

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
GRADUATE-PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

Legislative Letters

December 17, 2018

Updates in Higher Education



Image Credit: Kaylynne Glover, "The Capitol"

Advocacy groups and legislators both are mobilizing against the Department of Education's proposed changes to Title IX, through submitting comments to the register and drafting legislation. Meanwhile, a stop-gap measure was passed to keep the government from shutting down until December 21st, but it doesn't look like we're any closer to passing the remaining funding bills in time. Plus, in this edition, you'll find updates on our efforts on Title IX, our upcoming LAD, and a Call to Action to support employer supported student loan assistance.

To view previous editions and to subscribe to our newsletter, check out our [Legislative Letters blog](#)! If you have questions, suggestions, or are interested in contributing to the newsletter, or would like to be a part of the Legislative Concerns Committee, please contact the Director of Legislative Affairs, Kaylynne Glover, at legislative@nagps.org. To provide feedback on the newsletter, you can also follow the link at the end of the Letter to fill out a quick survey. To find out more about the ratified NAGPS [Legislative](#) and [Advocacy](#) Platforms, be sure to follow these links.

Updates

TITLE IX

We are preparing an official statement in response to the Department of Education's proposed Title IX rules. This statement will be used to help us draft the NAGPS comment as well as provide guidance to help you draft your own. We are also preparing statements that you can use to contact your legislators on this issue, both requesting them to put pressure on the Department of Education as well as to co-sponsor and support legislation that prioritizes student safety.

SPRING SUMMIT *and* LAD

The *2019 Spring Summit and Legislative Action Days* organization are underway. We are using the feedback that we received from this last session to guide our planning, and we encourage you to contact us if you have thoughts regarding the LAD. The tentative dates are March 9-11, so we encourage you to reserve that weekend to travel to DC, learn about issues that affect graduate education, and meet with your Congress members. Like last time, we will be offering alternative methods to participate if you are unable to travel, so stay tuned for that information.

CALL to ACTION

Congress is currently poised to take a step towards improving the student loan situation, but NAGPS needs everyone's help in making it happen. In both the House and the Senate there are currently proposals to extend employer-provided education assistance to repaying student loans. This means that, in addition to helping to provide tax-exempt tuition assistance to employees currently taking classes, they could also provide a tax-exempt contribution towards student loans. Not all graduate and professional programs are funded, and even for those that are, stipends are often insufficient to support us and our families. Furthermore, we all made it through an undergraduate degree that likely involved significant amounts of loans. As a result, [the average graduate student is \\$70,000 in debt, with many programs having a debt load of more than \\$100,000](#). To cap it off, these loans are typically at [higher interest rates than those provided to undergraduate students](#).

These bills would help us pay off those loans. This is why NAGPS supports the passage of this language and encourages you to contact your legislators in support of these bills. The Senate bill, [S. 796](#), already has 23 cosponsors, and the House bill, [H.R. 795](#), already has 129 cosponsors! We need your help to get these bills for the rest of the way. Check which of your legislators are already cosponsored the bill. Thank the ones that have and ask the ones that have not to support them. There is a very good chance that we can get this language included in the broader oversight and tax package working its way through Congress. Let's make this happen!

ON A PERSONAL NOTE

Lastly, this *Legislative Letter* will be a particularly short one because yours truly has injured herself (carpal tunnel from the repeated stress movements of data entry, *thank you, graduate school*) and has express orders to minimize contact with a computer. Nevertheless, I have an obligation to provide you with the most important information I have, even if it is largely delivered through voice dictation. A big thank you to Jack Reid of MIT for his willingness to step up and draft the *Call to Action* above. It is a pleasure to serve when I have such an amazing support team.

THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Title IX

The Department of Education's (ED) proposed changes to Title IX are [officially on the federal register and will be open for comment until January 28th](#). In addition to push back from policymakers and victims rights advocacy groups, there has been [strong mobilization at the grassroots level](#), fueled by the #MeToo movement and the Kavanaugh hearings.

Borrower Defense to Repayment

[After a ruling that ordered the Department of Education \(ED\) to forgive the loans](#) of students who were victims of predatory lending, the ED has announced that [they will forgive the loans of about 15,000 borrowers](#), totaling approximately \$150 million dollars.

THE WHITE HOUSE AND OTHER AGENCIES

Staff Changes

[President Trump has selected William Barr as the new Attorney General](#), replacing Jeff Sessions. A former Attorney General under President George H. W. Bush, he will need to be confirmed by the Senate.

STEM Strategic Plan

President Trump [released a strategic plan to strengthen STEM education](#) in the United States, which lists as priorities strengthening STEM literacy, increasing diversity in STEM careers, and preparing the STEM workforce.

