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**
   - **Funding**
     - **ED Announces Seed Grant Competition**: On Monday, the Department of Education, in partnership with the Department of Labor, announced the FY 2026 competition for the Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) grant program, a discretionary initiative aimed at increasing the number of highly effective educators nationwide.
   - **Child Nutrition**
     - **HELP Hearing on FY27 HHS Budget Highlights Student Health, Nutrition:** On Wednesday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee held a hearing on the FY27 Health and Human Services (HHS) budget. The hearing focused on healthcare policy but included notable discussions related to schools, students, and education—particularly around child health, nutrition, and medical training.

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

3. **In Brief – Last Week in Washington**
   - **Senators Introduce Measure to Repeal Federal Voucher Tax Benefits**: On April 15, Senators Mark Kelly (D-AZ) and Mazie Hirono (D-HI), joined by 28 cosponsors, introduced the "Keep Public Funds in Public Schools Act." The bill

seeks to repeal the federal private school voucher program created in last year's reconciliation act, often called the One Big Beautiful Bill.

- **Workforce Panel Advances WIOA Reauthorization:** On Tuesday, the House Education and Workforce Committee marked up the "Stronger Workforce for America Act of 2026" (H.R. 8210), a bill to reauthorize the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).
- **E&C HHS FY27 Budget Hearing Displays Sharp Partisan Divides:** On Tuesday, Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. appeared before the House Energy and Commerce Committee's Health Subcommittee to discuss the Administration's FY2027 budget request.
- **PPI Webinar Explores Teaching History Ahead of the Nation's 250th:** On Wednesday, the Progressive Policy Institute (PPI) hosted a webinar examining how educators at both the K–12 and higher education levels should approach teaching American history as the nation prepares to mark its 250th anniversary.

4. New Publications

- **Phone-Free Schools Annual Trend Report**
  YONDR (2026)
  This report is a synthesis of research, school-reported outcomes, and policy trends documenting the state of phone-free education in 2026.

5. In the News

- **As Deadline Looms, $289 Million in Federal Education Research Funding May Go Unspent**
  The Hechinger Report (April 22, 2026)
- **Trump Taps Longtime Insider to Fix Labor Department Headache**
  Politico (April 21, 2026)
- **Los Angeles Becomes The First Major School District To Require Screen Time Limits**
  NBC News (April 21, 2026)

6. Weekly Calendar - What's coming up this week?

- **Raising Young Children in an AI World**: Brookings will hold a webinar on "Raising Young Children in an AI World."
  Monday at 2pm ET
- **Lessons from the Mississippi Marathon**: The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research will hold a webinar on "What Can We Learn from the 'Mississippi Marathon'?"
  Monday at 4pm ET
- **Senate Appropriations Committee on FY27 Education Budget**: The Senate Labor-Health and Human Services-Education Appropriations Subcommittee will hold a hearing on FY2027 Budget Request for the Department of Education.
  Tuesday at 10am ET
- **House Education Committee on Equity Policies that Harm Students**: The House Education and the Workforce Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Subcommittee will hold a hearing on "Leveling Down: How Equity Policies Undermine Excellence and Harm Students."

Tuesday at 10:15am

- **Federal Policy Changes and Their Impact on Education**: The Urban Institute will hold a webinar to examine how shifting federal policies outside of education—such as those affecting nutrition, health care, and income supports—are increasingly impacting school operations, funding, and staffing, while offering state and local leaders research-based strategies to prepare and maintain stability for students.
  Tuesday at 4pm ET
- **House Appropriations Committee on FY27 Agriculture Bill**: The House Appropriations Committee will hold a markup of the FY2027 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies bill.
  Wednesday at 10am ET

7. **On The Floor of Congress This Week**
   - **Senate floor**
     - Consideration of nominations
     - **S.4344** To extend section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 for 3 years.
   - **House floor**
     - **S. 1318** – Foreign Intelligence Accountability Act
     - **H.R. 2616 –** Stopping Indoctrination and Protecting Kids Act
     - **S. Con. Res. 33 –** Setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2026 and setting forth the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2027 through 2035.
     - **H.R. 7567** – Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026
   - **Legislation that may be Considered: H. Con. Res. 75** – Directing the President, pursuant to section 5(c) of the War Powers Resolution, to remove the United States Armed Forces from hostilities against the Islamic Republic of Iran. *(Sponsored by Rep. Gottheimer / Foreign Affairs Committee)*

