



Wednesday, February 27, 2019

I. Policy Intelligence and Education News

- **CEF's Capitol Hill reception yesterday** – Thanks to everyone who came to yesterday's CEF reception to welcome the 116th Congress and introduce CEF's advocacy! Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR) spoke to the group and stayed to chat, and we had about 30 Capitol Hill staffers talking with 60 CEF members. We made some good connections for our future outreach while catching up with old friends!
- **Confusion over size of cut to non-defense discretionary (NDD) funding in President's upcoming budget** – On Monday the acting director of the Office of Management and Budget, Russ Vought, wrote an [opinion piece](#) that included two conflicting statements about how much the President's fiscal year (FY) 2020 budget will cut NDD funding. He said that the budget – expected to be submitted to Congress in mid-March - will adhere to the spending caps set in law, and it will cut NDD funding by 5%.

“The president's 2020 budget will meet the target of a 5 percent reduction to non-defense discretionary spending, by means of one of the largest spending reductions in history. Within these constrained levels, agencies will still be able to provide investments in key national priorities.” – Russ Vought

However, the NDD sequester-level cap in law for FY 2020 requires a 9% (\$55 billion) cut from the FY 2019 appropriated level, so a 5% cut would not comply with the cap. That raises the question of whether the President's budget will cut NDD funding by an additional 5% below that already low level, for a total 14% (\$82 billion) cut, or it could be just a talking point that understates the size of the cut we will see in the President's request. (Last year, the President's FY 2019 budget cut Department of Education funding by 11%, so a large overall cut in NDD funding wouldn't be out of the question.) The funding levels are shown in the table below.

Non-defense Discretionary (NDD) levels, in billions				
	2019	2020	\$ cut from 2019	% cut
2019 enacted	597			
2020 sequester cap in law		542	-55	-9%
2020 with 5% cut		567	-30	-5%
2020 with 5% below the cap		513	-84	-14%

The opinion piece also laid out the Administration’s plan to prevent the need to raise the caps for both defense and NDD funding (note that Congress has raised both caps every year since FY 2013); the President’s budget will provide billions for defense programs outside of the defense cap by placing it under the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) account that was intended for war-related expenses, not for regular defense needs. The acting director acknowledged that the budget will provide regular defense funding outside of the caps because if it proposed raising the defense cap, Democrats would insist on a matching NDD increase. Even though Congressional appropriators are not likely to agree to this approach, it will be a starting point for the debate on raising the caps this year.

- **House Education and Labor Committee approves school infrastructure bill** – Yesterday, the House Education and Labor Committee approved the Rebuild America’s School Act, H.R. 865, on a party line vote of 26-20. The bill would authorize more than \$70 billion in grants and \$30 billion in bonds to address physical and digital infrastructure needs. You can read the Majority press release includes links to a fact sheet and a section-by-section description of the bill. The Minority press release reflects its perspective on the bill.

II. Advocacy

- **CEF Hill Teams meetings this week**– Today CEF Hill Teams members met with Allison Feikes with Sen. Mike Braun (R-IN), who is on the Senate HELP and Budget Committees. She reports that Senator Braun supports expanded Pell grant eligibility in a pilot program to provide shorter term career and technical training, and would support a corresponding increase in the NDD cap within his overall fiscally conservative approach. We have three more Hill Teams meetings tomorrow with House freshmen on the Education and Labor Committee.

III. Events

- **CEF’s upcoming schedule** –
- **Friday, Mar. 1** – 9-11am, at AACTE (1307 New York Ave, NW, auditorium). Guest speaker: TBD.
- **Friday, Mar. 8** – 9-11am, at NEA (1201 16th ST, NW, News Conference Room). Guest speaker: Jonathan Antista, House Budget Committee.
- **Friday, Mar. 15** – 9-11am, at Georgetown Law School (600 New Jersey Ave, NW, Room 200 McDonough Hall). Guest speaker: Conor Sheehy, Sen. Tim Scott (R-SC).
- **Friday, Mar. 22** – 9-11am, Quarterly Committee meeting at University of California (1608 Rhode Island Ave, NW, auditorium).
- **Friday, Mar. 29** – No CEF meeting.

- Sarah

Sarah Abernathy, Deputy Executive Director



1800 M Street, NW
Suite 500 South
Washington, DC 20036
T: 202-327-8125
abernathy@cef.org
www.cef.org
Twitter [@edfunding](https://twitter.com/edfunding)