The Consortium of State School Boards Associations Weekly Education Report

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The COSSBA Education Report, a weekly publication, provides an executive summary of public policy issues affecting American K-12 education and employment. **Please use the bookmarks below to navigate to your area of interest:**

1. **News, Publications, & Updates on COSSBA Policy Priorities**
   - **Child Nutrition**
     - **House Agriculture Committee Advances Farm Bill Amid Snap Debate**: The House Agriculture Committee advanced the "Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026" after a lengthy markup, with Democrats unsuccessfully offering amendments aimed at reversing major changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program enacted in the 2025 reconciliation law.

2. **Budget and Appropriations Wrap-up**
   - **Impact on State School Board Associations**

3. **In Brief – Last Week in Washington**
   - **First Lady Addresses UN Security Council on Education, Tech, Peace**: First Lady Melania Trump addressed the United Nations Security Council as the United States assumed the rotating presidency of the body in March 2026, marking the first time a sitting First Lady presided over a Security Council session.
   - **House Education Committee Member Burgess Owens Announces Retirement:** Congressman Burgess Owens (R-UT) announced on Wednesday that he will not seek reelection in 2026, citing a desire to pursue the next chapter of his work outside elected office.

- **LHHS-ED Member Day Hearing Highlights Education Funding Priorities:** During a House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies "Member Day" hearing on Thursday, lawmakers highlighted several priorities tied to education programs and related federal investments as Congress begins work on the Fiscal Year 2027 spending bill.
- **House Energy, Commerce Committee Advances Child Online Safety Bills:** On Thursday, the House Energy and Commerce Committee held a markup of nine bills related to child digital safety and energy grid resiliency, advancing eight measures to the full House of Representatives.

4. New Publications

- **Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants: What Districts are Prioritizing with the New Flexibilities under ESSA's Title IV-A Program**
  National Center for Education Evaluation (February 2026)
  This report addresses whether the goals of Title IV, Part A of ESEA are being met, examining how a nationally representative set of districts reported spending their funds in the 2021–22 school year and viewed the combination of new flexibilities and constraints at a time when schools were still managing pandemic-related disruptions.
- **K-12 Education: Lessons Learned from Implementing COVID-19 Relief Funding Provisions Could Improve Future Grant Monitoring**
  U.S. Government Accountability Office (February 2026)
  During COVID-19, Congress provided billions in federal grants to schools and included provisions to protect low-income districts from funding cuts when those grants expired, but the Department of Education's oversight was hindered by unreliable and incomplete data that made it difficult to determine whether states properly identified their poorest districts. This report provides recommendations on what could be done differently.
- **Fiscal Year 2026 Management Challenges Facing the U.S. Department of Education**
  U.S. Office of Inspector General (February 2026)
  This report identifies Education Department management challenges through examining audit, inspection, flash review, and investigative work that was completed or part of a body of work that was completed between October 1, 2022, and September 30, 2025; reviewed corrective actions that the Department has not completed; assessed ongoing audit, inspection, flash review, and investigative work to identify significant vulnerabilities; and analyzed new programs and activities that could pose significant challenges.

5. In the News

- **'What is the point?": Conservative Spar Over Education Department Breakup**
  Politico (March 2, 2026)
- **Key Federal Education Data Collections Under Review in IES Overhaul**
  K-12 Dive (March 4, 2026)
- **McMahon Touts First Year in Office; Dems and Students Push Back**

Inside Higher Ed (March 5, 2026)

- **Families Turn to States for Civil Rights Support as Trump Dismantles the Education Department**
  Baltimore Sun (March 5, 2026)

6. **Weekly Calendar - What's coming up this week?**
   - **Reimagining Teaching With Insights from Educators**: The Bipartisan Policy Center will hold a briefing with Gallup and Teach Plus on the results of the most recent poll from Gallup on reimagining teaching. The Gallup report is Staying Power: What it Takes to Make Teaching both Affordable and Sustainable.
     Thursday at 10am ET
   - **How Cities are Investing in Playful Learning Landscapes**: The Brookings Institution will hold a discussion on "Supporting STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) teachers: Insights from the Noyce program."
     Thursday at 2pm ET

