

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
GRADUATE-PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

# Legislative Letters

May 31, 2020

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## Updates in Higher Education

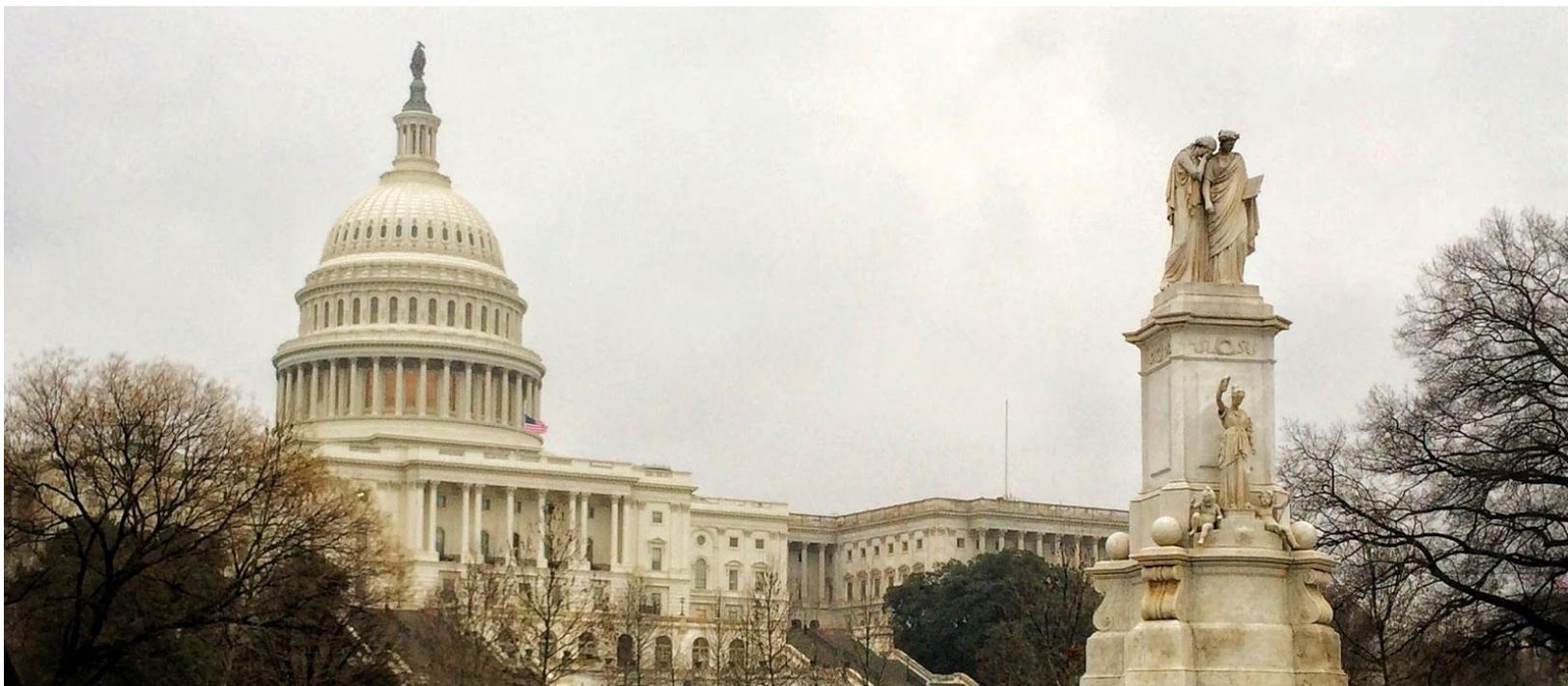


Image Credit: Kaylynne Glover, "The Capitol"

As states are beginning to open up after the coronavirus pandemic, the Department of Education investigated foreign funding in higher education. The Department of Education has also continued to face backlash for how they are distributing CARES Act funding as well as the new Title IX regulations. Education groups are asking for Pell Grants to be doubled, and a bill was introduced to the Senate to expand the National Science Foundation.

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# THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### Foreign Funding of Higher Education

The Department of Education found [\\$6 billion from other countries](#), including Russia and China, had been unreported by colleges and universities from across the nation. According to the Higher Education Act, any foreign gifts of more than \$250,000 must be reported, and House Republicans are monitoring the situation. However, the Department of Education is not able to easily access the information from institutions, because schools believe the Freedom of Information Act prevents the Education Department from giving the congressmen access to the data it receives.

### CARES Act Money Update

In the past several weeks there has been more confusion about the [CARES Act money](#) from colleges and universities. The Department of Education, who had previously given guidelines regarding emergency student aid, has said they will not enforce these rules. However, this still does not give financial aid offices a clear answer on whether undocumented students can receive emergency grants. Also, [for-profit colleges received 9% of the CARES Act funding](#) for colleges and universities, even though they only serve around 5.4%, whereas community colleges only received 22% of the funding for 32% of the students.

### Student Loan Borrowers Take a Credit Hit

In addition, the [Great Lakes Educational Loan Services](#) accidentally reported information about federal student loan borrowers not currently paying their loans, causing nearly 5 million people to have their credit score penalized. The CARES Act suspended required loan payments during the crisis, so this hit to people's credit scores was inappropriate. Now, Democrats are asking Secretary DeVos to take "immediate and aggressive" action against the organization. Great Lakes and the Education Department do not believe there has been lasting damage, though.

# THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

## LEGISLATION

### Pell Grants

On May 18, 77 education groups asked Congress to double the maximum amount of money [the Pell Grant](#) could offer. This would help ensure the long-term viability of the Pell Grants, and would help families who are struggling more now.

### **Democrats ask new Title IX regulations be rescinded**

Democratic representatives Jackie Speier [CA-14], Annie Kuster [NH-02], Ayanna Pressley [MA-07], Elissa Stokin [MI-08] and 97 other representatives wrote a [letter](#) to Secretary Betsy DeVos on May 22, requesting the new Title IX regulations be rescinded. Many are still concerned that the new rules jeopardize students' rights and that it harms victims of sexual assault.

### **Endless Frontier Act**

On May 27, Senator Chuck Schumer [D-NY] introduced the bipartisan [Endless Frontier Act](#), which would give an additional \$100 billion to develop new technologies at the National Science Foundation (NSF) and Commerce Department. It would also rename the National Science Foundation to the [National Science and Technology Foundation \(NSTF\)](#).

# IN RELATED NEWS...

## **GRADUATE SCHOOL AND CAMPUS CLIMATE**

Due to the financial losses from the coronavirus pandemic, [colleges and universities are making budget cuts, including from retirement benefits](#). For example, Duke University is cutting the Faculty and Staff Retirement 403(b) plan for a year starting July 1, after already having a hiring freeze, suspension of salary increases, new construction, and more. Georgetown University also announced that they will suspend all contributions to their retirement plan. However, other schools are planning more permanent cuts to their employee retirement accounts.

## **RELEVANT READS**

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[With DeVos rollback, Legislature must act on campus assault bill](#)

[New Grads Say Discrimination on Campuses Not Taken Seriously](#)

[The Challenge of Equity in Higher Education Under COVID-19](#)

### **The State of Higher Education**

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[Can College Be Saved in the COVID-19 Era?](#)

[The coronavirus pandemic is straining higher education. But there's opportunity here, too.](#)

[Can Higher Education Get America Back to Work?](#)

## **Career Advice**

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