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

9. **About BPAG**

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1. COSSBA Policy Priorities

FUNDING

ED ANNOUNCES SEED GRANT COMPETITION

On April 16, the Department of Education, in partnership with the Department of Labor, announced the FY 2026 competition for the Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) grant program, a discretionary initiative aimed at increasing the number of highly effective educators nationwide. The program will provide approximately $90 million in funding across an estimated 25–30 awards to support evidence-based efforts that prepare, develop, and enhance educator skills throughout their careers. Eligible applicants—including higher education institutions, nonprofits, and partnerships—can use funds to develop, expand, and evaluate scalable models that improve educator effectiveness and student outcomes, with an emphasis on rigorous evidence, innovation (including areas like AI and apprenticeships), and long-term sustainability.

"These grant competitions mark our continued efforts to support our nation's teachers and empower families with education choice," said Assistant Secretary for the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education Kirsten Baesler. Assistant Secretary for Employment and Training Dr. Henry Mack stated, "We are looking to cultivate not just competent professionals but individuals of reason, character, and skills, equipped to meaningfully contribute to the reindustrialization of America." Applications are due June 1, 2026.

CHILD NUTRITION

HELP HEARING ON FY27 HHS BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS STUDENT HEALTH, NUTRITION

On Wednesday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee held a hearing on the FY27 Health and Human Services (HHS) budget. The hearing focused on healthcare policy but included notable discussions related to schools, students, and education—particularly around child health, nutrition, and medical training. Lawmakers repeatedly linked student well-being to broader public health concerns, emphasizing that declining vaccination rates and misinformation have contributed to rising measles cases, with several senators warning that falling immunization rates are putting children at risk and leading to preventable illnesses and deaths. Education-related discussion centered heavily on nutrition and its impact on students. Senators highlighted that a significant portion—estimated between 30% and 60%—of children's daily nutrition comes from school meals, raising concerns about the quality of food served in schools and its role in chronic disease and obesity. The hearing also addressed higher education and workforce preparation through medical training. Members noted that historically, medical students receive little to no nutrition education, but recent HHS initiatives aim to require comprehensive nutrition training across dozens of medical schools to better equip future healthcare providers to address diet-related illnesses. Wednesday's hearing underscored the intersection of health and education, particularly how school environments, student nutrition, public health messaging, and medical education all play a role in shaping outcomes for children and students.

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2. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up

Last week, lawmakers were very focused on advancing the fiscal year (FY) 2027 appropriations process while simultaneously laying the groundwork for an ambitious, multi-step reconciliation strategy that Republican leaders hope will carry major policy priorities through a narrowly divided Congress. At the center of last week's activity was continued progress on a budget resolution—an essential procedural step that would unlock Republicans' ability to pursue another reconciliation package this year without Democratic support. (While budget resolutions do not carry the force of law, they set spending and revenue targets and, critically, provide reconciliation instructions that allow certain legislation to pass the Senate with a simple majority.)

Senate Republicans advanced the budget plan last week—passed narrowly 50–48—to provide roughly $70 billion in funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Border Patrol.

The move is part of a broader strategy to reopen the Department of Homeland Security amid a prolonged funding standoff, but Democrats oppose the plan due to a lack of oversight reforms and concerns following fatal encounters involving federal agents. Republican lawmakers described the approach as necessary to create flexibility to address a range of fiscal priorities, while acknowledging the difficulty of executing such a plan on an accelerated timeline. The resolution

now heads to the House, where its future remains uncertain as Republicans navigate internal divisions.

The timeline adds another layer of complexity. President Donald Trump has expressed a desire to see the package reach his desk by June 1, a goal that would require rapid movement on the budget resolution, committee markups, and floor consideration in both chambers. Given the procedural steps involved, and the likelihood of intra-party disagreements, many observers view that deadline as highly ambitious.

