

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
GRADUATE-PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

# Legislative Letters

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## Updates in Higher Education



Image Credit: Kaylynne Glover, "The Capitol"

International students, watch out: You now have to pay an additional \$150 to apply for a U.S. visa, a change that comes at the same time that the White House backs a proposal that favors highly-skilled workers over families for immigrants. Plus, we're getting a new head of DHS at the same time we get an opening for the department's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. But there is good news: A federal judge has ruled that President Trump's termination of the DACA program was unlawful, and the House has proposed legislation that would provide Dreamers with a path to citizenship. The House has also passed the first bill banning anti-LGBT discrimination, which is good because the White House is proposing the exact opposite for transgender persons access to housing and health care. But Congress remains legislatively deadlocked as the budget committee struggles to reach an agreement on the budget proposal and spending caps. What the details? Keep reading for more.

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# THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### Borrower-Defense

There are more than 158,000 outstanding borrower-defense claims, and Diane Janes, the Department of Education's (ED) Deputy Under Secretary said that there is [no timeline for processing them](#).

### Work-Study

The ED has announced a new pilot program that expands how the federal work-study program works, seeking to [update the program based on the needs of modern students](#). It would allow private-sector work options and more flexibility in the number of hours that a student can work. This would be a shift away from on-campus work, which is where [92% of work-study funds](#) currently go.

### Student Loans

Three more states are working to pass laws that would regulate student loan companies (Colorado, Maryland, New York, joining California, Connecticut, and Illinois), specifically aiming to [protect students from predatory lending practices](#).

While states are cracking down on student loan services, the ED has [extended its contracts with the largest loan providers](#), several of which are facing litigation for their policies. It has also hired the economic consulting firm FI Consulting to [examine its student loan portfolio](#), and McKinsey & Company will be making recommendations on the portfolio's management.

### Public Service Loan Forgiveness

Consumer and labor groups, led by the Student Loan Borrower Protection Center and the American Federation of Teachers, are asking that the Consumer Federal Protection Bureau (CFPB) [increase its oversight of federal student loans](#), particularly the ED's public service loan forgiveness (PSLF) program.

## THE WHITE HOUSE AND OTHER AGENCIES

### Transgender Protections

Two new proposed rules would end [health care](#) and [housing](#) protections for transgender persons. The health care rule would broaden the definition of sex discrimination in ObamaCare, effectively opening it up for interpretation and allowing transgender persons to be denied services by religious healthcare workers. The homeless rule would allow homeless shelters and federally-supported housing to deny appropriate housing to transgender persons.

## Staff Changes

[Ken Cuccinelli is expected to be picked to lead the Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\)](#). He is a former Virginia attorney general and prominent republican who advocates for hard-line immigration policies, often appearing on cable news networks.

[The director of DHS's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has been asked to resign](#) effective June 1st. L. Francis Cissna led the agency during the administration's implementation of the travel ban and attempts to limit undocumented immigrants claiming asylum on the southern border.

## IMMIGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENT CONCERNS

The White House is backing a proposal that would [favor highly-skilled workers over family-based migration](#). Not likely to make legislative progress, it's most likely to serve as a rallying point for Republican candidates in the 2020 elections. The proposal [does not address DACA recipients](#) or those under Temporary Protected Status (TPS).

A final rule was published in the federal register that [increases the fee that prospective international students must pay to get a U.S. visa](#). The increase of \$150 (from \$200 to \$350) is also accompanied by an increase in the fee that institutions of higher education must pay in order to host international students.

# THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

## LEGISLATION

### The Budget and Appropriations

[Congress has yet to reach a deal on the automatic spending cuts](#) that go into effect this year. Known as the sequestration, these cuts were put in place to be deliberately debilitating in order to force future Congresses to make a deal. No one wants the sequestration to take place, but we've yet to see much momentum on a deal. [The fundamental disagreement is on priorities](#): Republicans want to increase defense spending while also curb "obscene spending," and Democrats want to make sure that any increases in defense spending are matched domestically.

[The lack of movement on sequestration is just one case of legislative deadlock](#). The budget committee not only has to come to a deal on the automatic spending cuts, they also have yet to release an official budget proposal, mandatory for appropriations bills. But they have given appropriations committees enough guidelines to begin drafting and passing the spending bills, [which the House has been doing \(also here\)](#). The Senate isn't expected to begin this process until summer.

[The White House has revised their budget request for FY20](#), eliminating around \$3.9 billion from Pell surplus, in order to fund a new NASA moon mission. This proposal was met with strong pushback by

Democrats and education advocacy organizations and isn't likely to be taken seriously by either party in Congress.

## Education Legislation

Several new education-related legislation has been introduced. Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA) has proposed a bill that would increase resources for sexual assault survivors on campuses ([“Survivor Outreach and Support on Campus Act” or SOS](#)); Senators Bill Cassidy, M.D. (R-LA), Bob Casey (D-PA), Maggie Hassan (D-NH) and Todd Young (R-IN) have introduced bipartisan legislation that would remove barriers for students with disabilities ([RISE Act](#)); Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL), Angus King (I-ME), Tina Smith (D-MN), and Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ) and Representative Joe Neguse (D-CO) has re-introduced (for the fourth time) a bill that would expand the use of open educational resources, helping to alleviate the cost of college for students ([“The Affordable College Textbook Act”](#)), which was supported through appropriations last year; Representative and House Science Committee Chair Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX) has reintroduced a bill designed to increase underrepresented groups in STEM fields ([“STEM Opportunities Act”](#)). Senator Mark Warner (D-VA) has reintroduced three pieces of legislation, all aimed at helping to alleviate student debt ([“The Empowering Students through Enhanced Financial Counseling Act”](#), the [“Reverse Transfer Efficiency Act”](#), and the [Joint Consolidation Loan Separation Act”](#)).

