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**
   - **Broadband Connection & E-Rate**
     - **FCC Launches Review of E-Rate Program**: Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Brendan Carr has proposed a comprehensive review of the E-Rate program, the federal Universal Service Fund initiative that provides discounted broadband and telecommunications services to schools and libraries.

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

3. **In Brief – Last Week in Washington**
   - **ED Announces IAAs for Special Education, Civil Rights**: The Department of Education (ED) announced new partnerships with the Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Justice (DOJ) aimed at improving coordination of programs serving individuals with disabilities and strengthening enforcement of federal civil rights laws.
   - **Senate Education Panel Examines AI's Growing Role in K-12 Education:** On Tuesday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Subcommittee on Education and the American Family held a hearing on the future of primary education in the age of artificial intelligence (AI), examining how AI is beginning to shape K-12 classrooms and what guardrails may be needed as adoption expands.

- **ITIF Panel Examines Youth Use of AI Chatbots, Emerging Policy Debates:** On Tuesday, the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation (ITIF) hosted a discussion on youth use of AI chatbots, highlighting tensions between child protection, free speech, and digital literacy.
- **Heritage Foundation Examines Decline of School Recess:** On Thursday, the Heritage Foundation hosted a discussion examining the decline of unstructured playtime in American schools and its broader implications for children's mental and physical health.

4. New Publications

- **Catching Absenteeism Early and Often: Introducing the AEI Absence Forecast**
  American Enterprise Institute (June 2026)
  The AEI Absence Forecast is designed to be private, transparent, simple, and free, and it uses data that districts already routinely collect so that school officials can intervene early and often.

5. In the News

- **International Teachers Needed in U.S. Classrooms Threatened by Visa Delays, Fees**
  The 74 Million (June 17, 2026)
- **What will the Justice Department-OCR agreement mean for schools?**
  K-12 Dive (June 18, 2026)
- **Scott, Moore, Bonamici, Frost, Grijalva, and Pocan Introduce Keep Public Funds in Public Schools Act of 2026**
  Congressman Bobby Scott (June 12, 2026)
- **U.S. Department of Education Approves Indiana's Returning Education to the States Waiver, Freeing Up Millions to Invest in Students**
  U.S. Department of Education (June 16, 2026)
- **Disability Groups Fear RFK Jr.'s New Special Education Role**
  The New York Times (June 20, 2026)

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

- **House Education and Workforce Subcommittee Hearing on Apprenticeships**: The House Education and Workforce Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development will hold a hearing on "Workforce Rewired: Modern Apprenticeships for a Modern Economy."
  Wednesday at 10:15am ET
- **Senate Appropriations Committee FY27 Ag-FDA Markup**: The Senate Appropriations Committee will hold a markup of the Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA; Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act; the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Act; and the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act.
  Thursday at 10am ET

7. On The Floor of Congress This Week

- **Senate floor**: H.R.6644, 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act

- **House floor**
  - **H.R. H.R. 1181** – Protecting Privacy in Purchases Act (Sponsored by Rep. Moore (WV) / Financial Services Committee)
  - **H.R. 8595** – National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2027 (Sponsored by Rep. Diaz-Balart / Appropriations Committee)
  - **H.R. 9022** – Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2027 (Sponsored by Rep. Fleischmann / Appropriations Committee)
  - **H.R. 9237** – Take Care of America's Veterans Act (Sponsored by Rep. Bost / Veterans' Affairs Committee)
  - Additional legislative items are possible.