In the House, Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) faces the ongoing challenge of managing a razor-thin majority. Any reconciliation bill, as well as the underlying budget resolution, will require near-total Republican support to pass. That dynamic was evident in last week's discussions, as lawmakers weighed competing priorities within the conference. Some members are pushing for deeper spending reductions, while others are focused on preserving funding for key domestic programs. Navigating this narrow margin will shape not only the reconciliation packages but also the FY 2027 appropriations process, where similar divisions over spending levels and policy riders are expected to emerge.

Education Secretary Linda McMahon is scheduled to testify before the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee to defend the administration's FY 2027 budget request this week. Lawmakers are expected to press Secretary McMahon on proposed funding levels, the implementation of Interagency Agreements, program priorities, and the administration's broader vision for federal education policy.

This week is likely to bring greater clarity—and potentially heightened tension—on several fronts. Movement on the budget resolution will be closely watched, as it will determine whether Republicans can proceed with their reconciliation strategy on the desired timeline. At the same time, appropriators will continue to grapple with FY 2027 funding decisions, with education programs remaining a focal point of debate.

How does this impact State School Board Associations?

The stakes are particularly high for federal education policy. Both the appropriations process and potential reconciliation bills could significantly influence funding levels and program structures for K-12 and higher education. Some Republicans have indicated interest in restructuring or consolidating certain education programs, while Democrats have emphasized the need to protect and, in some cases, increase funding.

Adding to the policy landscape is a recent decision by the Departments of Education and Labor to maintain existing financial systems used by the Education Department to disburse K-12 funds to states this year. This marks a shift as it had been reported that staff at both agencies were working diligently to make switch to using Labor Department systems for weeks. The decision was welcomed by state education officials and program administrators, who had expressed concerns about potential funding disruptions. Maintaining the current system is expected to provide continuity in the distribution of funds, particularly as states finalize their budgets and program plans for the upcoming fiscal year.

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3. In Brief – Last Week in Washington

SENATORS INTRODUCE MEASURE TO REPEAL FEDERAL VOUCHER TAX BENEFITS

On April 15, Senators Mark Kelly (D-AZ) and Mazie Hirono (D-HI), joined by 28 cosponsors, introduced the "Keep Public Funds in Public Schools Act". The bill seeks to repeal the federal private school voucher program created in last year's reconciliation act, often called the One Big Beautiful Bill. Specifically, the legislation would eliminate Section 25F of the Internal Revenue Code, removing tax credits and income exclusions tied to contributions to scholarship-granting organizations—501(c)(3) nonprofits that fund private school scholarships. The provision currently allows individuals to claim a nonrefundable tax credit of up to $1,700 for donations to these organizations. Supporters argue the bill would keep taxpayer dollars out of private schools and strengthen public education, while opponents contend it would limit opportunities for low- and middle-income families to choose schools that best meet their children's needs. "In Arizona, we've already seen how universal vouchers are leading to rampant fraud and benefiting people who already had the means to send their kids to private school, while decimating public education for everyone else," said Sen. Kelly in a press release. "If we want to keep improving education to build a better future for the next generation, we have to start with keeping public funds in public schools that serve all kids." The message bill is unlikely to move this Congress.

WORKFORCE PANEL ADVANCES WIOA REAUTHORIZATION

On Tuesday, the House Education and Workforce Committee marked up the "Stronger Workforce for America Act of 2026" (H.R. 8210), a bill to reauthorize the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Republicans, led by Chairman Tim Walberg (R-MI), argued the bill would modernize workforce development by increasing state flexibility, strengthening employer alignment, expanding short-term and work-based training, and improving accountability and data transparency, particularly in response to emerging technologies like AI. Democrats, led by Ranking Member Bobby Scott (D-VA), criticized the proposal for abandoning a previously negotiated bipartisan framework, raising concerns about shifting adult education programs from the Department of Education to the Department of Labor, reducing funding, and introducing untested policies such as AI-driven "talent marketplaces." Numerous Democratic amendments aimed at restoring bipartisan provisions and protecting education programs were rejected, while Republicans defended the bill as outcome-focused and necessary to address inefficiencies. The committee ultimately advanced the legislation on a 19–14 party-line vote after adopting the Republican substitute amendment and rejecting all Democratic amendments, highlighting significant challenges for bipartisan support and Senate passage. A comprehensive summary prepared by BPAG is here.

