

ESEA Reauthorization On Hold In The House And Delayed In The Senate

Article By:

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Legislative Activity

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The House's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization bill, the Student Success Act (H.R. 5), failed to pass on the House floor in February and was not included on the House's legislative agenda for the rest of March. While it is unclear what the bill's prospects are for passage in the House, the possibility remains that ESEA reauthorization legislation could re-surface as the House calendar is not final. House Education and the Workforce Committee Chairman John Kline (R-MN) continues to work with House leadership to bring the bill to the floor soon but must secure enough votes beforehand.

Though the forecast for a House bill looks grim, the Senate is "making significant progress" in negotiations on its ESEA reauthorization, according to the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA). A markup is expected to be scheduled for the week of April 13 for their bill. Chairman Alexander has stated that he plans to provide opportunities for input and debate and will allow plenty of amendments in the HELP Committee markup and on the floor. The contents of the proposed legislation have yet to be made public during the negotiations, but many expect Title I to present the most contentious debate. Ranking Member Murray has voiced her strong support for keeping statewide annual tests and eliminating the controversial portability provisions. Additionally, Department of Education leaders and other stakeholders recently have pressed Congress to address the Title I comparability loophole and include enforcement provisions in the rewrite.

CBO Releases Pell Grant Appropriations Estimates

Last week, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released its Pell Grant Program appropriations [estimates](#). These figures represent how much additional funding is needed from Congress to sustain the program at its current level for the next ten years. Last year, CBO reported that the Pell Grant Program has accumulated \$11 billion in surplus —money saved as a result of lower than expected costs. This surplus now sustains the program through 2017 at current funding levels, meaning no additional funds are needed until 2018.

CBO estimates the Pell Grant Program will need additional funding beginning in Fiscal Year 2018, with \$2.3 billion and gradually increasing to \$5.6 billion in 2025. The total appropriations estimate totals \$31.8 billion over the next 10 years. This year's estimate by the CBO is substantially less than that of 2014, which stated the program would need an additional \$38.1 billion over ten years, beginning in 2017.

This Week's Hearings:

- Tuesday, March 17: The House Education and the Workforce Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training will hold a hearing titled "Strengthening America's Higher Education System."
- Tuesday, March 17: The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity is scheduled to hold a hearing titled "A Review of Higher Education Opportunities for the Newest Generation of Veterans."
- Wednesday, March 18: The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies will hold a hearing titled "Closing the Achievement Gap in Higher Education."

Executive Branch Activity

President Obama Announces Student Loan Executive Actions

Last Tuesday, President Obama spoke at Georgia Tech to outline a new series of executive actions to assist federal student loan borrowers and improve federal loan servicing. These executive actions are based on the President's [Student Aid Bill of Rights](#) that outlines basic rights of student borrowers. The [Presidential Memorandum](#) that accompanied the announcement will make a number of changes to the current student loan system including creating a student loan borrower complaint system; establishing a single point of access for all student loan borrowers; and providing options for consumers seeking to discharge student debt during bankruptcy proceedings by proving "undue hardship." While many of the actions in the Presidential Memorandum will occur within the next year, the executive actions will not be implemented fully until January 2017. In addition, we expect to see Members of Congress address student loan issues in the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) when the process begins in earnest in the coming months.

White House to Host First-Ever Demo Day

The White House announced that it would host a White House Demo Day to build on the steps that the Obama Administration has already taken to empower entrepreneurs to launch and scale innovative companies. The Demo Day will take place later this summer, with more details about the event to be released in the coming weeks. The White House plans to showcase entrepreneurial success stories to highlight best practices for how to diversify and expand the U.S. start-up economy. The Demo Day event will be based on the following themes:

- Growing local innovation economies;
- Training startup-ready students;
- Expanding "on-ramps" to entrepreneurship;

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- Connecting diverse talent to capital; and
 - Bringing local communities together to promote entrepreneurship.

In advance of the Demo Day, the White House has requested that stakeholders submit their ideas and commitments for how the U.S. can do a better job of tapping into its full entrepreneurial potential. Comments can be submitted [here](#).

Department of Education to Release Veteran Student Success Grant Opportunity

The Department of Education is expected to open the [Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Success](#) grant program for competition in early spring 2015 for the first time since FY 2010. While in recent years, the program has not received funding, Congress appropriated \$5 million for the program through the FY 2015 “CRomnibus” bill. The grant program encourages model programs to support veteran student success in postsecondary education by coordinating services to address the academic, financial, physical and social needs of veteran students. In the previous competition, required grant activities included establishing a Center of Excellence for veteran students; providing a veteran student support team on campus; monitoring the rates of veteran student enrollment, persistence and completion; and conducting activities related to outreach, recruitment, assistance with student financial aid, and housing support for veteran students.

Administration to Push America’s College Promise Proposal

The White House Office of Public Engagement is hosting a meeting Wednesday for several dozen community colleges, where Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and Dr. Jill Biden are slated to attend. Secretary Duncan and Dr. Biden are expected to use the event to gauge enthusiasm for the proposal and to build grassroots support among the colleges.

This post was written with contributions from Roxana Boyd.

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