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

9. **About BPAG**

1. COSSBA Policy Priorities

BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY & E-RATE

FCC LAUNCHES REVIEW OF E-RATE PROGRAM

Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Brendan Carr has proposed a comprehensive review of the E-Rate program, the federal Universal Service Fund initiative that provides discounted broadband and telecommunications services to schools and libraries. If approved by the Commission on June 25, the proceeding would examine whether E-Rate-funded networks and services are being used in a manner consistent with the program's statutory and educational purposes while also evaluating child online safety, parental and teacher involvement, and the effectiveness of existing oversight mechanisms. The review is expected to focus on several key issues, including whether E-Rate-supported services are sufficiently tied to educational outcomes, whether current interpretations of the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) remain appropriate in today's digital environment, and whether additional safeguards are needed to address concerns about student screen time and online content access. Such changes could affect compliance processes for schools, libraries, service providers, consultants, and consortium leaders involved in the program. While the proceeding remains in its early stages, it signals increased federal scrutiny of how E-Rate funding is used and administered. Stakeholders are expected to closely monitor the review's potential implications for educational technology, internet safety policies, procurement practices, compliance obligations, and broadband access in schools and libraries. If the Commission formally adopts the proposal, public comment opportunities will follow, allowing affected parties to weigh in on potential reforms to one of the federal government's largest educational connectivity programs.

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2. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up

The Senate was in session last week while the House wasn't. Senate appropriators made arguably surprising progress on developing their FY 2027 spending bills. Appropriations Committee Chair Susan Collins (R-ME) announced plans to move forward with the committee's first FY 2027

markups. The committee is scheduled to consider four bills on June 25: Agriculture-FDA, Military Construction–Veterans Affairs, Commerce-Justice-Science, and Legislative Branch appropriations measures.

The announcement suggests that Senate Republicans intend to continue advancing appropriations legislation despite the ongoing stalemate over spending levels. Earlier this month, the committee postponed planned markups after Republicans and Democrats failed to reach agreement on how to divide funding between defense and nondefense programs. Senate Democrats have continued to insist that a bipartisan agreement on overall spending levels must come before they can fully support movement on individual appropriations bills.

Senate Appropriations Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA) reiterated that position last week, saying Democratic support for moving appropriations bills will require a bipartisan agreement on overall spending levels. The disagreement reflects broader tensions surrounding President Donald Trump's FY 2027 budget request. The administration has requested approximately $1.15 trillion in discretionary defense spending while also seeking an additional $350 billion through a separate budget reconciliation measure. Senate Democrats have argued that any increase in defense spending should be accompanied by comparable attention to domestic priorities.

Earlier this month, Murray said she and Collins remained "miles apart" on a funding agreement. Collins, meanwhile, has emphasized the importance of maintaining momentum. After postponing committee markups, she said Democratic leaders had made clear they were unwilling to move forward on FY 2027 appropriations bills without resolving the broader spending dispute.

Beyond spending levels, policy disagreements are also emerging. Democrats have sought language preventing the Trump administration from reviving a Justice Department compensation program that could provide up to $1.8 billion to individuals claiming politically motivated federal prosecutions. The issue contributed to tensions surrounding earlier planned Senate markups and remains a point of contention between the parties.

On the House side, appropriators continue to move legislation through committee, but questions remain about when the full chamber will begin floor consideration of the bills that have already cleared the House Appropriations Committee.

House Republicans are expected this week to continue advancing their appropriations agenda. The House Appropriations Committee plans to complete work on all twelve annual spending bills, including a markup of the Defense appropriations measure. Republican leaders are also expected to bring National Security-State (H.R. 8595) and Energy-Water Development (H.R. 9022) appropriations bills to the House floor. (The House has already passed separate FY 2027 appropriations measures funding Agriculture-FDA programs (H.R. 8646) and Military Construction–Veterans Affairs programs (H.R. 8469)).

As both the House and Senate return to Washington this week, appropriators face growing pressure to demonstrate progress toward completing the annual spending bills before the start of the new fiscal year. The Senate's planned markups represent a significant procedural step, but major questions remain unresolved, including whether lawmakers can reach a bipartisan agreement on overall spending levels and whether House leadership will schedule floor debate on the remaining appropriations bills approved by committee.

With fewer than four months remaining before the September 30 funding deadline, Congress continues to confront the challenge of completing its work while navigating deep disagreements over defense spending, domestic priorities, and executive branch policies. Those debates are expected to intensify in the weeks ahead.

How does this impact State School Board Associations?

For school boards, the outlook for federal education funding remains uncertain. While Congress is making partisan progress on FY 2027 spending bills, it's clear significant disagreements over broad spending levels will delay final funding decisions and increase the likelihood of a temporary funding measure this fall. The ongoing debate between higher defense spending and domestic investments raises questions about whether education programs will see funding increases, flat funding, or potential cuts, making long-term budget planning more challenging for districts heading into the 2026–27 school year.