E&C HHS FY27 BUDGET HEARING DISPLAYS SHARP PARTISAN DIVIDES

On Tuesday, Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. appeared before the House Energy and Commerce Committee's Health Subcommittee to discuss the Administration's FY2027 budget request. The hearing covered a broad range of health policy priorities and was marked by sharp partisan exchanges on vaccines, Medicaid funding, and the direction of federal public health policy. Kennedy touted commitments from more than 50 medical schools to expand nutrition education from an average of two hours to 40 hours and described efforts to phase out petroleum-based food dyes in partnership with the food industry. Kennedy framed these initiatives as part of a broader

effort to shift federal health policy away from chronic disease management and toward prevention, saying the Administration had "flipped the food pyramid upside down." Democratic members pushed back forcefully on several fronts, including proposed eliminations of the CDC's Safe Motherhood program and Title X family planning funding, cuts to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) research grants, and reductions to SAMHSA behavioral health programs. Democrats also pressed Kennedy on vaccine policy, citing rising measles case counts and questioning his influence on declining vaccination rates. Kennedy maintained that he is not anti-vaccine, pointing to $1 billion in new vaccine research. Kennedy also noted his nutrition curriculum initiative—securing commitments from medical schools to dramatically increase nutrition training—which was praised by Republican members. Interagency agreements as well as Head Start were not discussed at length. A recording of the hearing can be found here.

PPI WEBINAR EXPLORES TEACHING HISTORY AHEAD OF THE NATION'S 250TH

On Wednesday, the Progressive Policy Institute (PPI) hosted a webinar examining how educators at both the K–12 and higher education levels should approach teaching American history as the nation prepares to mark its 250th anniversary. The discussion focused on a new report by PPI's Richard Kahlenberg and Lief Lin analyzing three years of publications in *American Quarterly*, the flagship journal of the American Studies field. Kahlenberg and Lin found that approximately 80% of articles published in the journal over the past three years focused on negative aspects of American history—such as racism and homophobia—while 20% were neutral, and none offered a uniformly positive framing of the country. Lin described their methodology as a three-step process involving keyword searches, representative quote analysis, and categorization of critiques. Kahlenberg noted that, despite *American Quarterly*'s limited readership, its academic influence allows it to shape course syllabi. He also cited polling suggesting that one in four Gen Z individuals are more likely to view the Founding Fathers as villains rather than heroes, arguing that this aligns with the journal's more critical perspective. Caroline Levander (Rice University) offered a more sympathetic interpretation, emphasizing that graduate training prioritizes critical thinking and that each generation of scholars seeks to address perceived gaps in prior scholarship. She cautioned against drawing broad conclusions based on isolated quotes taken out of context. Kahlenberg largely agreed that critical scholarship can be valuable but argued that intellectual inquiry should also explore why American society has fostered innovation and why people continue to immigrate to the United States—questions he said are largely absent from the journal. Panelists broadly agreed that civic education should combine foundational knowledge of American ideals with experiential learning, noting that research supports the value of both approaches, particularly for underserved communities. Kahlenberg also observed that events following October 7 prompted significant introspection among university leaders regarding the application of academic values, and he expressed cautious optimism that the current political moment may encourage greater self-reflection within academia.

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4. New Publications

Phone-Free Schools Annual Trend Report

YONDR (2026)

This report is a synthesis of research, school-reported outcomes, and policy trends documenting the state of phone-free education in 2026.

