

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
GRADUATE-PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

# Legislative Letters

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## Updates in Higher Education



Image Credit: Kaylynne Glover, "The Capitol" The

The student loan crisis is driving the day: A new poll finds that 2/3rds of Americans believe it's a significant threat to the economy. This sentiment is apparently mirrored by policy makers: The Department of Education is hiring outside consultants to examine their student loans, watchdog groups are calling for investigations into loan mismanagement, and legislation is being proposed to eliminate interest rates. And still progress continues on the appropriations front - the House Appropriations Committee has passed their first spending bill of FY20 with 6% increases in funding across the board, with increased education support. And Senator Alexander has announced intentions for a first draft of the HEA reauthorization to be released by the end of May - and several new pieces of education legislation have been introduced, hoping to garner enough support to be included.

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Contact: Kaylynne M. Glover, NAGPS Director of Legislative Affairs, [legislative@nagps.org](mailto:legislative@nagps.org)

# THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### Student Loans

The student loan crisis continues to be a primary focus in all levels of government, which isn't a surprise when [two-thirds of Americans polled say it's a threat to the economy](#) ([POLITICO/Morning Consult poll](#)), with around the same number having delayed major purchases because of them. However, only 6% say education issues are a priority when they vote for federal offices, though more than half of them support Senator Warren's proposed plan to cancel \$640 billion of student loans.

Appropriately, the Department of Education (ED) just released its [quarterly report on student aid](#). [CGS breaks it down for us](#): "enrollment in income-driven repayment plans continued to rise; approval of Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) applications slightly increased; new federal student loan defaults decreased; and delays persist in processing of borrower defense claims." Additionally, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has released its most recent [Pell Grant](#) and [student loan projections](#).

Secretary Betsy DeVos has recently [hired outside consultants](#) to look at the department's student loan portfolio while they consider selling off student debt to private investors, a move that would be met with legal and political challenges.

The left-leaning government accountability group, Democracy Forward, has asked for an [investigation of the ED's and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's handling of student loans](#). By law, the two agencies are required to work together, but the Trump administration cancelled information-sharing agreements between them in 2017.

### On-Campus Sexual Assaults

In a recent letter to Rep. Elissa Slotkin (D-MI), Secretary DeVos said that holding schools accountable for sexual assaults is "[one of my highest priorities](#)," as she strives to balance the rights of victims and accused.

### CCAMPIS (Child Care on Campus) Changes

The ED has adopted a [new policy in CCAMPIS that would give priority to private, third-party child care providers](#), as opposed to those provided by colleges and universities. [Senator Patty Murray \(D-WA\), ranking member of the Senate HELP, has issued a letter to Secretary DeVos](#) saying that this move is "contrary to the intent of CCAMPIS and undermines the federal investment in campus-based child care."

## THE WHITE HOUSE AND OTHER AGENCIES

A joint committee is being formed between the White House National Science and Technology Council and several federal agencies in order [to improve the quality of U.S.-based research](#). Part of the committee's focus will be to examine integrity issues and "inclusive and equitable settings" for research.

## IMMIGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENT CONCERNS

A federal district court has [temporarily stopped a policy within the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services \(USCIS\) that would change how a student's length of being "unlawfully present" would be determined](#). The original policy required USCIS to notify students before they began accruing unlawful presence, but the change would begin counting from the day they were out of status, even if they were unaware, or there was a reporting error by a school.

# THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

## LEGISLATION

### Appropriations

The first spending bill for FY20 has passed the House on a party-line vote. Appropriators have approved \$189.8 billion in the Labor-HHS-Education spending bill - a 6% increase in spending across the board - with \$75.9 billion going to the ED. It increases the maximum Pell Grant award by \$150 per award, federal aid programs by \$492 million, higher education programs by \$431 million, and the Federal Work Study program by \$304 million. The report language also requires the ED to provide monthly updates on stalled debt forgiveness claims and to be more judicious in working with for-profit colleges and student loan providers. (See more from [ACE](#), [CGS](#), [IHE](#), and [the Hill](#).) The Senate isn't likely to pass this bill without serious changes, a pattern we're likely to see for all of FY20 spending bills. Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Richard Shelby (R-AL) has already begun warning others that a [second shutdown might be inevitable if the debt ceiling isn't raised](#).