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3. In Brief – Last Week in Washington

ED ANNOUNCES IAAS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION, CIVIL RIGHTS

The Department of Education (ED) announced new partnerships with the Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Justice (DOJ) aimed at improving coordination of programs serving individuals with disabilities and strengthening enforcement of federal civil rights laws. Under the initiative, HHS will take on a larger role in administering certain special education and rehabilitative services programs, while DOJ will assume greater responsibility for investigating and enforcing education-related civil rights protections. ED characterized the move as part of its broader effort to reduce bureaucracy, improve service delivery, and align programs with agencies possessing specialized expertise. According to the Department, the partnership with HHS is intended to better coordinate services for individuals with disabilities across education, health, and rehabilitation systems, while the DOJ partnership is designed to enhance the federal government's capacity to investigate discrimination complaints and enforce civil rights protections. Education Secretary Linda McMahon stated that the changes will improve responsiveness and coordination while maintaining support for students and families. The announcement represents the latest step in the Administration's broader effort to redistribute responsibilities traditionally housed within the Department of Education to other federal agencies. Supporters argue the changes will streamline operations and leverage agency expertise, while critics—including disability and civil rights advocates—have raised concerns that moving special education and civil rights functions outside ED could weaken educational oversight, complicate complaint resolution, and reduce protections for students with disabilities. The transition is expected to affect administration of special education programs, disability services, and civil rights enforcement activities, although ED indicated that further implementation details and timelines are forthcoming. Stakeholders are closely monitoring the changes for their potential impact on students with disabilities, schools, higher education institutions, and families seeking federal support or enforcement assistance.

SENATE EDUCATION PANEL EXAMINES AI'S GROWING ROLE IN K-12 EDUCATION

On Tuesday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Subcommittee on Education and the American Family held a hearing on the future of primary education in the age of artificial intelligence (AI), examining how AI is beginning to shape K-12 classrooms and what

guardrails may be needed as adoption expands. Members of both parties agreed that AI is already affecting schools and will likely play a larger role in teaching and learning, but they differed in their emphasis on how quickly schools should move and which risks warrant the most immediate policy attention. Republican members generally highlighted AI's potential to personalize learning, support teachers, strengthen workforce readiness, and provide states and local school districts with flexibility to develop standards and implementation strategies. Democratic members placed greater emphasis on student privacy, cybersecurity, civil rights protections, cognitive development, and the risk that consumer AI products could enter school settings before being adequately tested for safety or educational value. Witnesses representing a state education agency, a nonprofit organization, and a private-sector provider broadly agreed that AI should support rather than replace teachers. They emphasized the need for stronger educator training, more evidence on AI's long-term effects, clearer procurement standards, and state-level guidance to help schools evaluate AI tools before large-scale deployment. Likely areas of continued policy focus include privacy and cybersecurity protections, independent evaluation of AI tools, research on student outcomes and impacts, and the development of frameworks to guide responsible classroom use. The hearing can be watched here, and a comprehensive summary of the hearing is here.

ITIF PANEL EXAMINES YOUTH USE OF AI CHATBOTS, EMERGING POLICY DEBATES

On Tuesday, the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation (ITIF) hosted a discussion on youth use of AI chatbots, highlighting tensions between child protection, free speech, and digital literacy. Panelists argued that outright bans may be an appealing but blunt policy tool that could fail to achieve their intended objectives while limiting young people's access to technologies that are likely to become commonplace in higher education and the workforce. Much of the discussion focused on the federal GUARD Act, which would prohibit minors from using "AI companions," defined as chatbots designed to develop emotional connections with users. Speakers emphasized that the bill would apply equally to younger children and to 16- and 17-year-olds, without a parental consent option. They argued that, in practice, the legislation would regulate speech that is emotionally supportive rather than purely informational. At the state level, panelists noted that policymakers are pursuing narrower approaches, including legislation aimed at restricting suggestive dialogue, self-harm-related content, or chatbots embedded in toys, as well as emerging age-verification requirements that may raise privacy and cybersecurity concerns. Speakers recommended that policymakers focus on educating parents, students, and teachers about AI chatbots and supporting the development of stronger safety tools and content filters rather than pursuing broad prohibitions. They also cautioned that a patchwork of state regulations may be difficult to enforce, particularly when young users can access technologies through virtual private networks (VPNs) and argued that excluding youth from AI tools altogether could leave them less prepared for adulthood and an increasingly AI-enabled economy. The webinar can be viewed here.