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5. **In the News**

As Deadline Looms, $289 Million In Federal Education Research Funding May Go Unspent
The Hechinger Report (April 22, 2026)

Trump Taps Longtime Insider To Fix Labor Department Headache
Politico (April 21, 2026)

Los Angeles Becomes The First Major School District To Require Screen Time Limits
NBC News (April 21, 2026)

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THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

6. **Weekly Calendar**

Monday, April 27, 2026

Webinar: Raising Young Children in an AI World
Subject: Brookings will hold a webinar on "Raising Young Children in an AI World."
Participants: Isabelle Hau, executive director, Stanford Accelerator for Learning; Dana Suskind, founder and co-director, Center for Early Learning and Public Health, University of Chicago; and Kathy Hirsh-Pasek, senior fellow, Center for Universal Education, Brookings.
Time: 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Contact: Register **here.**

Webinar: Lessons from the Mississippi Marathon
Subject: The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research will hold a webinar on "What Can We Learn from the 'Mississippi Marathon'?"
Participants: Kelly Butler, senior adviser, Reading Universe; Robert Pondiscio, senior fellow, AEI; Kymyona Burk, senior policy fellow, ExcelinEd; and Rachel Canter, director of education policy, Progressive Policy Institute.
Time: 4:00 p.m.
Contact: Register **here.**

Tuesday, April 28, 2026

Hearing: Senate Appropriations Committee on FY27 Education Budget
Subject: The Senate Labor-Health and Human Services-Education Appropriations Subcommittee will hold a hearing on FY2027 Budget Request for the Department of Education.
Witness: Linda McMahon, secretary, US Department of Education.
Time: 10:00 a.m.
Contact: Live stream **here.**

Hearing: House Education Committee on Equity Policies that Harm Students

Subject: The House Education and the Workforce Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Subcommittee will hold a hearing on "Leveling Down: How Equity Policies Undermine Excellence and Harm Students."
Time: 10:15 a.m.
Contact: Live stream **here.**

Event: Federal Policy Changes and Their Impacts on Education
Subject: The Urban Institute will hold a webinar to examine how shifting federal policies outside of education—such as those affecting nutrition, health care, and income supports—are increasingly impacting school operations, funding, and staffing, while offering state and local leaders research-based strategies to prepare and maintain stability for students.
Participants: Kristin Blagg, principal research associate, Work, Education, and Labor Division, Urban Institute; Lindsay Fryer, founder, Lodestone DC; Karishma Furtado, senior research associate, Research to Action Lab, Center for Equity and Community Impact, Urban Institute; Emily Gutierrez, senior research associate, Work, Education, and Labor Division, Urban Institute; Kunjan Narechania, CEO, Watershed Advisors; Sasha Pudelski, director of advocacy, AASA, The School Superintendents Association; Maggie Reeves, director, k–12 education, Work, Education, and Labor Division, Urban Institute; and Kathryn White, director of budget process studies, National Association of State Budget Officers.
Time: 4:00 p.m.
Contact: Live stream **here.**

Wednesday, April 29, 2026
Markup: House Appropriations Committee on FY27 Agriculture Bill
Subject: The House Appropriations Committee will hold a markup of the FY2027 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies bill.
Time: 10:00 a.m.
Contact: Live stream **here.**

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7. On The Floor of Congress This Week

Senate Floor:
Consideration of nominees
S.4344 To extend section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 for 3 years.

House Floor:
S. 1318 – Foreign Intelligence Accountability Act *(Sponsored by Rep. Crawford / Judiciary Committee)*

H.R. 2616 – Stopping Indoctrination and Protecting Kids Act *(Sponsored by Rep. Walberg / Education and Workforce Committee)*

S. Con. Res. 33 – Setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2026 and setting forth the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2027 through

2035. *(Sponsored by Sen. Graham / Budget Committee)*

H.R. 7567 – Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026 *(Sponsored by Rep. Thompson (PA) / Agriculture Committee)*

Legislation that may be Considered:

H. Con. Res. 75 – Directing the President, pursuant to section 5(c) of the War Powers Resolution, to remove the United States Armed Forces from hostilities against the Islamic Republic of Iran. *(Sponsored by Rep. Gottheimer / Foreign Affairs Committee)*

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

U.S. House and Senate 2026 Schedule

U.S. Department of Education

U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor

U.S. Senate Budget Committee

U.S. House Budget Committee

Congressional Budget Office

Federal legislative information

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9. 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:

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

For more information, please visit our website.

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