Latest Congressional Updates

In late December, before it broke for the holidays, Congress passed an FY20 budget that funds the Department of Education (ED) through September 2020. The bill increases ED funding by $1.4 billion. Within ED, virtually every program received an increase. This is the third largest increase for ED since FY 2011 (the year that ED funding started being cut or frozen). As a reminder, the original Senate allocation provided the bill with only a $223 million increase, while the original House allocation provided an $11.8 billion increase. So, while the final bill provided some solid increases to education programs that directly impact schools and principals (see chart below), our work continues to ensure that these programs are funded at ESSA-authorized levels. **One bright spot in this bill: Title II-A received $2.1 billion, an increase of $76 million over current levels.**

The President’s FY21 Budget is slated to be released in early February, with hopes that a final FY21 budget can be approved and signed by the President by late summer, ahead of the November elections. NAESP will be actively meeting with budget committee staff in February and March to push for higher allocations to the Ed-Labor-Health appropriation bill, which would lead to more available funding for education programs.
Youth Vaping

NAESP is actively lobbying Congress to take action against the youth e-cigarette public health crisis. More than 5.3 million middle and high school students used e-cigarettes in 2019, an alarming increase of more than 3 million in two years. The use of e-cigarettes places a new generation at risk of nicotine addiction and tobacco use. NAESP has joined other education and public health groups to advocate for the passage of H.R. 2339, the Reversing the Youth Tobacco Epidemic Act of 2019.

Most important, the legislation would remove flavored vaping and tobacco products from the market. In a recent survey, seven out of ten youth said they used e-cigarettes “because they come in flavors I like.” Flavors mask the harsh taste of tobacco and make it easier for kids to become addicted. It is critical for members of Congress to hear from their constituents—especially parents and educators—on the importance of advancing H.R. 2339.

SCOTUS: Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue

The Supreme Court heard oral arguments in a case (Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue) that could have wide-ranging implications on states’ abilities to provide public funding for private schools. The case centers on a now disbanded Montana program that provided a dollar-for-dollar tax credit for individuals who donated to organizations that provided scholarships for students to attend private schools. Montana’s executive branch issued an administrative rule barring the scholarships from being used at religiously affiliated schools, citing the state constitution’s Blaine Amendment, which prohibits public dollars from being used at religiously affiliated school. The state’s high court agreed that the program violated the state’s constitution, prompting families that benefit from the program to sue. Last year, NAESP joined other national education groups in writing an amicus brief in support of the state of Montana.

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