

News & Notes

The transition to the 115th Congress and Trump administration has proved as tumultuous as many political observers expected, and education policy has been no exception. Education leaders on Capitol Hill have clashed over implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), proposed changes to Medicaid that could affect district services for low-income and disabled students, and the president's fiscal year 2018 budget request.

In an abridged version of the budget request published in March, the president asked for a \$9 billion decrease (13 percent) in the U.S. Department of Education's budget but did not detail how all programs would be affected; a full budget is expected to be released as this issue goes to print. Appropriations measures are subject to filibuster in the Senate, and therefore the president would need 60 votes to secure passage, making steep cuts difficult. Nonetheless, the proposed budget telegraphs administration priorities:

- zeroed out funding for ESSA Title II, which supports teacher and leader preparation, and 21st Century Community Learning Centers, which funds summer school and after-school programs;
- increased School Choice Initiatives by \$1.4 billion, including \$168 million for the Charter Schools Program, \$250 million for a new private school choice program, and \$1 billion more for Title I with the goal of encouraging school

districts to adopt open enrollment models and funding portability systems;

- kept level funding for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act programs;
- decreased funding for two college awareness and outreach programs for disadvantaged youth, GEAR UP and TRIO, by \$104 million and \$92 million, respectively; and
- proposed eliminating 20 other categorical programs. The document does not specify the full list of target programs but does reference Striving Readers, Teacher Quality Partnership, Impact Aid Support Payments for Federal Property, and international education programs.

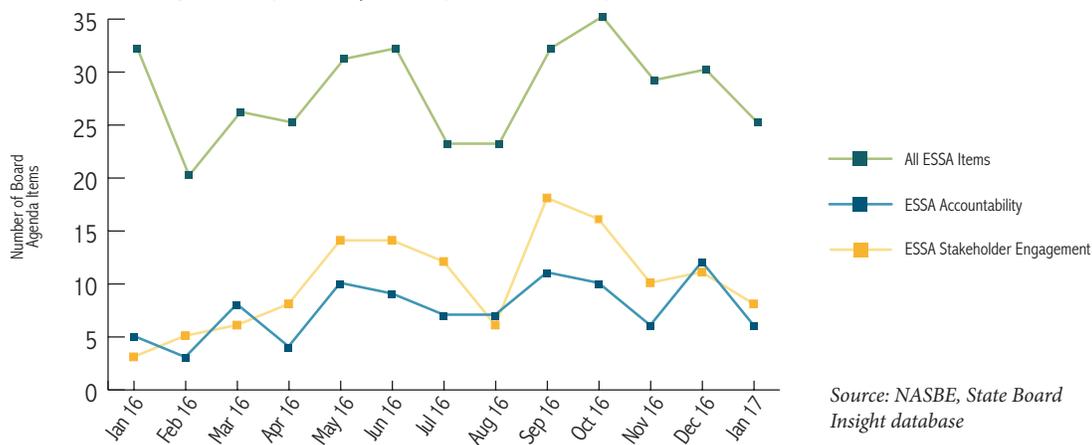
The fiscal 2018 budget is unlikely to move through the process until at least the end of the year, but the appropriations committees will be busy working on it. Meanwhile, appropriations leaders have been trying to finish up on fiscal 2017. Congress was expected to pass a long-term continuing resolution in late April to keep government going until the next fiscal year, but it may make a last-ditch effort to pass an omnibus spending bill instead.

Senator Lamar Alexander and Congresswoman Virginia Foxx plan to focus on reauthorizing the Higher Education Act (HEA) and the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. HEA reauthorization may create opportunities for state leaders to influence the work of educator preparation and induction

programs, including ensuring new teachers arrive in the classroom better prepared. Congress's work on HEA will likely also spark a conversation about improving connectivity between systems at secondary and postsecondary institutions so that educators have access to the data required to better serve their students. Perkins has been an important source of funding for career and technical education (CTE). Given the Trump administration's focus on American manufacturing and equipping workers to be more globally competitive, the CTE reauthorization could assume increased importance. NASBE plans to look for opportunities to collaborate with other CTE leaders to ensure the bill addresses state and district needs, including growing dual and concurrent enrollment programs.

Commissioner Ajit Pai, currently serving as chair of the Federal Communications Commission as he awaits the Senate to confirm him, has said he favors changes to the operation of the E-rate program. He also recently withdrew the federal authority of nine communications companies to provide broadband services through the Lifeline program. He stated that they need state and not federal approval to participate in the program, which helps ensure students have access to home broadband. Observers are also closely watching the new administration's plans for two open FCC seats.

Figure 1. ESSA on State Board Agendas by Month, January 2016–January 2017



Source: NASBE, State Board Insight database