## LGBT Protections

For the first time in history, [the House has passed a bill banning anti-LGBT discrimination](#), expanding the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Fair Housing Act to include sexual orientation and gender identity (“The Equality Act”). While it is unlikely that Senator Mitch McConnell will let this bill onto the floor of the Senate, and even more unlikely that President Trump would sign it, the legislation does signal progress on protections for the LGBTQ community.

## DACA

Two bills have passed the House Judiciary Committee that would give DACA, TPS, and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) recipients a path to citizenship, given they meet specific requirements (the [“Dream Act of 2019”](#) and the [“American Promise Act of 2019”](#))

## HEARINGS

### For-Profit Colleges

The Department of Education’s principal deputy under secretary, Diane Jones, appeared before the [House Oversight Committee over the agency’s policies on for-profit colleges](#). The ED was criticized for its continued use of a for-profit college accreditor that had failed to meet specific standards of support and Argosy University, a for-profit institution whose access to federal aid was terminated earlier this year for failing to distribute funds to students.

# THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

## LITIGATION

### DACA

A federal judge has ruled that [President Trump's termination of the DACA program was unlawful](#) as it failed to abide by processes required for rule changes, including going through the public comment period and adequately explaining the decision.

## IN RELATED NEWS...

## OPPORTUNITIES AND WEBINARS

### Title: Tools for Academic Engagement in Public Policy (Free)

When: 3 weeks, 1-3 hours per week

Host: MIT

Summary: Led by Chappell Lawson (Faculty Director) and Dan Pomeroy (Senior Policy Advisor), and created in partnership with Meghan Perdue (SHASS Digital Learning Fellow), this short online course provides researchers the tools they need to effectively engage with and policymakers and inform the development of public policy with their work.

[Register](#)

## RELEVANT READS

[Being a PhD student shouldn't be bad for your health](#)

[Investing in Student Mental Health: Opportunities and Benefits for College Leadership](#)

[Outcome-Based Graduate School?](#)

[Hacking Grad School](#)

[Moving On](#)

[In Praise of a Nonelite Education](#)

[Why I Write for the Public](#)

[Life Outside the Lab](#)

[Academic Minute: Chronic Fatigue Syndrome](#)

[The Shape of Higher Ed to Come](#)

[3 changes higher ed leaders should be ready to make](#)

[Here's how graduate students can truly take advantage of their summer break](#)

[How Much Do You Know About Higher Ed? Take Our Quiz](#)

[New Effort to Examine Postsecondary Value](#)

## **Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice**

[Texas Professors Could Be Criminally Charged if They Don't Report Sexual Violence](#)

[Born to Win, Schooled to Lose](#)

[Testing and Fasting](#)

[Let's Make the Admissions Process More Equitable](#)

[#Gamergate Meets #MeTooPhD](#)

[Teaching Evals: Bias and Tenure](#)

[Report: Income, Race Disparities Persist in Higher Education Opportunities](#)

[2 Decades of Abuse, 177 Victims, No Action](#)

## **In Government**

[From loan cancellation to Pell Grant expansion: Democratic candidates' ideas for higher education](#)

## **News From You**

[Graduate-Professional Student Congress Holds Annual Awards Ceremony, Inaugurates New Leadership Team](#)

## **REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS**

[Benchmarks 2019: Second Place America? Increasing Challenges to US Scientific Leadership, Task Force on American Innovation.](#)

The US share of global R&D is diminishing while China is on track to surpass the US in R&D expenditures. South Korea, Germany, the United Kingdom and China all have created national strategies to increase government investment in science research. To help sustain US leadership, the report calls for increased federal investments in scientific research and human capital.

[Differences in Master's and Doctoral Enrollment in Science, Engineering, and Health in 2017, NSF.](#)

Graduate enrollment by degree level and field of study are available for the first time through the 2017 Survey of Graduate Students and Postdoctorates in Science and Engineering (GSS), which allows for the monitoring of both master's and doctoral enrollment trends for science, engineering, and health (SEH) fields to assess the potential future stock of SEH personnel. These new data show notable differences in the composition and financial support of master's and doctoral students in SEH fields of study. The survey is sponsored by the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES) within the National Science Foundation (NSF) and by the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

[Federal Student Aid's Process to Select Free Application for Federal Student Aid Data Elements and Students for Verification, U.S. Department of Education.](#)

FSA did not evaluate its process for selecting FAFSA data elements to verify. FSA also did not effectively evaluate three of its four processes we reviewed for selecting students for verification but did effectively evaluate one process. Additionally, FSA did not evaluate the effectiveness of its 30-percent limitation for selecting students it required postsecondary educational institutions (institutions) to verify. Finally, FSA did not monitor its processes for selecting students for verification to ensure the processes performed as expected and any significant differences were addressed. As a result, there is no reasonable assurance that the verification processes effectively identified FAFSAs with errors that would result in improper payments.

*Want to let us know how we can improve? [Give us feedback!](#)*