



NAESP Advocacy Update

Politics and Policy Report December 18, 2015

Top Notes of the Week

- This week Congress approved a \$1.1 trillion spending bill, including the U.S. Department of Education's annual budget, finalizing the fiscal year 2016 appropriations process. President Obama is scheduled to quickly sign the measure, which includes a \$1.2 billion increase for the Department of Education's discretionary grant programs compared to fiscal year 2015. The measure provides important funding wins for literacy, preschool, arts, and other principal priorities.
- Eight days after the President signed the Every Student Succeeds Act into law (P.L. 114-95), the Department of Education sent a Dear Colleague [letter](#) to state chiefs and released a [Request for Information](#) on public comments related to Title I regulation on ESSA. NAESP will be collecting comments and questions that are sent to advocacy@naesp.org, as well as hosting a Title I webinar on January 5, 2016 – stay tuned for the posting.
- Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Roberts (R-KS) and Ranking Member Stabenow (D-MI) announced tentative plans to consider bipartisan legislation in early updating the Child Nutrition Act, including the School Lunch Program. The full Congress could approve the legislation early in the year.
- The President will make his last State of the Union Address to Congress on January 12 and in early February the Administration will submit the President's Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Request, including defining the Department of Education's priority allocations for programs authorized by the new Every Student Succeeds Act.

Budget and Appropriations

Following months of negotiations, this week Congress approved a \$1.1 trillion spending bill, including the U.S. Department of Education's annual budget. The bill represents the final step in the fiscal year 2016 appropriations process. President Obama is scheduled to quickly sign the measure, which includes a \$1.2 billion increase for the Department of Education's discretionary grant programs compared to fiscal year 2015. This spending increase was made possible by a two-year budget approved on October 27 that lifted, for two years, mandatory spending caps imposed in 2011.

NAESP's advocacy efforts contributed to several important improvements in the final fiscal year 2016 spending package, including a:

- \$500 million increase for Title I grants to LEAs; total now at \$14.9 billion
- \$415 million increase for IDEA State grants; total now at \$11.9 billion
- \$2 million increase for the Arts in Education Program; total now \$27 million.
- \$30 million increase for Strivers Readers; total now at \$190,000,000
- \$2 million increase for the Innovative Approaches to Literacy program; now \$27 million
- \$6 million increase for Rural Education; total now at \$175,840,000
- Level funding at \$16,368,000 for School Leadership
- Level funding at \$250,000,000 for the Preschool Development grants

Notably, the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCLC) program, the School Leadership Program and the Preschool Development Grants had all been eliminated in budget drafts released over the summer.

The Committee for Education Funding (CEF), of which NAESP is a member organization, released a funding table (attached to this email) that examines all of the FY 2016 funding changes for the Department of Education and related programs.

In addition to the budget deal, lawmakers also approved an expansive tax package. Of note to NAESP members, the measure extends the educator tax deduction of \$250, which will now be adjusted for inflation and can also be used toward professional development opportunities.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, P.L. 114-95)

Earlier this week, NAESP attended a stakeholder meeting convened by incoming Acting Secretary of Education John King. The discussion was a precursor to formal action by the Department to initiate implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). As noted, today the Department of Education sent a [Dear Colleague letter](#) to state superintendents and state board of education chairs this week describing the Department's initial implementation plans. In addition, the Department released a [public notice](#), which will appear in the Federal Register next week, inviting comment on the Title I implementation process.

NAESP plans to be actively engaged in the rulemaking process. The Department's letter and the public notice express the agency's expectations regarding several foundational implementation issues, including the Title I assessment peer review process; addressing legacy NCLB and NCLB waiver issues, such as annual measurable objectives and annual measurable achievement objectives for school years 2014–2015 and 2015–2016, conditions and other related requirements under ESEA flexibility; priority and focus school lists; and educator evaluation and support systems under ESEA flexibility.

Publication of these materials represents the first in a series of federal implementation steps that will occur in 2016. Acting Secretary King and his team have approximately thirteen months to set the ESSA's course before handing over the Department to the next president's administration on January 20, 2017. Public comments responding to the Department's request for information will be due in late January, and we expected additional rulemaking activities to emerge throughout the winter and spring. NAESP will be holding a Title I webinar and discussing this issue on January 5th. Stay tuned...

What We're Reading

[Promoting Student Achievement through Improved Health Policy](#), NASBE

[Secret legacy of Secretary Duncan](#), The Hill

[Los Angeles and New York Differ in their Responses to Terrorism Threat](#), New York Times

[US High School Graduation Rate Ticks Up to 82 Percent](#), Associated Press