



Tuesday, February 16, 2021

I. Policy Intelligence and Education News

- **Budget reconciliation overview** – Today is the deadline for House and Senate committees with reconciliation instructions in the [fiscal year 2021 budget resolution](#) to report measures intended to be bundled into a reconciliation bill that enacts the Biden Administration’s \$1.9 trillion COVID-relief measure. Most of the 12 House committees that received instructions have produced their measures but none of the 11 instructed Senate committees has marked up – and none will. Instead, the Senate will consider its reconciliation package directly on the floor. The next step in the reconciliation process is for the House Budget Committee to hold a markup (likely later this week) to package together the recommendations from the 12 House committees, which were either officially reported by a committee markup or that were sent from the chair. The Budget Committee cannot make substantive changes to the underlying proposals but the Rules Committee can allow House floor amendments. I expect there will be a manager’s amendment that might be automatically incorporated that will fix technical problems or address issues that might have arisen since the committees reported their bills. The House could consider the reconciliation bill as early as next week and then send it to the Senate, where the fast-track reconciliation procedures matter (the House Rules Committee sets the parameters for House floor consideration, so reconciliation protection isn’t needed in the House). I expect the Senate will substitute its own reconciliation bill for the House version and debate and vote on many amendments. Senate floor debate is limited to 20 hours but then there can be a “vote-a-rama” where Senators offer amendments for a vote with no time for debate. I’d expect the Senate version to be very similar to the House version but with whatever modifications are needed both to pass a Byrd Rule challenge that excludes non-budgetary items and to ensure at least 50 votes for passage. The education-related funding should be fine although it’s possible that the Senate might include less than \$350 billion for state and local fiscal relief. (See the CEF Update on 2.8.21 #2 for a description of the Education and Labor Committee’s bill.)
- **Senator Murray will chair Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee** – On Friday, Senate Appropriations Committee leaders announced the chairs and ranking members of all 12 subcommittees, and Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) will continue to lead Democrats as chair of the Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee. Many of the other subcommittees have changed Democratic leadership in the 117th Congress.
- **CBO forecasts large Pell grant surplus** – On Thursday the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released its budget and economic outlook for the next ten years that includes updated estimates for the Pell Grant program. CBO estimates that the Pell Grant program has \$12.0 billion in reserve this

year because Congress has provided the same amount of new funding each year but discretionary program costs have declined over the last decade. However, CBO expects program costs to increase by \$2 billion in FY 2021 and to keep increasing for the next ten years even without any increase in the maximum award. Pell grant funding can be used for two fiscal years, so any leftover money gets used the next year and does not expire. Congress has rescinded some of the Pell Grant “surplus” in four of the five last fiscal years and used it to pay for other programs in the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill. CBO has not yet released new estimates for student loan program costs and interest rates.

- **LPI blog on COVID-19’s impact on student access to well-prepared and diverse teachers** – CEF member the Learning Policy Institute has a new [blog post](#) exploring how COVID-19 has exacerbated pre-pandemic inequities in access to well-prepared and diverse teachers.

II. Events

- **COE’s TRIO briefing on Thursday, Feb. 18** – CEF member the Council for Opportunity in Education is holding an online briefing on “Federal TRIO Programs: Uniting for College Access and Success” this Thursday, Feb. 18, from 10-11:30 a.m. ET. The event will feature remarks from co-chairs of the Bipartisan Congressional TRIO Caucus - Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME), Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT), Rep. Gwen Moore (D-WI, TRIO alumna), and Rep. Mike Simpson (R-ID) – and an overview of TRIO and a panel of Hill staffers who are TRIO alumni. [RSVP here](#) for the Zoom link.
- **CEF’s upcoming schedule -**
 - **Friday, Feb. 19** – No CEF meeting during the congressional recess.
 - **(tentative) Thursday, Feb. 25** – Zoom Hill reception (details coming soon).
 - **Friday, Feb. 26** – 9:30-11:00 a.m. ET, [Zoom Friday meeting](#). Guest speaker TBD.
 - **Friday, March 5** - 9:30-11:00 a.m. ET, [Zoom Friday meeting](#). Guest speaker TBD.
 - **Friday, March 12** – no CEF meeting.
 - **Friday, March 19** - 9:30-11:00 a.m. ET, [Zoom Friday meeting](#). Guest speaker TBD.
 - **(tentative) Wednesday, March 24 – 2-3:30 p.m.** – Zoom briefing for congressional staff and CEF members: “Impact of COVID-19 on Education Jobs” (link and details to come).