7. **Weekly Calendar – Future Events**
   - **Beyond Test Scores: What the World's Best Systems Get Right**: The National Center on Education and the Economy will hold a virtual discussion on "Beyond Test Scores: What the World's Best Systems Get Right."
     March 12 at 11am ET
   - **Digital Wellbeing for Kids and Teenagers with Congresswoman Erin Houchin**: Punchbowl News will hold a discussion on digital wellbeing for kids and teenagers.
     March 18 at 8:30am ET

8. **On The Floor of Congress This Week**
   - **Senate floor**
     - **H.R.6644**- Housing for the 21st Century Act
     - Potential DHS appropriations
   - **House floor**: In recess

9. **Important U.S. House and Senate Links**

10. **About BPAG**

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1. COSSBA Policy Priorities

CHILD NUTRITION

HOUSE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE ADVANCES FARM BILL AMID SNAP DEBATE

The House Agriculture Committee advanced the "Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026" after a lengthy markup, with Democrats unsuccessfully offering amendments aimed at reversing major changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) enacted in the 2025 reconciliation law. Democratic members, led by the Subcommittee on Nutrition and Foreign Agriculture Ranking Member Jahana Hayes (D-CT), proposed repealing provisions that shift some SNAP costs to states, expand work requirements, and limit future benefit increases, arguing the

policies could reduce food assistance and strain state budgets. After the markup, Hayes said she opposed the bill because it "does not address the needs of families, farmers, or the Ag economy," adding that the process was "a missed opportunity to rebuild the Farm Bill and work in a bipartisan manner." The bill maintains roughly $187 billion in previously enacted SNAP spending reductions and introduces new cost-sharing requirements for states with higher payment error rates. Chair GT Thompson (R-PA) urged his colleagues to vote in favor of the bill, saying, "There is a lot of good being done in this bill, across all 12 titles. For the good of the people we represent, I encourage you all to vote based on what is in the bill, instead of based on what is *not* in the bill." Advocacy groups raised concerns about the proposal's potential impact on food insecurity, particularly among college students. Mark Huelsman of The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs said the measure "neither recognizes nor repairs the policy choices that have led to over four million college students going hungry." The legislation ultimately passed the committee on a 34–17 vote and now moves forward as part of the broader farm bill reauthorization process.

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2. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up

Congress began laying the groundwork this week for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 appropriations cycle, even as the Trump administration has yet to release its formal budget request—an unusual dynamic that is already shaping early activity on Capitol Hill. Long lines on Capitol Hill this week indicate that advocates for every cause are making the case for the programs important to them, no matter where appropriators are in the process.

The House Appropriations Committee is moving ahead, and last week held a round of hearings across its subcommittees. Early hearings included oversight and budget-focused sessions with agencies and program officials, signaling the committee's intention to start gathering information ahead of drafting spending bills. On Thursday, the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) Subcommittee held its traditional "Member Day" hearing, giving House members the opportunity to testify about their funding priorities for the upcoming fiscal year.

House Appropriations Committee Chair Tom Cole (R-OK) has framed these early steps as the formal beginning of the FY2027 appropriations process. In guidance issued to members late last month, Cole announced that lawmakers could begin submitting programmatic, language, and Community Project Funding requests. "I am pleased to announce the beginning of the Fiscal Year 2027 appropriations process," Cole wrote in a Dear Colleague letter. He also indicated that subcommittee chairs would begin releasing additional guidance for each of the twelve appropriations bills as the process ramps up.

Traditionally, the White House releases its budget request in early February, providing Congress with the administration's detailed funding proposals. This year, however, the request has been delayed. Reporting indicates that the Office of Management and Budget has been working through significant internal debates over defense spending, particularly following Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's push for a major increase in the Pentagon's budget. Hegseth has directed reviews identifying roughly $50 billion in spending shifts within the defense budget to prioritize the administration's military objectives, part of a broader effort to reshape defense funding. Legal machinations around the collection of tariffs and direction that the administration refund them could also be affecting spending plans. Education advocates are understandably nervous that such shifts will come at the expense of education and other domestic investments.

