



Federal Content - April 25, 2022

Budget and Appropriations

Congress returns to Washington, DC, this week after a two-week recess. As lawmakers look to Memorial Day as the next time both chambers take a break, leadership and appropriators will consider development and passage of supplemental spending to address the conflict in Ukraine and additional COVID funds. In addition, appropriators and their staff will get to work on FY 2023 spending bills. The competitiveness package is also expected to see progress, as leadership formally appoints the conferees that were announced before Congress left town and negotiations on the House- and Senate-passed bills begin in earnest.

This week, various House Appropriations Subcommittees will host 18 hearings on FY 2023 spending proposals. The Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee will host Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona on Thursday. Conversations between education advocates and appropriations staff during recess indicated that, as usual, the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education (LHHS) spending bill will be among the last to be developed and marked up. The bill is always complicated and addresses highly partisan issues. It is also the bill that includes the most requests from members for projects (formerly known as earmarks). Members can submit requests for a total of 15 projects. Member requests for programs funded by the LHHS bill are due April 27.

The House reportedly plans to debate its spending bills on the floor before the August recess. The Senate has not been as forthcoming about its plans, and generally moves more slowly. Seasoned advocates are trading theories about how and when the FY 2023 spending process might be completed, particularly since it is an election year. Congress might work hard to finalize FY 2023 funding in a lame duck session, in part because several Senate Appropriations Committee leaders are retiring and will want to see the earmarks they requested signed into law. Of course, any change in chamber leadership could mean those about to be in charge will want to wait until the 118th Congress to finish action.

The competitiveness legislation was among the priorities that President Joe Biden and his proxies touted as they toured the country during the Congressional recess. The bills passed by the House and Senate are thousands of pages long and encompass many complicated and partisan issues. The education community is looking to preserve a number of provisions related to STEM education, computer science and higher education. While the White House would like to see this package negotiated and signed as soon as possible, the first realistic "deadline" seems to be the July 4 recess, and even that timeline is ambitious.

Staff and advocates are gearing up for one of the busiest times of the year. Much work is ahead before Memorial Day provides a break.

AFTERSCHOOL ALLIANCE ON REENGAGING CHILDREN AFTER THE PANDEMIC

On Wednesday, April 13, the Afterschool Alliance hosted a virtual briefing on how afterschool programs

are helping children and youth reengage and heal after two years of pandemic-related closures, isolation and disruptions to daily life. Jodi Grant, executive director of Afterschool Alliance, opened the briefing by presenting on “Promoting Healthy Futures: Afterschool Provides the Supports Parents Want for Children’s Well-Being” – a pre-pandemic survey that shows parents increasingly turn to after-school programs to provide the positive settings, relationships and experiences that support children’s healthy development. Parents recognize that after-school and summer learning programs provide a holistic set of supports children need today, and these programs give parents peace of mind. But there aren’t nearly enough programs to meet the demand and too many young people are missing out – most often, students from low-income families. Next, Kwamara Thompson, founder of TEC, LLC: Be Human, moderated the discussion with the panelists. Noah Shaw, youth after-school ambassador for the Miller Family Boys & Girls Club Afterschool Program, began by saying that being in an after-school program provided him with a lot of support during the pandemic and allowed him, as well as his peers, to develop greater social skills. Melissa Johnson, parent of a seventh grade student attending Monnig Middle School, provided a parental perspective to the discussion. Kenny Riley, director of out-of-school-time programs at the Carole Robertson Center for Learning, and Michael “Bull” Brown, program director and CEO of the Boys & Girls Club of Coffee County, emphasized the importance of crafting spaces for staff and volunteers to feel connected to the mission in addition to serving students. Lastly, Kenny Riley and Noah Shaw discussed how after-school programs differ from schools in that they provide hands-on experiences, fun projects and field trips without the stress of standardized testing. To read more about the Afterschool Alliance, click [here](#).

ED RELEASES EQUITY ACTION PLAN

On Thursday, April 14, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) released its 2022 Agency Equity Plan, which can be found [here](#). The plan’s release follows an Executive Order from the Biden-Harris administration, [Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#). Speaking on the action plan, Education Secretary Miguel Cardona said, “We need to keep the focus on transforming our education system so it truly expands opportunity for all students, no matter their race, background, zip code, age, or family’s income. Together, we must take bold action to ensure our nation’s schools are defined not by disparities, but by equity and excellence, especially as we recover from the pandemic and reemerge stronger than before.” The plan consists of additional efforts to promote equity, including: (1) prioritizing access to and completion of an education beyond high school; (2) ensuring equitable impact of American Rescue Plan’s \$130 billion in funding for K-12 students; (3) investing in resources to help advance civil rights; (4) advancing equity in contracting and procurement; and (5) advancing equity in grant process strategies. To read a press release from the department, click [here](#).

ED ANNOUNCES ACTIONS TO FIX FAILURES IN STUDENT LOAN PROGRAMS

On Tuesday, April 19, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) announced changes to the federal student loan repayment plans that will make it easier for borrowers to have their debts forgiven after 20 or 25 years of repayment. The department said it would make a one-time adjustment to borrower accounts to provide credit toward loan forgiveness under income-driven repayment for any month in which a borrower made a payment. “Student loans were never meant to be a life sentence, but it’s certainly felt

that way for borrowers locked out of debt relief they're eligible for," said Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. "Today, the Department of Education will begin to remedy years of administrative failures that effectively denied the promise of loan forgiveness to certain borrowers enrolled in IDR plans." To read a press release from the department, click [here](#).