

# AASA/ASBO Advocacy Update

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# Overview

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# Advocacy 101

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# School Nutrition

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Senate Agriculture (AG) Committee is still in the early process of reauthorizing the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act, as they have yet to introduce priorities or an official release date for the bill.

We are optimistic the Senate bill will exclude provisions that give us pause. However, we are not yet in the clear, as Senate GOP members remain focused on the rate of improper payments to the Federal School Meals programs. The House proposal is still in its infancy, but we are concerned with the rate of bills focused on School Meal Debt.

AASA and ABSO Priorities: (1) Return to a Five-Year Administrative Review Cycle, (2) modify the Smart Snacks in Schools Rule (3) increase USDA Foods (Commodities) support for the School Breakfast Program, and (4) oppose any effort to block grant the School Meals Programs.

# Higher Education Act

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This year, all eyes are on Sens. Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Patty Murray (D-WA) as they work towards negotiating a bipartisan Higher Education Act. Bill text for HEA was set to drop in April. However, negotiations over Title IX, Title II, and Title IV programs have stalled the reauthorization.

In the House side, it's also unclear whether Chairman Scott and Ranking Member Foxx will come to a bipartisan agreement on HEA. Last session of Congress' PROSPER (Republican) and AIM HIGHER (Democrat) acts were very different visions for the future of the nation's higher education system, and neither party wants to reopen barely healed wounds.

AASA endorsed the Preparing and Retaining Education Professionals (PREP) Act, which offers Congress a practical approach for updating Title II of HEA by supporting TEACH grants and the PSLF program.

# Medicaid

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AASA looking to advance bill that would reduce administrative obstacles to billing Medicaid called *The Improving Medicaid in Schools Act*

STOP treating school districts like they are hospitals and clinics

Small and rural districts much less likely to participate in Medicaid due to 1) inability to take on the administrative and compliance related paperwork, 2) inability to find a qualified healthcare provider for provision of services and 3) inability to afford a third-party biller to handle paperwork.

AASA solution: streamline the Medicaid program paperwork to ensure districts of all sizes can participate in the program and guarantee more equitable participation in Medicaid program by rural/small districts.

Simplify the reimbursement stream; open districts up to partnerships with Managed Care Organizations and reduce unnecessary red-tape and confusion

# E-Rate

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FCC is considering a rule that would cap the Universal Service Fund, and place E-Rate under a cap with the Rural Health Care program.

Our strategy is to ensure the FCC hears loud and clear about the importance of the E-Rate program, how the proposed partner cap creates an arbitrary competition between complementary programs, and threatens to undermine the viability of the overarching program.

We will need all hands on deck: The comment period was super short, but we were granted a two week extension. **Comments are due July 29.** We need YOU to submit comments on your district letter head.

On the hill: make sure your delegation knows what E-Rate means to your district and that we oppose the FCC action. Also, we support the amendment in the Financial Services Approps bill (house side) that prohibits the use of federal dollars to implement such a rule.

# FY20 Appropriations

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President Trump released his FY20 budget on March 11. It is built on a premise of cuts to non-defense discretionary funding. It is described as 'dead on arrival' and 'non-starter', with Congress expected to do their own work.

Eliminates 29 education programs (incl. Title II and IV), and cuts edu by more than \$10 b (12%), but has \$5 for a TTC.

Threat of shutdown for FY20, and safe path for edu is anything but certain.

House Democrats introduced bill to increase USED funding by \$4.4 b for 2020; Funds USED at \$75.9 b (\$11.9 b /16.6% above Trump levels)

The bill that passed the House has to go to the Senate. While they are expected to support raising the caps, the House Dems \$4.4 b increase for USED is probably too rich for their blood.

Current status: House has passed bills, including two minibuses, but no big deal on cap increase/debt ceiling

# IDEA Full Funding

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This year, we bipartisan IDEA Full Funding bills in both the House and Senate.

These bills won't get a lot of attention this year, but do provide a pressure point in our annual appropriations process to make sure we are protected in FY20 conversations.

On the hill:

- Talk about the impact of IDEA under funding on your district. How many local dollars do you have to use to cover the federal shortfall? If IDEA were more fully funded, what would you be able to do with the freed up local dollars?
- Ask your Senators to sign on to the IDEA Full Funding Act (S 866)
- Ask your Representative to sign on to the IDEA Full Funding Act (HR 1878)

# Infrastructure

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When it comes to school infrastructure, AASA and ASBO International are engaged in two conversations:

- To ensure that the nation's public schools have an explicit path of engagement and support in any broader infrastructure package
- To address tax extenders, school construction, and tax credit bonds.

Ask your senators and representatives to support efforts to reinstate QZABs as part of a broader tax extenders package. In the House, the bill to advocate support for is H.R. 3301, the Taxpayer Certainty and Disaster Tax Relief Act of 2019.

Ask your elected officials to sign on to the Rebuild America's Schools Act (H.R. 865 / S. 266).

# Forest Counties

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The 115th Congress funded the SRS program for the short term, which extended SRS funding for fiscal year (FY) 2017–2018. The short-term FY 17–18 SRS funding has now expired.

SRS is critical to support essential safety, fire, police, road and bridge, and education services in your community.

Congress must act to protect and preserve this program in both the short and long term.

- Over the short term, Congress must act to ensure funding for FY20, and retroactively for FY19, via the annual appropriations process.
- Over the long term, they must enact the Forest Management for Rural Stability Act to provide permanent funding for county and education services as forest communities and schools fight for economic survival.

# Get Involved, Stay Engaged

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AASA Policy Blog The Leading Edge

AASA Advocacy on Twitter (@AASAhq)

ASBO International on Twitter (@ASBOIntl)

Weekly & Monthly Updates

Websites & Newsletters

- EdWeek
- [Politics K12](#)
- [Morning Education](#) (Politico)
- [Real Clear Education](#)
- [Cabinet Report](#)

# Contact Us!

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# Questions?

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