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 Connectivity & E-Rate**
     - **FCC Weighs Changes to E-Rate, Could Gut School, Library Wi-Fi Funding**: On Thursday, the Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband Coalition partnered with Sen. Ed Markey's (D-MA) office to bring together education, library, and policy experts who warned that a new FCC proceeding could seriously weaken—or even eliminate—the E-Rate program.

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

3. **In Brief – Last Week in Washington**
   - **AI Hearing Spotlights Risks to Career Pathways, Entry-Level Jobs**: On Wednesday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety convened to examine how artificial intelligence is reshaping work, with senators and witnesses warning that the greatest risks may lie in disrupted career pathways rather than mass job loss.
   - **Senate HELP Committee Advances Nominees, Bipartisan Education Bills:** On Thursday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee held a markup covering three Department of Health and Human Services nominations and 10 pieces of legislation.

4. New Publications

- **Who Can Receive A Scholarship? The eligible K-12 Student Population Under The New Federal Education Freedom Tax Credit**
  American Federation for Children (July 2026)
  This is the first state-by-state estimates of the number and share of children eligible to enroll in a K-12 school and receive a scholarship under Section 25F of the IRS Code.

5. In the News

- **Trump Administration Concedes That It Canceled Research Grants in Blue States**
  NBC News (July 24, 2026)
- **As Massachusetts Codifies Science of Reading, Experts Expect Results to Take a Few Years**
  K-12 Dive (July 22, 2026)
- **U.S. Department of Education Investigates Districts in Washington and Colorado to Protect Parental Rights Laws and Uphold Title IX**
  U.S. Department of Education (July 28, 2026)
- **Teaching, Training, Transforming: AI's Role In America's Future**
  The Washington Times | U.S. Rep. Tim Walberg (R-MI) (July 26, 2026)
- **Inside the federal keyword lists that canceled billions in research funding**
  Higher Ed Dive (July 27, 2026)
- **DHS final rule could hinder students' access to food, healthcare, AASA warns**
  K-12 Dive (July 27, 2026)
- **How a years-long rise in teacher turnover reshaped American classrooms**
  Chalkbeat (July 30, 2026)

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

- **Senate Commerce Committee Markup on Child Safety Bills**: The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation will hold a markup on S.737, the "Shielding Children's Retinas from Egregious Exposure on the Net (SCREEN) Act"; S.1748, the "Kids Online Safety Act" (KOSA); S. 4199, the "Youth AI Privacy Act"; S.4407, the "Children's Health, Advancement, Trust, Boundaries, and Oversight in Technology (CHATBOT) Act"; S. 5171, "Children's Artificial Intelligence Toy Safety Act of 2026"; and vote on a promotion list in the Coast Guard.
  Wednesday at 10am ET
- **Enhanced School Safety Using Behavioral Threat Assessment**: The U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) will hold a virtual presentation highlighting key findings and implications from its decades of research on the attackers perpetrating school violence and how education practitioners can best align support systems in K-12 schools.
  Wednesday at 12pm ET
- **Supporting and Sustaining a Diverse Teacher Workforce**: EdTrust and the Learning Policy Institute will hold a webinar on why teacher diversity matters and

what policymakers, advocates, and education leaders must do to protect and strengthen a more racially and ethnically diverse teacher workforce.
Wednesday at 1pm ET

7. **Weekly Calendar – Future Events**
   - **Homeroom with Education Leaders – Math Policy and Practice**: The Hunt Institute will hold a webinar exploring how states are rethinking how mathematics is taught, assessed, and supported, connecting bold policy decisions with implementation strategies that expand access to rigorous, high-quality math for all students.
     August 12

8. **On The Floor of Congress This Week**
   - **Senate floor**: HR 6500 – Vehicle for continuing resolution
   - **House floor**: In recess

