



Federal News & Information – May 23, 2022

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

As was expected, last week the Senate approved a \$40 billion Ukraine aid package. Before the House and Senate approved the bill, there was an effort to combine the package with COVID relief funds. That effort was rejected. Some have opposed additional COVID relief for months, despite pleas from President Joe Biden and top administration health officials that the funding is needed to replenish federal stockpiles of tests, therapeutics and vaccines. Even as infections are spiking again, there are those in Congress who insist that any additional relief be fully offset. That makes the path to passage and enactment difficult. Members of the House will be in their districts this week, although committees will be working. The following week, both the House and Senate will be in recess, which means prospects for another relief package are slim — particularly when House lawmakers want to develop and pass all FY 2023 spending packages before July 4.

There is a hearing of particular interest to K-12 education advocates this week. The House Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee will examine teacher shortages. The Wednesday hearing, titled “[Tackling Teacher Shortages](#),” will feature familiar policy experts. A [recent report](#) from the National Education Association (NEA) unveiled new data that union officials deemed “alarming,” including findings that during the 2020-21 school year, first-year teachers earned an average of \$41,770. When adjusted for inflation, that represents a 4% decrease from the previous year. An NEA survey released earlier this year found that 55% of educators are ready to leave the profession earlier than planned and that teachers’ job satisfaction is at an all-time low. The hearing will likely be a lively one.

As for other legislative issues, last week, it was reported that lawmakers are hoping to resolve [hundreds of differences](#) between the House- and Senate-passed competitiveness bills by the end of this week. Conversations with Hill staffers suggest that a structure for negotiations has yet to be finalized. Staff took issue with the reporting, with one even suggesting that floor debate and passage might not take place until September. STEM education advocates are encouraged to continue weighing in with conferees on the importance of various proposed investments in the bills. The more politically charged issues could steal attention from the bipartisan provisions important to the community.

ED TO HOST SUMMIT ON SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

On Monday, May 16, the Department of Education (ED) announced plans to host a virtual summit titled, “Recovery to Thriving: Supporting Mental Health and Students with Disabilities.” The half-day event will take place on Monday, May 23, and will highlight steps schools, colleges and communities can take to support students with disabilities and mental health needs, as well as some of ED’s latest announcements and resources. “Ensuring that our students with disabilities receive a free, appropriate

public education that meets their academic, social and emotional needs isn't just written into law, it's a moral obligation. We must work together so that students with disabilities and mental health needs receive the resources they need to thrive," said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. The summit will bring together education leaders, disability advocates, special education professionals and others. Learn more and register for the summit [here](#).

HOUSE PASSES WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

On Tuesday, May 17, the House of Representatives passed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2022 (H.R. 7309). The measure, which is unlikely to see any consideration by the Senate, would authorize \$74 billion in funding over the next five years for employee training and education programs. Among other items, major funding authorizations in WIOA include nearly \$8 billion for youth workforce investment activities; just over \$7 billion for a new summer and year-round employment program for youth; \$5.3 billion for adult education and literacy programs; \$2.3 billion for reentry employment opportunities for justice-involved adult and youth; and \$1 billion for the YouthBuild program. Additional provisions include codifying the Labor Department's Strengthening Community Colleges Training Grants program and requiring the department to reserve a percentage of funds for the YouthBuild program for rural areas and American Indian tribes. During his [remarks](#) on the House floor Tuesday, Education and Labor Chairman Bobby Scott (D-VA) said, "The legislation modernizes WIOA to help expand work opportunities for disconnected youth. It makes critical reforms to improve Job Corps. It expands sector-based training so that we can train for entire sectors, such as electric cars, trucking and nursing. It strengthens community colleges' capacity to help workers succeed in in-demand industries. And it helps justice-involved individuals reenter the labor force and obtain sustainable career paths." Amendments were offered and adopted, including an amendment from Representative Josh Harder (D-CA) that encourages more funding for youth job training programs. "At present, afterschool programs that train young people for successful careers hosted by organizations, such as the Boys and Girls Club, do not regularly receive federal funding," according to the Congressman's May 18 [press release](#). Supporters of updating the sweeping law are frustrated that the measure, which was approved on a largely party-line vote, will not make any further progress in the 117th Congress. A recording of the floor debate can be found [here](#).

