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.

Both the U.S. House and the U.S. Senate returned to work this week after a week-long Memorial Day break. The House spending committees have continued to make progress on the 12 FY 2025 spending bills, with a few bills being subject to markups. The first spending bill to pass out of the House chamber was the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs bill. The House Appropriations Committee Chair, Tom Cole (R-OK) continues to aim for passage of all 12 appropriations bills by the first week in August.

In the Senate, spending subcommittees continue to hear from leaders in the administration about various proposals for federal spending, but the timeline for developing and marking up bills has not been set. COSSBA's government relations team, Bose Public Affairs Group predicts that this lack of a plan stems from the assumption that “one or more temporary spending bills will keep the federal government operating through the elections. The lame duck session or even the 119th Congress are the more likely venues for final FY 2025 spending decisions.”

Bose Public Affairs Group also encourages public education advocates to continue to make the case for federal investments and continue to monitor the appropriations process as it unfolds. To read the full COSSBA Weekly Education Report dated June 10, 2024, please visit this link. You can also access this week’s full COSSBA Court Report.
Top Three Federal Education Updates

1. Mark your Calendar for COSSBA webinar on Federal Education Priorities
On Wednesday, August 7, 2024, at noon (Central Time), COSSBA and Bose Public Affairs Group will host a live webinar in preparation for COSSBA’s Federal Advocacy Conference in Washington D.C., in September. While the “Know Before You Go” webinar is intended for conference attendees, it will be a great opportunity for any school board member to hear about COSSBA’s federal education priorities and to learn strategies to best advocate at the federal level. Stay tuned for more details and registration information in the coming weeks. To learn more about the COSSBA Federal Advocacy Conference, visit this link.

2. Bipartisan Bill Introduced to Boost Artificial Intelligence (AI) Education for K-12
According to the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, a new bill has been introduced in the Senate that would create student scholarships, professional development, and AI guidance for K-12 teachers. The bill will provide these expanded opportunities in AI with support from the National Science Foundation (NSF). If passed the bill will require the NSF to work with educators to create guidance through publicly available “playbooks” to introduce AI skills in education in K-12 classrooms and create Centers of Excellence at community colleges.

The authors, Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and Senator Jerry Moran (R-KS) have observed in their home states that “demand for AI expertise is already high and will continue to grow. This bill will open doors to AI for students at all levels and upskill our workforce to drive American tech innovation, entrepreneurship, and progress in solving the toughest global challenges ... AI has tremendous potential but will require a skilled and capable workforce to unlock its capabilities.”

To learn more about this bipartisan bill in the Senate, you can read this NSF AI Education Act Summary provided by Education Week.

Unfortunately, Minnesota schools are well aware of the threats that ransomware, hacks and data breaches can bring to public education. To mitigate these threats in schools across the country, the FCC has adopted a three-year pilot program to provide up to $200 million to support cybersecurity services and equipment for eligible schools and libraries. The pilot program will allow the FCC to collect data about the effectiveness of different cybersecurity equipment and services that most benefit schools and libraries.

For more details about this program, please visit the announcement on the FCC News website.
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.