

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

Gun Violence Prevention

- The House passed H.R. 8, the Background Checks bill, which requires a background check for every gun sold as well as most transfers
- H.R. 1112, the Enhanced Background Checks Act of 2109 (Charleston loophole), which extends the initial background check review period from 3 days to 10 days.

School Modernization

- The House Committee on Education and Labor approved the Rebuild America's Schools Act (H.R. 865). The measure passed through a 26-20 vote. The legislation highlights the high need for investment in school infrastructure, to achieve greater educational equity for those in high-poverty and minority-serving public schools, while also creating millions of jobs.

IDEA

- House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education held a hearing titled, "Classrooms in Crisis: Examining the Inappropriate Use of Seclusion & Restraint Practices." Testimonial panelists included Allison Sutton, an NEA member and Special Education Teacher from Wichita Public Schools in Wichita, Kansas.
- NEA recently conducted a focus group survey in mid-February to determine from our members of what is working and what is not working within IDEA to help shape our future legislative agenda.

Higher Education

- Senator Ben Cardin introduces *the Preserving Teacher Loan Forgiveness for Military Spouses Act* (S. 532), which would ensure military spouses do not lose eligibility for the federal Teacher Loan Forgiveness program, should they need to relocate with their military spouse due to reassignment to military installations in the U.S. and abroad.
- Senator Lamar Alexander, Chairman of the Senate HELP Committee, recently spoke at the American Enterprise Institute about reauthorizing the Higher Education Act. He noted three goals he hopes to tackle in the effort:
 1. Simplifying the Free Application for Federal Student Aid;
 2. Condensing student loan repayment plans into two options (an income-based plan, and a ten-year repayment plan); and
 3. Requiring colleges to ensure all their programs lead to gainful employment.

Teacher Quality

- Senator Jeff Merkley introduces the *Smaller Class Sizes for Students and Educators Act* (S. 579), which would create a grant to assist eligible school districts in reducing class sizes for grades K-3.

Budget

- With the book *finally* closed on FY2019, all energy has quickly shifted to FY2020 regarding spending caps. Without another deal like the last couple bipartisan two-year deals to raise discretionary spending caps implemented as part of the Budget Control Act of 2011, non-defense discretionary (NDD) is slated to be decreased by \$55 billion (which includes Labor-HHS-Education funding), jeopardizing education funding and investments that support students and their families. A timely budget caps deal would help reduce uncertainty and disruption in the budget process as well as discourage future government shutdowns.

Appropriations

- A near-term decision on FY2020 (and FY2021) annual spending allocations would help to provide adequate time and sufficient funding for Congress to complete all twelve of the annual appropriations bills before the new fiscal year starts on October 1, 2019, without having to resort to draconian cuts (a continuing resolution or a government shutdown). The first action that kicks off the appropriations cycle (aside from getting the caps raised), is the President's release of his budget requests to Congress. The request typically happens in February, but the government shutdown delayed this year's release. We anticipate the President's budget sometime in March. Fortunately, for the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill, Congress has ignored the President's deep cuts and zeroing out of education programs. For FY2020, we'll continue to advocate for increased funding to formula programs (Title I, IDEA, etc.) that help the most students in need.

Immigration:

- The highly anticipated bill to provide a pathway to citizenship for DACA recipients and Dreamers, individuals brought to the U.S. as minors, has been slated for introduction. As of now, we anticipate the *American Promise Act* will be introduced in the House and March 12 and will include the most progressive Dream Act (protecting the greatest number of individuals) and a permanent solution for Temporary Protected Status or TPS beneficiaries. The hope is to have the bill move through markup in Committee and then move to the House floor for a vote within about four weeks or so.

ESP Award

- The House passed a bill to create an award recognizing the important contributions of Education Support Professionals

Child Care Access

- A bill to expand child care access was introduced in both the House and the Senate

Courts

- The Senate Judiciary Committee advanced the troubling nomination of Naomi Rao to the DC Circuit

Read Across America

- The House and Senate passed resolutions in support of Read Across America