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NCSDAE Washington Views

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Government Relations Report: January

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Washington is preparing for the Trump Administration. Congress reconvened yesterday and began the process of addressing health care. Like so much else with the new Administration, including its views of Education policy, details will be forthcoming.

Secretaries of Education and Labor Confirmation Hearings

We do know that Secretary of Education designate Betsy DeVos will have her confirmation hearing on January 11 before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP). While some of her views are well known, others remain to be revealed. Based on what we know, we can say with some confidence that she wants to devolve more authority over education to the States, give the States more flexibility in how they spend federal dollars, reduce regulation, promote choice, and expand the use of vouchers. Her hearing can be seen on the HELP Committee web site (go to US Senate, click on Committees, click on Health, Education ..., and you will see the announcement on the right side of the page). Yo9u7 can also watch it on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/iO1-YSXAJx4>

We have submitted a question to the Committee and hope that Senators will question the nominee about her views on Adult Education.

(The Committee has not yet posted a hearing date for Secretary of Labor designate Andrew Puzder, although it is likely to take place the following week.)

In a late breaking development, Senate Democrats have asked that the DeVos hearing be postponed because ethics officials have not completed their review of her finances. Nor has she signed an agreement addressing possible conflicts of interest. No word yet on whether the hearing will be delayed.

Funding

The Congressional Budget process is confusing in the best of circumstances. Last year, Republicans on the House Budget Committee proposed a budget that, if implemented, would have balanced the budget within 10 years – without raising taxes – by \$6.5 trillion over ten years; one trillion of it from non-defense discretionary programs. The full House never voted on this proposal. The Senate did not do a budget resolution.

But, next week the Senate will finally consider a Budget Resolution for FY 2017. This is essentially a vehicle to allow the Senate to dismantle the Affordable Care Act (ACA) through the process known as Budget Reconciliation.

Reconciliation is the process by which the House and Senate Budget Committees instruct other Committees of jurisdiction to make changes in entitlement programs to achieve a certain level of savings. The most important things to

remember about Reconciliation are it affects only entitlements and the bills require only a majority vote, instead of the usual 60 votes it takes to get a bill through the Senate.

The Senate bill gives the relevant Committees less than a month to report bills that cut the deficit by at least \$1 billion, although the result could be much larger. There is no expectation that the Senate HELP Committee, which jurisdiction over part of the ACA will seek to achieve any savings through changes in student financial aid. The House is likely to take up this Budget Resolution after the Senate completes work.

We are awaiting details on future funding proposals.

As you may recall, Congress passed and the President signed a Continuing Resolution for FY 2017 that is in effect until April 28. According to staff, by the beginning of March, Congress will have to decide how it wants to close the books on 2017 as it works on funding for FY 2018. Thus far, the focus has been on health-related entitlements. Staff expects the Administration to send the Hill a Budget document that provides some guidance about how it intends to proceed.

We do know that during the campaign, President-elect Trump proposed the so-called "Penny Plan" in which funding for non-defense discretionary programs would be funded at 1 percent below the previous year's total. According to the well-regarded Center on Budget and Policy Priorities this would mean that by 2026, "non-defense appropriations would be about 29 percent below current levels, after accounting for inflation." Obviously, exempting a program or set of programs like the National Institutes of Health, law and border enforcement, and Veterans and the like, would inflict deeper cuts on the remainder. We don't know whether this is still Administration thinking.

As a result, ultimate decision-making authority was left to the Appropriations Committees.

- New Members, New Friends

The House has not completed its committee assignments, but the Committee for Education Funding reports that the following members will be joining the House Appropriations Committee:

- Scott Taylor (R-VA),
- Dan Newhouse (R-WA) and
- Rep. John Moolenaar (R-MI) will be joining the House Appropriations Committee

The new Senators on Committees with responsibility for Education are:

HELP

- Maggie Hassan (D-NH)
- Tim Kaine (D-VA)
- Todd Young (R-IN)

Appropriations

- John Kennedy (R-LA)
- Joe Manchin (D-WV)
- Marco Rubio (R-FL)
- Chris Van Hollen (D-MD)

Please reach out to these new Members and invite them to see Adult Education programs in action.

National Council of State Directors of Adult Education

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