

# News & Notes

In July, the Senate and House passed bills (S. 1177 and H.R. 5) to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and thereby set in motion a fall conference committee, *Schoolhouse Rock*-style, to reconcile the two into one bill to be sent to the president. The two bills have many things in common: Both continue the requirement for annual assessment, although they address accountability differently. Neither defines what percentage of schools should be designated “lowest performing,” whereas waiver states now must identify the lowest performing 15 percent. The committee will begin to hammer out differences in September when Congress returns from recess. Negotiations will continue throughout the fall, likely until November. The biggest battles on the road to creating a bill that the full Congress will approve and President Obama will sign will be over the formula for Title I funding, the elimination of programs, and levels of federal prescription around accountability.

While ESEA reauthorization has taken center stage, the Senate has also been considering the Higher Education Act,

up for reauthorization since 2013. Health, Education, Labor, and Pension Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) has said he hopes to submit a draft bill to the HELP committee in September. The chairman established four working groups to develop ideas for the future of the law, and, in a reprise of their successful ESEA collaboration, he plans to work closely with Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) to develop a bipartisan bill. One issue on the table is the stringency of teacher preparation programs. A recent US Government Accountability Office report (15-598) found that some states fail to report on the quality of such programs, as current law requires, and that the US Department of Education has missed opportunities to help states improve programs’ quality. Also up for debate will be renewal of grant programs such as Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), which helps high-poverty middle and high schools provide college guidance and support.

A report NASBE released in July urges state boards to view the surge in parent requests to opt their children out of standardized tests as an opportunity to communicate how the tests benefit students and schools. It also represents a

chance to clarify state policy and guidance to local districts.

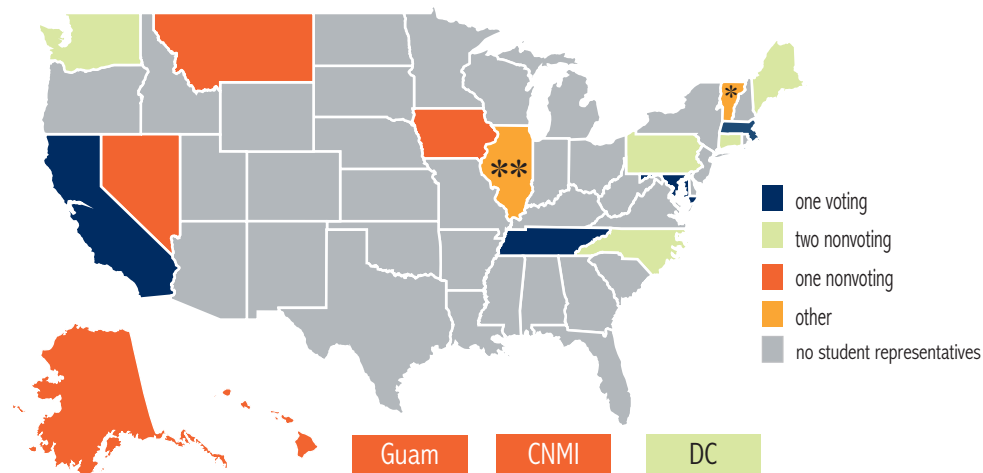
<http://www.nasbe.org/wp-content/uploads/Lorenzo-Opt-Out-final.pdf>.

On September 17, the Senate Agriculture Committee, led by Senator Pat Roberts (R-KS) and Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), plans to consider legislation to update the Child Nutrition Act, including the School Lunch Program. The committee held hearings this summer on the future of the act. The House Education and the Workforce Committee, led by Representative John Kline (R-MN) and Representative Bobby Scott (D-VA), also held hearings, but no time had been scheduled at this writing to consider legislation.

Twenty states have student representatives on their state boards of education. Typically, there are one or two student members, with powers ranging from purely advisory to full voting rights (see map). Because the students are still in classrooms, they can bring an influential voice and distinctive perspective to their boards.

—Reg Leichty, Jared Costanzo, and Sarah-Jane Lorenzo contributed to this section.

**Figure 1. Student Membership on State Boards of Education**



\* **Vermont** has one voting and one nonvoting student member.  
 \*\* **Illinois** has a separate Student Advisory Council.