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

LEGISLATION

Appropriations

Congress continues to fight over the remaining appropriations bills. They approved a continuing resolution to [keep the government open until December 21st](#), but it remains unclear as to whether the remaining bills will pass in time, especially as the next time they will convene will be this Wednesday, [two days before the deadline](#). [President Trump wants a minimum of \\$5 billion for his border wall, while the Senate is only offering \\$1.6 billion](#). Democrats are refusing to go any higher since they will take the House in January; some believe that the first move the new Congress will make, two weeks after the would-be shutdown, [would be to pass another continuing resolution](#), so it doesn't benefit the Democrats to compromise now. If there is a partial government shutdown, [here's what will happen](#).

Title IX Protection and Campus Safety

There are two pieces of legislation that have been proposed that would protect Title IX from the proposed rulemaking in the Department of Education, both proposed by Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA). The first is the [Title IX Protection Act \(H.R. 4030 \[115\]\)](#) that codifies several of the rules that Secretary DeVos is attempting to replace. It was first proposed last year when the interim Title IX rules had been released and currently has 41 Democratic co-sponsors and is supported by several advocacy groups. The second is the [HALT Act \(H.R. 6464 \[115\]\)](#), which, while newer, has bipartisan support. This would allow institutions to be both sued by students and fined by the ED for failure to protect students.

A third bill in Congress, the [Campus Accountability and Safety Act \(H.R. 1949 \[115\]\)](#), would expand the Clery Act to require institutions to be transparent about actions they are taking to address sexual misconduct. It also requires the Department of Education to release regular statistics about campus relationship and sexual violence. It currently has 31 co-sponsors and, while primarily Democrat-led, it does have some bipartisan support.

IN RELATED NEWS...

RELEVANT READS

[HEA Reauthorization Can Reduce the Equity Gaps that Persist for Students of Color](#)

[The Trump Administration Is Quietly Denying Federal Housing Loans To DACA Recipients](#)

[Agencies at Loggerheads Over Gainful-Employment Data](#)

[NASPA's Initial Analysis of the Proposed Rule on Title IX, Part 1](#)

[On the Value of Dissertation Writing Groups](#)

[Navigating Graduate School While Managing a Chronic Illness](#)

[How Is Higher Ed Helping To Close The Global Knowledge Gap?](#)

[How I Went From Graduate School Student to Amazon Warehouse Janitor](#)

[International students steer clear of graduate programmes in the United States](#)

[Schooling the feds: what national higher-education policy can learn from Tennessee | Opinion](#)

[UNC teaching assistants go on strike over Confederate monument](#)

[Trump Administration Takes Aim at National Climate Assessment,](#)

REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

[Graduate Student Mental Health: Lessons from American Economics Departments, Harvard](#). We study the mental health of graduate students at Economics Ph.D. programs in the U.S. Using clinically validated surveys, we find that 18% of graduate students experience moderate or severe symptoms of depression and anxiety — more than three times the population average — and 11% report suicidal ideation in a two-week period.

[CBO's 10-Year Budget and Economic Projections](#): Presentation by Jeffrey F. Werling, Assistant Director of CBO's Macroeconomic Analysis Division, to the National Association of Forensic Economics, at the Southern Economic Association Annual Meetings, November 18, 2018.

[Science Policy Research Report: Student Visa Policy and the Scientific Workforce, NSF](#). This research report provides a rich descriptive picture of the distribution of students from abroad enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities on F-1 visas by country of origin and program of study over time. The primary data source informing this analysis is the universe of F-1 visa recipients (2004-2015).

[Monthly Budget Review for November 2018, CBO](#). The federal budget deficit was \$303 billion for the first two months of the fiscal year 2019, CBO estimates, \$102 billion more than the deficit recorded during the same period last year.

[CBO to Release Volume of Budget Options on December 13, CBO](#). On Thursday, December 13, CBO will release Options for Reducing the Deficit: 2019 to 2028. This report will describe 121 policy options that would decrease federal spending or increase federal revenues over the next decade.

[The Deficit Has Never Been This High When the Economy Was This Strong, CRFB.](#) This year, the budget deficit is projected to total about \$970 billion – 4.6 percent of GDP – up from \$666 billion (3.5 percent of GDP) in 2017. This borrowing is virtually unprecedented in current economic conditions.

[Options for Reducing the Deficit: 2019 to 2028, CBO.](#) CBO periodically issues a volume of options—this year’s installment presents 121—that would decrease federal spending or increase federal revenues. CBO’s website allows users to filter options by topic, date, and other categories.

[Director's Statement on CBO's Latest Volume of Budget Options, CBO.](#) Options for Reducing the Deficit: 2019 to 2028 is the latest edition of a report that CBO publishes periodically and describes 121 policy options that would decrease federal spending or increase federal revenues over the next decade.

FEEDBACK FOR LEGISLATIVE LETTERS

Our *Letter* is still new, and we would really appreciate your thoughts on it - after all, it’s for you! So please follow [this link](#) to fill out a quick survey so that we can best meet your needs.