MSBA and COSSBA Federal Advocacy Update

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The MSBA and COSSBA Federal Advocacy Update is your timely news about current public education issues affecting Minnesota schools.

MSBA became a charter member of the Consortium of State School Boards Associations (COSSBA) in 2021. COSSBA is a nonpartisan, national alliance dedicated to sharing resources to support, promote and strengthen state school boards associations as they serve their local school districts and board members. COSSBA works to advance federal congressional priorities on behalf of 25 state school boards association members.

This week, members of the U.S. House worked to meet deadlines set by the new House Appropriations Committee Chairman Tom Cole (R-OK). After being appointed the leader of the powerful panel, he shared guidance that gave members only a few weeks to submit programmatic and language requests for the FY 2025 appropriations cycle. That timeline had advocates busily checking in with their House allies throughout the week.

In the Senate, the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee hosted Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. While defending President Joe Biden’s FY 2025 budget request for the Education Department, he faced tough questions from Democrats and Republicans regarding the ongoing issues with FAFSA processing, the recently released Title IX regulations and the protests on campuses nationwide regarding the conflict in Israel and the United States’ role in it. Secretary Cardona will appear before the same panel next week.

Education funding stakeholders should continue to monitor Secretary Cardona’s visits to Capitol Hill where he is defending President Joe Biden’s FY 2025 budget request for the Department of Education (ED). President Biden’s FY 2025 ED request reflects a $3.1 billion (4.0 percent) increase from FY 2024. While presidents are important actors in setting the federal budget, Congress will also have final say with budget numbers, and the FY 2025 funding process will likely unfold similarly to FY 2024. Congress will be in session for the next three weeks, before breaking for the Memorial Day holiday. It’s not clear if there will be any real progress on FY 2025 spending bills in that time.

If you would like to read the full COSSBA Weekly Education Report dated May 6, 2024, please visit this link. The most recent COSSBA Court Report can be found here.
Top Three Federal Education Updates

1. 2024 Education Innovation and Research (EIR) Grant Application is Open

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) has announced that the FY 2024 Education Innovation and Research (EIR) Grant Competition applications are now available. Evidence-based projects that include STEM, social emotional learning, educator recruitment/retention, and other field-initiated innovations are welcome.

According to the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education at ED, The Education Innovation and Research (EIR) Program provides funding to create, develop, implement, replicate, or take to scale entrepreneurial, evidence-based, field-initiated innovations to improve student achievement and attainment for high-need students; and rigorously evaluate such innovations.

The EIR program is designed to generate and validate solutions to persistent educational challenges and to support the expansion of effective solutions to serve substantially larger numbers of students. The EIR is established under section 4611 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

To find detailed information on the EIR grants and the application process, visit the ED competition website here.

The website also describes the grant timelines, deadlines, and webinars to address questions around organizing and submitting an application, providing evidence and preparing a budget narrative. Applications are due on July 5, 2024, for mid-phase and expansion projects and on July 22, 2024, for early-phase grant applications.

2. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Restored Net Neutrality

According to the FCC, the commission voted last week to restore a national standard to ensure the internet is fast, open, and fair. The vote also reclassified broadband service as a Title II telecommunications service which allows the FCC to protect consumers, defend national security, and advance public safety. It also creates a national standard by which it can ensure that broadband internet service is treated as an essential service.

The FCC’s restoration of net neutrality benefits public schools by ensuring that all students have equal access to online content and online tools. Broadband providers will not be allowed to slow down services or implement internet fast lanes for paying customers. This equal access is an important element in closing the “homework gap,” a term used to describe the gap between students who have digital devices and reliable internet at home and those who don’t.

For more information on net neutrality, including the history of this proceeding and a description of more than a decade of work to secure these protections, visit the FCC website here.
3. 2024 U.S. Department of Education (ED) Green Ribbon awarded to Eden Prairie Schools

The U.S. Department of Education’s Green Ribbon award honors school districts who are leading the way in reducing environmental impact, promoting health, and ensuring high-quality environmental education. Eden Prairie Schools is among 10 public school districts across the country to receive this federal honor in the area of District Sustainability.

Green Ribbon recipients are invited to a ceremony in Washington D.C., to be recognized and to share best practices. To learn more about the ED Green Ribbon Schools program, visit their website. A report featuring highlights of all Green Ribbon honorees is also available at this link.

Watch this update for future advocacy opportunities! If you’re unsure who represents you in Washington, D.C., visit this link. For more information on the Minnesota delegation in Washington, see this directory for Minnesota Members of Congress.