Several bicameral bills ([American Cures Act](#) and [American Innovation Act](#)) have been introduced that would provide guaranteed funding to top research agencies, including the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Defense Health Program, the Veterans Medical and Prosthetics Research Program, the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy Office of Science, the Department of Defense Science and Technology Programs, the National Institute of Standards and Technology Scientific and Technical Research, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Science Directorate.

## Higher Education Act

Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) has set the goal for a [committee markup of the HEA reauthorization for this month, releasing a draft of the bill by the end of May](#). The House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment held a hearing on strategies to improve student graduation rates and outcomes.

## Other Education Legislation

Several other bills have been introduced, hoping to garner enough support to be incorporated into the HEA reauthorization. One bill would [reauthorize the Child Care Access Means Parents in School \(CCAMPIS\) program](#) and would increase funding for grants to universities that provide on-campus child support for student parents. Another bill, the [Innovation Zone Act](#), would require the ED to release information on institutions of higher education that are engaging in innovative teaching and research programs to ensure that students and parents are making appropriate decisions about where to attend school, which is similar to the [College Transparency Act](#), which is gaining traction. The [ALERT Act](#) would require college and university top officials to be informed of sexual assault allegations against employees (led by Michigan congress members and inspired by the Larry Nassar scandal at the University of Michigan). The [STEM Opportunities Act](#) (HR 2528) focuses on identifying and removing barriers within STEM and education that keep women and minorities from staying in STEM fields. Finally, the [Leveraging Opportunities for Americans Now \(LOAN\) Act](#) (S 1292) replaced interest on federal student loans with a one-time, non-compounding fee, paid over the lifetime of the loan.

Additionally, the House passed a resolution ([H.Res. 327](#)) that would enhance financial literacy for colleges by increasing collaboration between the private and public sectors.

# THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

## LITIGATION

A federal judge has ruled that [plaintiffs may proceed with a challenge to President Trump's travel ban](#) which was [upheld by the Supreme Court last June](#). The ban prohibits individuals from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen from entering the United States. The federal judge ruled that these plaintiffs have “new information” that may show that the ban is not based on national security concerns.

# IN RELATED NEWS...

## RELEVANT READS

### Surviving Student Life

[Suicide-Prevention Training for All](#)

[How to Hope in Graduate School](#)

[Don't Sleep on Sleep](#)

[Mental health first aid in the higher education environment](#)

[Overextended and Overcommitted](#)

### Diversity and Inclusion

['Intersectionality and Higher Education'](#)

[Disabled in Graduate School: History and Progress](#)

[How men can help combat misogyny in graduate education](#)

[When Inclusion Just Makes Life Easier](#)

[Resources: Inclusion and Freedom of Expression](#)

### The Academy

[Anger in the Classroom](#)

[Scholarly Society in 'Crisis](#)

[Collaboration and Conflict in Academe](#)

[This Will Be The Biggest Disruption In Higher Education](#)

[Internationalization of Higher Education in the New Political Climate](#)

[Discrepancies in Estimates About Food Insecurity](#)

### Harassment and Discrimination

[Students Seek Professor's Ouster Over Harassment](#)

['Prolonged Institutional Failure' at Harvard](#)

[Protest at Princeton on Handling of Sex Assaults](#)

### Jobs

[How Not to Confront the Jobs Crisis](#)

[Admissions & Enrollment jobs in Other Jobs Outside Higher Education](#)

### Graduate Student Rights and Advocacy

[UT needs to finally eliminate tuition for graduate students](#)

[To Improve Grad Students' Pedagogical Training, the University Must Recognize GSU](#)

[GSC talks advisor relationships, elections and grad student block party](#)

[Georgia State To Establish Graduate School To Expand, Strengthen Graduate And](#)

[Professional Programs](#)

### In Government

[Congress Bolstering Its Access to S&T Expertise](#)

