



Monday, November 23, 2020

## I. Policy Intelligence and Education News

- **Weekly congressional update** – The House and Senate recessed for Thanksgiving without reaching agreement on a COVID-relief bill or on a clear path forward to finalizing fiscal year (FY 2021) appropriators before government funding expires on December 11.
  - **COVID-relief** – On Friday, House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) said it’s possible Congress will pass a smaller and “targeted” COVID-relief bill in the lame duck session and return in January to work on a larger bill to present to President Biden after he takes office (the second version of the Heroes Act that the House passed in September provided more than \$2 trillion in relief, including \$225 billion for education). No word on whether an interim package would include education funding.
  - **FY 2021 appropriations** – The first step is to agree on totals for the 12 government funding bills, but House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) objects to providing \$12.5 billion for veterans health care as emergency funding that is not subject to the statutory cap on non-defense discretionary (NDD) for FY 2021. That cap – and the defense cap – are essentially frozen at FY 2020 levels, making it hard to increase funding for any one area without an offsetting cut in another. The House-passed Military Construction-Veterans Affairs bill provided the \$12.5 billion in emergency veterans affairs funding as part of an overall \$9.2 billion increase over FY 2020 levels for veterans’ health care. If the funding is not designated as an emergency, the bill would exceed its allocation and the total of all 12 bills would exceed the statutory NDD cap, triggering an across-the-board sequester on all eligible NDD funding – something Congress would not allow to happen. Thus, this disagreement will need to be resolved before funding totals for all 12 bills are set. It seems more and more likely that Congress will need to extend current funding for at least a week beyond Dec. 11 to have time to finalize some or all of the FY 2021 bills.
- **How much CARES Act education funding has been spent – a little or almost all of it?** – There are two ways to measure how much CARES Act education funding has been spent: looking at actual outlays (money that has been transferred from the Treasury and has been “spent”) and looking at obligations (money for which states have provided the Department of Education with contracts detailing exactly how funding will be used, but for which the money hasn’t yet outlaid). The federal government’s public tracking of COVID-19 relief funding shows that currently [more than 98% of the CARES Act education stabilization funding has been obligated](#). On Friday, the Department of Education published an [online portal](#) that measures only how much funding had been outlaid as of September 30. The data show that as of that date, 12% of the K-12 funding had been spent, 64% of the higher education funding had been spent, and very little had

been spent of the education funding given to governors to allocate. The Department will next update its portal in January, with data that reflects outlays through November 30. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos criticized states for failing to open schools for in-person learning while not using all their money, based on the two-month-old data about CARES Act outlays. “States that neglected their obligations to provide full-time education, while complaining about a lack of resources, have left significant sums of money sitting in the bank. There may be valid reasons for states to be deliberate in how they spend CARES Act resources, but these data make clear there is little to support their claims of being cash-poor,” she said in a [press release](#).

- **Earmarks likely to return in the House for FY 2022** – All three Representatives running for Chair of the House Appropriations Committee support a return to allowing appropriations bills to include earmarks next year. Representatives could apply for “congressionally directed spending” through a transparent process that listed the earmarks. The Senate has banned earmarks but Senate Appropriations Chair Richard Shelby (R-AL) has seemed amenable to their return. Note that it was easier to pass appropriations bills when they included funding Members of Congress had supported for their own district or state – funding that Members knew might be removed if they would not vote for the bills.

### III. Advocacy

- **Last week’s #HearOurEdStories week on social media (CEF is @edfunding)** – Thanks to all who participated last week in CEF’s #HearOurEdStories campaign on social media. CEF’s [#HearOurEdStories social media toolkit](#) makes it easy for the public to tell their Members of Congress about their education priorities, with instructions for how to find their Members of Congress and their Twitter address, sample messages, and instructions for posting. We will continue reminding the public – and your organization and grassroots members – to share their education experience responding to the coronavirus pandemic and to urge Congress to provide more education funding for both the response and for the regular education funding bill.

### III. Events

- **Tomorrow - AERA forum on Measuring Teaching at a Global Scale** – CEF member the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development are holding an interactive policy forum to discuss new results from the Global Teaching InSights Video Study on November 24, 9:30-11:00 a.m. ET. After a presentation of findings, an international panel of policymakers, experts, and representatives from the teaching profession will consider the results and discuss implications for further improving teaching and learning. Information and registration are available [here](#).
- **CEF’s upcoming schedule -**
  - **Tuesday, Nov 24** - 2021 CEF Board nominations and recommended slate shared in advance of annual meeting on Dec. 11.
  - **Friday, Nov. 27** – No Friday meeting – enjoy the Thanksgiving break!
  - **Friday, Dec. 4** - 9:30-11:00 a.m. ET, [Zoom Friday meeting](#). Guest speaker: Leslie Zelenko, Rep. Mark Pocan (D-WI).
  - **Friday, Dec. 11** - 9:30-11:30 a.m. ET, Zoom Annual Meeting (link to come). Keynote speaker: 2020 National Teacher of the Year Tabatha Rosproy!

Attendance is important for elections and preview of CEF's 2021 plans. This is the last planned meeting of the year.

- **Friday, Jan. 8** - 9:30-11:00 a.m. ET, Zoom Friday meeting. Guest speaker TBD.