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

10. **About BPAG**

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1. COSSBA Policy Priorities

BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY & E-RATE

FCC WEIGHS CHANGES TO E-RATE, COULD GUT SCHOOL, LIBRARY WI-FI FUNDING

On Thursday, the Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition partnered with Sen. Ed Markey's (D-MA) office to bring together education, library, and policy experts who warned that a new FCC proceeding could seriously weaken—or even eliminate—the E-Rate program. E-Rate provides funding that helps schools and libraries nationwide pay for broadband services. The program dates to the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which Markey helped write. In 2025, E-Rate provided more than $3 billion in discounts on broadband, Wi-Fi, and related equipment to public and private schools and public libraries, with higher discounts available to lower-income communities. Kristen Corra, senior policy counsel at SHLB, and E-Rate expert Jon Bernstein explained why the program matters. It has brought high-speed internet to nearly every classroom and library branch in the country, is funded through fees on telephone bills rather than the annual congressional appropriations process, and has received bipartisan support for decades. Bernstein also challenged the assumption that E-Rate lacks sufficient oversight. Schools and libraries must competitively bid for services, select the most cost-effective option, comply with the Children's Internet Protection Act's (CIPA) filtering and online safety requirements, and face claw backs or criminal charges if they misuse program funds. Improper payments are already below the threshold that the Government Accountability Office identifies as a concern. Dr. LaTonya Goffney, superintendent of Aldine Independent School District, a high-poverty Texas district serving 52,000 students, said E-Rate keeps essential digital tools operating in her schools. If E-Rate discounts disappear, schools' ongoing financial obligations under existing contracts will remain. Schools could therefore be forced to cut staff and programming to secure the funding needed to maintain their technology infrastructure. Megan Sutherland, chief operating officer of the Prince George's County Memorial Library System, and CoSN Board Chair Dr. Stacy Hawthorne made a similar point about online safety: School and library networks are among the safest places for children to

access the internet, largely because CIPA requires participating institutions to implement online protections. If E-Rate disappears, the federal government's ability to enforce those protections through the program would disappear with it.

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2. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up

With the House of Representatives already enjoying its August recess, all eyes were on the Senate last week, where lawmakers continued work on two fiscal priorities: developing a bipartisan continuing resolution (CR) to prevent a government shutdown while also navigating growing pressure from the White House to advance a separate budget reconciliation package addressing the costs of the Iran conflict and Republican election priorities. The Senate recently released a CR that runs through December 11 and would extend current funding levels until after the November election. Most significantly, the released CR includes bipartisan language that was pursued by Senate Appropriations Chair Susan Collins (R-ME) that blocks the implementation of proposed Office of Budget and Management (OMB) rules that would dramatically overhaul the federal grantmaking process – injecting partisan politics and incredible uncertainty into a long-settled process. In July, COSSBA submitted comments asking for a delay and significant overhaul of these draft rules. This is a significant step toward ensuring that the federal grantmaking process remains fair and impartial with certainty for recipients.

The broader appropriations process itself remained largely at a standstill. The House completed its work before departing by passing a continuing resolution that would extend current government funding through December 4, providing Congress additional time to complete the Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 appropriations bills. House Republican leaders characterized the measure as a straightforward extension of current funding intended to avoid a lapse in appropriations while allowing negotiations on full-year spending bills to continue. Senate colleagues are developing their own version of a funding extension. Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD) has continued to emphasize that avoiding a government shutdown remains the immediate priority while acknowledging that negotiations with Democrats will ultimately be necessary to move any funding legislation through the Senate's 60-vote threshold.

At the same time, Senate Republicans spent much of last week wrestling with a separate legislative challenge: whether and how to advance another budget reconciliation package. The White House has intensified its push for legislation that would provide tens of billions of dollars in additional funding for ongoing military operations related to the conflict with Iran while also incorporating Republican priorities such as the SAVE Act. The House previously approved budget instructions authorizing committees to develop reconciliation legislation that could include roughly $95 billion in new spending authority, including funding for military operations, agricultural assistance, and implementation of the SAVE Act. The Senate has shown considerably less enthusiasm for moving quickly. Although President Donald Trump has urged Senate Republicans to remain in session until both the reconciliation package and the SAVE Act are enacted, Majority Leader Thune has publicly acknowledged the procedural and political challenges facing the legislation. Republicans

hold only a narrow Senate majority, and several members have expressed reservations about both the size of the package and the strategy for advancing it.

