

News & Notes

Federal leaders have been working diligently to complete key education legislation and other decision making before the 2020 campaign season begins in earnest.

At the beginning of 2019, Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and House Education and Labor Committee Chairman Bobby Scott (D-VA) agreed to prioritize reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA), including updates to K-12 educator recruitment and preparation provisions. Given the number of new House committee members, Scott decided to spend the first part of the year educating new members on the issues. Working closely with Ranking Member Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Scott's committee completed five bipartisan HEA hearings by Memorial Day. With the mostly veteran HELP Committee, Alexander decided to forgo a heavy hearing schedule and began negotiating with Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA) on a bipartisan bill for committee debate and an eventual vote.

Prospects for a new higher education law being sent to the president this fall may be dimming. Although the Alexander-Murray negotiations have reportedly progressed, key issues remain. Recognizing

the necessity of a Senate compromise before a bill can be sent to the president, Chairman Scott has taken a wait-and-see approach before drafting a new House bill. Absent movement by year's end, we do not expect Congress to update the HEA before the 2020 elections.

After uncertainty early in the year, Congress appears to be poised to provide at least a modest funding boost for education. The House had moved quickly early in the year to approve a meaningful spending increase for U.S. Department of Education programs, despite the lack of an overarching budget agreement, and the full House approved increases for Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Senate Appropriations, however, got a very late start after Senate leaders directed them to wait for a budget agreement with the White House. Negotiators finally reached a two-year agreement in late July, setting the stage for a likely rush of Senate appropriations decisions in September and October. Although it is too early to project final allocations, the agreement provides aggregate caps that should accommodate at least

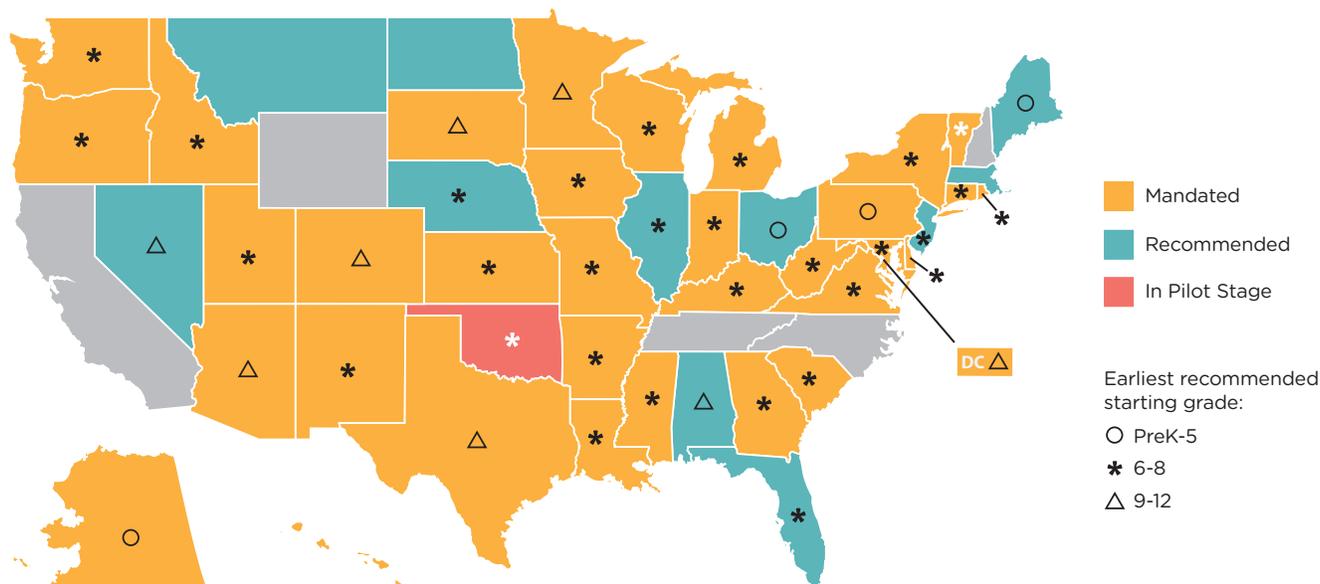
some of the education spending increases included in the House bill. That's good news after a year of tense budget negotiations that could have easily led to overall decreases in federal education spending.

Also on the House agenda, Chairman Scott may ask his committee to consider legislation to further promote apprenticeships as a core workforce development strategy, and he may champion a measure to increase the federal share of overall funding committed to special education.

Among government agency developments, the Federal Communications Commission is expected to soon make important decisions about E-rate, a program to help schools acquire high-capacity broadband, including whether to continue the current formula for allocating funding for WiFi in schools. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is expected to invite states to submit applications for the fiscal year 2019 Preschool Development Grants competition.

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

Figure 1. Individual Learning Plans for College and Career Readiness by State



Source: Drawn from data published in Office of Disability Employment Policy, "Individualized Learning Plans Across the U.S." (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, 2016), as well as staff's scan of state policies.