 12 House and Senate Appropriations subcommittees have been given their allocations (known as the 302(b) allocation). There is some concern in education policy circles that agreed-to increases in defense spending could result in cuts to domestic investments. Regardless, the community expects to see increases over FY 2021 levels. In recent weeks, lawmakers have heard from many about the adverse effects of multiple CRs. They argue that many agencies are relying on funding levels set in 2020 and are unable to fulfill the promise of the infrastructure package passed last year or run competitive grant programs on schedule. It is hoped that appropriators will complete their work on an omnibus bill before March 11, giving agencies the enacted funding levels they need to operate.

The FY 2023 spending process is already delayed. In theory, a State of the Union address and a White House budget request should be completed by mid-February. President Biden will address Congress and the nation on March 1. The administration has not announced a release date for its FY 2023 budget request, but rumors suggest it will not be earlier than the week of March 14.

The House and Senate will be in recess this week and will return the week of February 28. Last week, it was announced that, unlike last year, every member of Congress will be allowed to attend the March 1 State of the Union Address.

HELP HEARING ON INNOVATIONS AND BARRIERS TO WORKFORCE PROGRAMS

On Tuesday, February 15, the Senate Health Education Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee held a hearing titled, "Supporting Quality Workforce Development Opportunities and Innovation to Address Barriers to Employment." The hearing explored workforce shortages, economic disparities, partnerships between employers and state and local agencies, and how federal policy can best support workforce development and training. Many of the witnesses detailed how support services—childcare, transportation, affordable housing—can support program completion and workforce participation. Panelists also stressed the importance of partnerships between government, business and philanthropy and the importance of employee "soft skills" to ensure success in the workforce. To view the hearing, click [here](#).

HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE HOSTS HEARING ON SERVING ALL STUDENTS

On Wednesday, February 16, the House Education and Labor Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Subcommittee held a hearing titled, "Serving All Students: Promoting a Healthier, More Supportive School Environment." The 2.25-hour hearing focused on disciplinary practices in schools and how Congress can support policies and practices that ensure healthier school environments for all children. Subcommittee Democrats expressed their concern over harmful discipline practices, such as corporal punishment, seclusion, and restraint. On the other side of the



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aisle, Republicans expressed their belief that it is the committee's duty to ensure parents play the key role in making choices regarding their students' education and that greater federal intervention is not the way to achieve safer and healthier learning environments for students. Democrats and Republicans traded barbs and asked questions aimed at supporting their perspective. In closing the hearing, Chairman Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan (D-NMI) thanked all the witnesses for being present. He believes it "is more crucial than ever that students return to safe learning environments that support their social, emotional and economic growth." He asserted that Democrats passed the American Rescue Plan to enable schools to hire more school counselors and mental health professionals and added that there is continuing work to advance proposals to keep students safe and implement evidence-based strategies to create healthier learning environments. Ranking Member Burgess Owens (R-UT) stated that children attend school for one purpose only, which is to learn. He said there is an expectation that students have a safe environment while at school; he does not believe addressing chaos in classrooms should fall to teachers and that it is important to look at the systemic issues to know what is occurring in schools. He emphasized that teachers are not meant to act as students' parents. The archived video of the hearing and witness testimony can be found [here](#).