This week will be important to the budget reconciliation process and Senate action on a continuing resolution will set the stage for House-Senate negotiations on the measure in September. Lawmakers, staff and advocates are looking forward to the respite August brings before then.

How does this impact State School Board Associations?

For school boards, the House-passed continuing resolution would provide short-term stability by maintaining federal education funding generally at current levels through December 4 and reducing the immediate risk of a government shutdown. With pending Senate action before their summer recess, it seems likely the Senate will do the same. If ultimately adopted, the move to bar the implementation of the proposed OMB rule will hopefully provide a degree of certainty for currently awarded federal grants that could be subject to termination under the proposed draft rule. Unfortunately, districts should not expect new funding increases or certainty about full-year FY 2027 allocations until Congress completes the appropriations process. The competing reconciliation debate could further consume lawmakers' time and complicate negotiations, so school leaders should plan conservatively, monitor federal cash-flow guidance and prepare for continued budget uncertainty into late fall.

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3. In Brief – Last Week in Washington

AI HEARING SPOTLIGHTS RISKS TO CAREER PATHWAYS, ENTRY-LEVEL JOBS

On Wednesday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety convened to examine how artificial intelligence is reshaping work, with senators and witnesses warning that the greatest risks may lie in disrupted career pathways rather than mass job loss. Chairman Jim Banks (R-IN) and Ranking Member John Hickenlooper (D-CO) described AI as part of a "fourth industrial revolution," noting that early evidence points to weaker hiring for entry-level workers and changing job responsibilities but little broad unemployment so far. They also highlighted their bipartisan AI Workforce PREPARE Act, which would provide federal agencies with better data on how AI is affecting jobs. Ken Clark, president and CEO of EmployIndy in Indianapolis, testified that AI in sectors such as health care is "augmenting workers, not replacing them." However, he warned that if entry-level experiences are automated away, employers will lose the pipelines that turn apprentices and junior staff into senior professionals, making career-connected learning and local workforce boards increasingly important. Carol Rogers, director of the Indiana Business Research Center, presented state data showing that job postings are declining in "high-AI-exposure" occupations even as wages rise. She argued that the pattern reflects market-based reallocation rather than mass job elimination and urged the adoption of standardized definitions and stronger links between federal and state data systems to track task-level changes. Other witnesses, including labor economist Liya Palagashvili and Opportunity@Work's Justin Heck, emphasized that current statistics were designed for an earlier economy and that AI may be slowing hiring pipelines and hollowing out the gateway jobs workers use to advance. They argued that policy should focus on skills-based hiring, tax neutrality

between investments in machines and people, and timely, disaggregated data to ensure that AI-driven innovation strengthens worker mobility instead of quietly narrowing it.