SENATE HELP COMMITTEE HOLDS HEARING ON CYBERSECURITY IN EDUCATION

On Wednesday, May 18, Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee Chairwoman Patty Murray (D-WA) hosted a hearing on strengthening cybersecurity in the healthcare and education sectors in order to prevent detrimental cyberattacks. Witnesses included Dense Anderson, president and CEO of Health Information Sharing and Analysis Center; Joshua Corman, founder of I Am The Cavalry; Amy McLaughlin, cybersecurity program director of Consortium of School Networking; and Helen Norris, vice president and chief information officer of Chapman University. Amy McLaughlin's testimony addressed the high costs of cybersecurity investment for colleges and universities. She specifically called out the Federal Communications Commission's schools and libraries universal service support program (E-rate), stating that it "does not fund cybersecurity or network defenses." She suggested that E-rate be updated and address cybersecurity. Helen Norris' testimony echoed McLaughlin's sentiments and encouraged Congress members to reach out to colleges and universities in

their states. Another theme during the hearing pertained to cybersecurity education and workforce training. Senator Tommy Tuberville (R-AL) directed a question toward McLaughlin and Norris about cybersecurity higher education and training programs, and the types of programs that can be implemented in elementary schools to encourage the involvement of more young people in the field. “We have opportunities to build a pipeline of students who want to grow into these kinds of professions later on... by offering them opportunities like cybersecurity camps and courses,” McLaughlin responded. Norris added, “As we bring more and more students, both from K-12 and higher education into cybersecurity, we need to make sure we continue to address that digital divide.” A recording of the hearing, as well as testimony from the four witnesses, are available [here](#).

HOUSE ED AND LABOR ADVANCES BILL TO REBUILD AMERICA’S SCHOOLS

On Wednesday, May 18, the House Education and Labor Committee advanced several bills, including measures to rebuild America’s schools and address the country’s mental health crisis. The Rebuild America’s Schools Act (H.R. 604) provides support for long-term improvements to public elementary and secondary schools’ physical and digital infrastructure through investing \$130 billion targeted at high-poverty schools with facilities that pose health and safety risks to students and staff and expanding access to high-speed broadband for digital learning. “While the American Rescue Plan delivered investments to help schools reopen safely, keep them open safely, and make up for lost learning time, research shows that our K-12 schools still need additional and sustained investments to deliver healthy, safe and efficient school facilities for all,” said Chairman Bobby Scott (D-VA). Legislation that advanced pertaining to mental health needs includes the Enhancing Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Through Campus Planning Act (H.R. 5407); the Campus Prevention and Recovery Services for Students Act of 2022 (H.R. 6493); and the Mental Health Matters Act (H.R. 7780). The former two measures include provisions that promote comprehensive mental health services, suicide prevention plans, and evidence-based prevention and recovery programs on college campuses, while the latter would take progressive steps to support the behavioral health of elementary and secondary students and staff and ensure access to mental health and substance use disorder benefits for workers and families. Lastly, the committee also advanced the Wage Theft Prevention and Wage Recovery Act (H.R. 7701), a bill to protect American workers’ wages. “Taken together, these bills will advance Americans’ financial, mental and physical health — steps that are sorely needed to ensure every American has the opportunity to succeed,” Chairman Scott stated in his [opening remarks](#) during committee markup. A recording of the full committee markup is available [here](#).

HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE HOLDS HEARING ON CLASSROOM CENSORSHIP

On Thursday, May 19, Chairman of the House Oversight and Reform Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Jamie Raskin (D-MD) held a [hearing](#) to examine efforts to censor classroom discussion about American history, race and LGBTQ+ issues, and “to punish teachers who violate vague and discriminatory state laws by discussing these topics,” according to [a press release](#) on the hearing. The hearing followed an April 7, 2022, [hearing](#) on book bans. Members and witnesses discussed how laws recently enacted or proposed in a number of states to prohibit discussion of race and LGBTQ+ issues arguably violate free speech principles. They also said such policies are similar to policies implemented by authoritarian governments around the world. Regarding state laws and legislative proposals,

witnesses asserted they are often vaguely worded, overly broad and inject micromanagement into classrooms. Students who participated in the hearing highlighted how, in their opinion, censorship laws undermine public education and underestimate students' ability to comprehend and discuss "controversial" topics. "This hearing addresses the closely related nationwide assault on the rights of teachers and students to engage in free speech and learning in the classroom through the dissemination of basic facts and historical truths that are deemed by some, politically incorrect or just uncomfortable," said Chairman Raskin. "Authoritarianism always opposes historical memory and teachings that record and evoke the experiences of prior victims of authoritarianism, racism and fascism. The historical record of oppression and suffering is treated as an impediment to imposing new forms of control over people's lives and people's thoughts and people's bodies." A recording of the hearing, as well as testimony from the proceeding's nine witnesses, are available [here](#).