Taken together, the developments this week highlight a familiar tension in the federal budget process: the executive branch sets priorities through its budget request, but Congress ultimately controls appropriations—and this year, the House is beginning its work even before the administration has fully defined its own plan.

How does this impact State School Board Associations?

As the House moves further along on the FY 2027 budget process and the President's budget is released, we will continue monitoring developments as proposed investments and changes for programs impacting public schools are released.

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3. In Brief – Last Week in Washington

FIRST LADY ADDRESSES UN SECURITY COUNCIL ON EDUCATION, TECH, PEACE

First Lady Melania Trump addressed the United Nations Security Council as the United States assumed the rotating presidency of the body in March 2026, marking the first time a sitting First Lady presided over a Security Council session. In her remarks, she emphasized the role of education, technology, and knowledge-sharing in promoting long-term peace and global stability. Trump argued that societies that value learning and access to information are more likely to foster understanding and tolerance, while restrictions on education can limit social and economic progress. She also highlighted the growing role of artificial intelligence and digital connectivity in expanding global access to knowledge, suggesting these technologies could help bridge cultural divides and support future generations. Trump encouraged Security Council members to support broader access to education and technology worldwide as part of efforts to strengthen international peace and cooperation.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEMBER BURGESS OWENS ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

Congressman Burgess Owens (R-UT) announced on Wednesday that he will not seek reelection in 2026, citing a desire to pursue the next chapter of his work outside elected office. Owens, who was first elected in 2020, has represented a district covering parts of central Utah and suburbs around Salt Lake City and Provo. His retirement comes as Utah continues to navigate a court-driven redistricting process that could reshape the state's congressional map. During his time in Congress, Owens held a prominent role on the House Committee on Education and Workforce, serving as chair of the Higher Education and Workforce Development Subcommittee, where he led hearings and policy discussions on topics including college affordability, workforce training, apprenticeships, and preparing workers for emerging technologies. His departure will create an open seat in Utah, a state where Republicans currently hold all four House districts.

LHHS-ED MEMBER DAY HEARING HIGHLIGHTS EDUCATION FUNDING PRIORITIES

During a House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies "Member Day" hearing on Thursday, lawmakers highlighted several priorities tied to education programs and related federal investments as Congress begins work on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 spending bill. Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) emphasized the importance of maintaining funding for education initiatives such as Head Start and Pell Grants, describing them as programs that "level the playing field for low-income children" and help students pursue higher education and workforce opportunities. Members also discussed the role of

federally funded research conducted at universities, particularly through the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and programs like the BRAIN Initiative, which supports neuroscience research and training at academic institutions. Additional remarks connected federal education and research funding to broader workforce and public health outcomes, including support for maternal health research partnerships with minority-serving institutions and investments in scientific research that rely on university-based laboratories. Overall, the hearing underscored bipartisan recognition of the role federal education and research programs play in expanding opportunity, supporting students, and advancing innovation.

HOUSE ENERGY, COMMERCE COMMITTEE ADVANCES CHILD ONLINE SAFETY BILLS

On Thursday, the House Energy and Commerce Committee held a markup of nine bills related to child digital safety and energy grid resiliency, advancing eight measures to the full House of Representatives. The three measures addressing child online safety revealed a clear partisan divide. Much of the disagreement centered on H.R. 7757, the "Kids Internet and Digital Safety (KIDS) Act," which would require online platforms to adopt guardrails against harmful content and implement safer product design practices. The bill also incorporates the latest version of the debated "Kids Online Safety Act." After several hours of debate and criticism from Democrats—who argued the legislation was too lenient on technology companies—H.R. 7757 advanced to the full House on a 28–24 party-line vote. Much of the discussion focused on the standards software companies would need to meet when identifying minor users of their platforms, highlighting broader ideological disagreements over the federal government's role in regulating online services. By contrast, H.R. 2657, "Sammy's Law," which would require large social media platforms to allow parents to manage and access account data and permissions through safety software providers, passed with a more bipartisan 36–16 vote, suggesting potential common ground on certain digital safety measures. H.R. 3149, the "App Store Accountability Act," which would require age verification and parental consent for app store downloads by minors, was reported to the full House on a narrower 26–23 vote—the tightest margin of any bill considered during the markup. That debate reflected ongoing concerns about balancing protections for minors with the potential impact on technological innovation. Democrats also pointed to a similar Texas law that was recently temporarily blocked in federal court over First Amendment concerns. Collectively, the advancement of these three bills highlights the committee's continued focus on addressing risks children face online, while also underscoring a persistent partisan divide over how aggressively the federal government should regulate the digital marketplace. You can watch the full markup here.