HERITAGE FOUNDATION EXAMINES DECLINE OF SCHOOL RECESS

On Thursday, the Heritage Foundation hosted a discussion examining the decline of unstructured playtime in American schools and its broader implications for children's mental and physical health. The event featured the creators of the documentary *The Death of Recess* alongside policy experts and researchers. Speakers highlighted research indicating that 60 minutes of daily recess is associated with a 10% increase in test scores, despite the average school recess period today lasting only about 25 minutes. They emphasized that the brain continues processing information and learning during unstructured breaks. Panelists also pointed to Tennessee's bipartisan "Say Yes

to Recess" initiative as a model for expanding playtime nationwide. The panel also cited 2023 research connecting reduced unstructured playtime to declines in adolescent mental health and well-being. Speakers argued that conventional classroom models, which often deliver instruction at the pace of the slowest learner, combined with increased screen time, have displaced valuable unstructured free time for children. Finally, panelists highlighted growing interest in project-based and hands-on learning models, including passion-driven projects and internships, which they argued are often undervalued in traditional educational systems. Several speakers identified reform of the Community Eligibility Provision as a key policy priority. Overall, the discussion underscored the panelists' broader argument that improving children's sleep, nutrition, physical activity, and opportunities for unstructured play is foundational to improving educational outcomes. The webinar can be viewed here.

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4. New Publications

Catching Absenteeism Early and Often: Introducing the AEI Absence Forecast
American Enterprise Institute (June 2026)
The AEI Absence Forecast is designed to be private, transparent, simple, and free, and it uses data that districts already routinely collect so that school officials can intervene early and often.

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5. In the News

International Teachers Needed in U.S. Classrooms Threatened by Visa Delays, Fees
The 74 Million (June 17, 2026)

What will the Justice Department-OCR agreement mean for schools?
K-12 Dive (June 18, 2026)

Scott, Moore, Bonamici, Frost, Grijalva, and Pocan Introduce Keep Public Funds in Public Schools Act of 2026
Congressman Bobby Scott (June 12, 2026)

U.S. Department of Education Approves Indiana's Returning Education to the States Waiver, Freeing Up Millions to Invest in Students
U.S. Department of Education (June 16, 2026)

Disability Groups Fear RFK Jr.'s New Special Education Role
The New York Times (June 20, 2026)

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THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

6. Weekly Calendar

Wednesday, June 24, 2026
Hearing: House Education and Workforce Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development

Subject: The House Education and Workforce Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development will hold a hearing on "Workforce Rewired: Modern Apprenticeships for a Modern Economy."
Witnesses: TBA.
Time and Location: 10:15 a.m.; 2175 Rayburn HOB.
Contact: Live stream available **here.**

Thursday, June 25, 2026

Markup: Senate Appropriations Committee FY27 Ag-FDA, CJS, MilCon, and Leg Branch
Subject: The Senate Appropriations Committee will hold a markup of the Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA; Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act; the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Act; and the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act.
Time and Location: 10:00 a.m.; Dirksen 106.
Contact: Live stream available **here.**

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7. On The Floor of Congress This Week

Senate Floor
H.R.6644, 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act

House Floor
H.R. 1181 – Protecting Privacy in Purchases Act *(Sponsored by Rep. Moore (WV) / Financial Services Committee)*

H.R. 8595 – National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2027 *(Sponsored by Rep. Diaz-Balart / Appropriations Committee)*

H.R. 9022 – Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2027 *(Sponsored by Rep. Fleischmann / Appropriations Committee)*

H.R. 9237 – Take Care of America's Veterans Act *(Sponsored by Rep. Bost / Veterans' Affairs Committee)*

Additional legislative items are possible.

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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:

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- Association Management
- Strategic Communications
- Policy Events

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