SENATE HELP COMMITTEE ADVANCES NOMINEES, BIPARTISAN EDUCATION BILLS

On Thursday, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee held a markup covering three Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) nominations and 10 pieces of legislation. Chairman Bill Cassidy (R-LA) supported all three nominees, including David Kaufman to lead the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR), after securing assurances that Kaufman would not be involved in vaccine policy decisions. Ranking Member Bernie Sanders (I-VT) opposed the nominations of Kaufman and Keith Sonderling to serve as Labor Secretary, citing concerns about vaccine misinformation and labor policy, respectively. The committee ultimately favorably reported all nominations under consideration including Erica Schwartz to serve as the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The central legislative debate of the markup involved S. 5046, a bipartisan bill introduced by Sens. Tim Kaine (D-VA), Susan Collins (R-ME), and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) that would prevent the administration from transferring four Department of Education (ED) offices—including the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services and the offices responsible for elementary and secondary education, postsecondary education, and Indian education—to other federal agencies. Democrats, including Sens. Patty Murray (D-WA) and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), argued that the administration's interagency agreements represented an unlawful attempt to dismantle ED without congressional approval. Sen. Tommy Tuberville (R-AL) countered that reducing federal bureaucracy would better serve students. The bill advanced by a 13–9 vote. S. 4097, the State-Based Loan Awareness Act, led by Murkowski, would allow states to inform student loan borrowers about nonprofit, state-based lenders offering rates as favorable as those available through federal PLUS loans. The bill includes safeguards requiring borrowers to exhaust their federal loan options first and receive disclosures covering the full term of a loan. It advanced by a 20–2 vote. Other measures advanced included the bipartisan READ Act, which addresses literacy instruction and passed 20–2; the 21st Century Dyslexia Act, which would establish a distinct category for dyslexia under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); the RISE Act, which would facilitate the transfer of K–12 disability documentation to higher education institutions; the College Transparency Act; the Health Information Privacy Reform Act; the Railroad Retirement Board Stability Act; and the Emergency Savings Enhancement Act. Most received broad bipartisan support. Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT) raised concerns that the dyslexia legislation could conflict with definitions already used by 27 states, while Sen. Ashley Moody (R-FL) withdrew an amendment addressing "ghost student" fraud after Cassidy committed to holding a hearing on the issue in September. It is unclear if any of these bills passed by the HELP Committee has a path to enactment before the end of the 119th Congress.

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4. New Publications

Who Can Receive A Scholarship? The Eligible K-12 Student Population Under The New Federal Education Freedom Tax Credit

American Federation for Children (July 2026)

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5. In the News

Trump Administration Concedes That It Canceled Research Grants in Blue States
NBC News (July 24, 2026)

As Massachusetts Codifies Science of Reading, Experts Expect Results to Take a Few Years
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Teaching, Training, Transforming: AI's Role In America's Future
The Washington Times | U.S. Rep. Tim Walberg (R-MI) (July 26, 2026)

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DHS final rule could hinder students' access to food, healthcare, AASA warns
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How a years-long rise in teacher turnover reshaped American classrooms
Chalkbeat (July 30, 2026)

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THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

6. Weekly Calendar

Wednesday, August 5, 2026

Markup: Senate Commerce Committee
Subject: The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation will hold a markup on S.737, the "Shielding Children's Retinas from Egregious Exposure on the Net (SCREEN) Act"; S.1748, the "Kids Online Safety Act" (KOSA); S. 4199, the "Youth AI Privacy Act"; S.4407, the "Children's Health, Advancement, Trust, Boundaries, and Oversight in Technology (CHATBOT) Act"; S. 5171, "Children's Artificial Intelligence Toy Safety Act of 2026"; and vote on a promotion list in the Coast Guard.
Time: 10:00 a.m.
Contact: Live stream available **here.**

Webinar: Enhanced School Safety Using Behavioral Threat Assessment
Subject: The U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) will hold a virtual presentation highlighting key findings and implications from its decades of research on the attackers perpetrating school violence and how education practitioners can best align support systems in K-12 schools.
Time: 12:00 p.m.

Contact: Register **here.**

Webinar: Supporting and Sustaining a Diverse Teacher Workforce
Subject: EdTrust and the Learning Policy Institute will hold a webinar on why teacher diversity matters and what policymakers, advocates, and education leaders must do to protect and strengthen a more racially and ethnically diverse teacher workforce.
Time: 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Contact: Register **here.**

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7. Future Hearings and Events

Wednesday, August 12, 2026

Webinar: Homeroom with Education Leaders — Math Policy and Practice
Subject: The Hunt Institute will hold a webinar exploring how states are rethinking how mathematics is taught, assessed, and supported, connecting bold policy decisions with implementation strategies that expand access to rigorous, high-quality math for all students.
Time: 2:00 p.m.
Contact: Register **here.**

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8. On The Floor of Congress This Week

Senate Floor
H.R.6500, vehicle for Continuing Resolution

House Floor
The House is out of session for August recess.

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

U.S. House and Senate 2026 Schedule
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U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. Senate Budget Committee
U.S. House Budget Committee
Congressional Budget Office
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10. About BPAG

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- 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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- Advocacy Training
- Association Management
- Strategic Communications
- Policy Events

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