[An Interview with OSTP Director Kelvin Droegemeier](#)

[Poll: Voters Oppose Free College, Loan Forgiveness Report Examines Office of Federal Student Aid](#)  
[Young People Support Free College](#)  
[CBO: Federal Student Loan Program Will Run Deficit](#)

## REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

[Ensuring accountability and effectiveness at the Office of Federal Student Aid, AEI.](#) Congress should consider necessary updates to the statutory goals and structure of the performance-based organization (PBO). In doing so, it should ignore calls for more radical solutions such as jettisoning the structure or moving all Federal Student Aid (FSA) operations to another Cabinet agency. Instead, policymakers should consider updates to the PBO that address today's problems, such as transparency and oversight.

[CBO Finds Debt Rising in the President's Budget, CRFB.](#) The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released its analysis of the President's Fiscal Year 2020 budget Thursday showing the plan would result in substantially more debt over the decade than the White House claims. According to CBO, debt would rise from 78 percent of GDP today to 87 percent by 2029 under the President's budget, rather than falling to 71 percent of GDP as the Administration claims. Deficits will exceed \$1 trillion, rather than falling to \$202 billion as the Administration claims.

[CBO's Analysis of the President's FY 2020 Budget, CRFB.](#) The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released its estimate of the President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 budget using its own assumptions to evaluate the budget's policies. CBO's analysis shows that deficits and debt under the President's budget will rise over the next decade, rather than fall as the White House claims.

[Reviving Expired Tax Extenders Could Cost \\$150 Billion, CRFB.](#) Recent tax extenders proposals would revive nearly 30 temporary tax provisions that expired at the end of 2017, plus one that expired at the end of 2018. In total, we estimate that making all the tax breaks permanent without offsets would add about \$150 billion to the debt with interest, while extending them retroactively for 2018 and 2019 alone would cost over \$30 billion.

[Monthly Budget Review for April 2019, CBO.](#) The federal budget deficit was \$531 billion for the first seven months of fiscal year 2019, CBO estimates, \$145 billion more than the deficit recorded during the same period last year.

[Work organization and mental health problems in PhD student, Research Policy.](#) Research policy observers are increasingly concerned about the potential impact of current academic working conditions on mental health, particularly in PhD students. The aim of the current study is threefold. First, we assess the prevalence of mental health problems in a representative sample of PhD students in Flanders, Belgium (N = 3659). Second, we compare PhD students to three other samples: (1) highly educated in the general population (N = 769); (2) highly educated employees (N = 592); and (3) higher education students (N = 333). Third, we assess those organizational factors relating to the role of PhD students that predict mental health status. Results based on 12 mental health symptoms (GHQ-12) showed that 32% of PhD students are at risk of having or developing a common psychiatric disorder, especially depression. This estimate was significantly higher than those obtained in the comparison



groups. Organizational policies were significantly associated with the prevalence of mental health problems. Especially work-family interface, job demands and job control, the supervisor's leadership style, team decision-making culture, and perception of a career outside academia are linked to mental health problems.

[Updated Budget Projections: 2019 to 2029, CBO](#). CBO projects a deficit of \$896 billion for 2019—\$1 billion less than the deficit it projected in January. Federal debt held by the public is projected to grow from 78 percent of gross domestic product in 2019 to 92 percent in 2029.

[Director's Statement on CBO's Updated 10-Year Baseline Budget Projections, CBO](#). Overall, our baseline budget projections, which reflect the assumption that current laws generally remain in place, have changed little since January, when we released *The Budget and Economic Outlook: 2019 to 2029*. In our projections, federal debt continues to rise from its already high level because of persistently large budget deficits.

["Sanctuary" Jurisdictions: Federal, State, and Local Policies and Related Litigation, CRS](#). This CRS report discusses legal issues related to state and local measures limiting law enforcement cooperation with federal immigration authorities, as well as the federal government's efforts to counter those measures.

## **FEEDBACK FOR LEGISLATIVE LETTERS**

We'd love your feedback on our *Letter*, so please follow [this link](#) to fill out a quick survey so that we can best meet your needs.