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4. New Publications

Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants: What Districts are Prioritizing with the New Flexibilities under ESSA's Title IV-A Program

National Center for Education Evaluation (February 2026)

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5. In the News

'What is the point?': Conservatives spar over Education Department breakup
Politico (March 2, 2026)

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Families Turn to States for Civil Rights Support as Trump Dismantles the Education Department
Baltimore Sun (March 5, 2026)

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THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

6. Weekly Calendar

Thursday, March 12, 2026

Event: Reimagining Teaching with Insights from Educators
Subject: The Bipartisan Policy Center will hold a briefing with Gallup and Teach Plus on the results of the most recent poll from Gallup on reimagining teaching. The Gallup report is Staying Power: What it Takes to Make Teaching both Affordable and Sustainable.
Time and Location: 10:00 a.m.; SVC 200, Capitol Visitor's Center.
Contact: Register **here.**

Event: How Cities are Investing in Playful Learning Landscapes
Subject: The Brookings Institution will hold a discussion on "Supporting STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) teachers: Insights from the Noyce program."
Participants: Sweta Shah, fellow, Brookings Global Economy and Development Program and Brookings Center for Universal Education; Andres Bustamante, associate professor, University of California, Irvine's School of Education; Alvaro Nunez, city manager, City of Santa Ana, CA; Anthony Phillips, councilmember, Philadelphia City Council; and Sarah Lytte, executive director, Playful Learning Landscapes and nonresident fellow, Brookings Center for Universal Education.
Time and Location: 2:00 p.m.; Brookings, 1775 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Falk Auditorium, Washington, D.C.
Contact: Register **here.**

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7. Future Hearings and Events

Wednesday, March 18, 2026
Webinar: Digital Wellbeing for Kids and Teenagers
Subject: Punchbowl News will hold a discussion on digital wellbeing for kids and teenagers.
Participant: Rep. Erin Houchin (R-IN).
Time: 8:30 a.m.
Contact: Register **here.**

Thursday, March 12, 2026
Webinar: Beyond Test Scores: What the World's Best Systems Get Right
Subject: The National Center on Education and the Economy will hold a virtual discussion on "Beyond Test Scores: What the World's Best Systems Get Right."
Time: 11:00 a.m.
Contact: Register **here.**

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8. On The Floor of Congress This Week

Senate Floor:
- **H.R.6644** - Housing for the 21st Century Act
- Potential DHS appropriations

House Floor: In recess

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9. Links for Up-to-Date Information on Hearings, Legislation, and Events

U.S. House and Senate 2026 Schedule
U.S. Department of Education

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U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. Senate Budget Committee
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10. About BPAG

Bose Public Affairs Group is a full-service government affairs and public relations consulting firm that has built a reputation for producing results. We partner with clients committed to excellence in education and other social services to achieve policy and advocacy success by:

- leveraging our expertise and passion;
- strategizing intelligent solutions; and,
- Creating meaningful impact.

Our team includes long-term insiders in education policy from Pre-K through higher education, innovative thinkers and savvy strategists that provide a comprehensive array of customized client services. We have the knowledge, skills, and relationships that are necessary for successful advocacy at all levels. From grassroots to grass tops and everything in between, our broad-based legislative practice approaches every project with the same degree of determination and professionalism. BPAG provides expertise in a variety of services:

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- Research and Analysis
- Advocacy Training
- Association Management
- Strategic Communications
- Policy Events

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