

News & Notes

Early in 2019, the House Education and Labor Committee passed the Rebuild America's Schools Act (H.R. 865) on a 26-20 vote along party lines. The act would invest \$100 billion in school infrastructure through grants and tax credits. Under the bill, districts would seek competitive grant funding from their states and would be required to prioritize projects at schools serving high percentages of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals. House Democratic leaders would like H.R. 865 to be part of a broader federal infrastructure package—if one emerges—so further action on the bill may be delayed. The bill's prospects in the Republican-held Senate seem dim, unless Democrats negotiate its inclusion in a more expansive infrastructure bill.

On March 14, NASBE sent a letter to Congress urging legislators to use the next version of the Higher Education Act (HEA) to address teacher shortages, especially in special education and high-need subjects like math and science. The Senate and House education committees held a series of higher education-focused hearings this spring, and NASBE expects the committees to consider legislation later

this year to update the HEA, including its programs on educator preparation and college access and success. In mid-March, the White House released the president's proposed HEA reauthorization principles, which largely focus on financial aid but also include an emphasis on policies with K-12 implications, including expanding student access to dual and concurrent enrollment opportunities.

The House Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Subcommittee held a hearing in late February on schools' use of seclusion and restraint. Subcommittee Chairman Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan (D-NMI) declared that seclusion practices are inappropriate for schools and require resources and time that could be spent in the classroom. Ranking Member Rick Allen (R-GA) said every child is unique and a one-size-fits-all approach will not work, adding that the committee should tread carefully to ensure that legislation does not interfere with educators' abilities to respond quickly and efficiently to a dangerous situation. Democratic committee members will likely follow up on the hearing by reintroducing the Keeping All

Students Safe Act, which the committee may consider later this year.

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos in late February announced support for a proposal to create a \$5 billion federal tax credit for those who donate to scholarships for private schools and other educational programs. The secretary made the announcement with Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX) and Rep. Bradley Byrne (R-AL), who incorporated the proposal in legislation they introduced: the Education Freedom Scholarships and Opportunity Act. The proposal is not likely to move through either the Senate or House, given widespread Democratic opposition.

In a March *Federal Register* notice, the U.S. Department of Education asked for comments by early April on a survey to identify state and local activities supported by Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants under Title IV, Part A, of the Every Student Succeeds Act. The department will survey all states this spring to learn about activities that states and districts are using these funds to support.

Thanks to Reg Leichty and his colleagues at Foresight Law + Policy for these updates.

SBE Governance by Number of Members and Method of Selection

