



The Consortium of State School Boards Associations Weekly Education Report

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The COSSBA Education Report, a weekly publication, provides an executive summary of public policy issues affecting American K-12 education and employment. **Please use the bookmarks below to navigate to your area of interest:**

1. **News, Publications, & Updates on COSSBA Policy Priorities**
 - **School Boards**
 - **Fordham Examines School Boards And Their Constituents:** On Tuesday, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute **hosted a webinar** titled “Are School Boards Out of Touch With Their Constituents?”
2. **Budget and Appropriations Wrap-up**
 - **Impact on State School Board Associations**
3. **In Brief – Last Week in Washington**
 - **Judge Temporarily Blocks Trump Admin Shutdown RIFs:** On Wednesday, a U.S. District Court judge **temporarily blocked** the Trump administration’s plan to terminate thousands of federal workers, including sharp cuts at the Department of Education.
 - **Afterschool Alliance Releases 2025 “America After 3pm Report:** On Wednesday, the Afterschool Alliance **hosted an event** to announce the release of their 2025 “**America After 3PM**” report.
 - **“Anchor Institutions” Role in Connecting Underserved Communities:** On Wednesday, Broadband Breakfast hosted its weekly **Broadband Breakfast Live Online** discussion on the role of “anchor institutions,” including schools, libraries, and healthcare facilities, in expanding broadband access and advancing digital equity.

4. New Publications

- **America After 3PM 2025**

Afterschool Alliance (October 2025)

The Afterschool Alliance's fifth edition of America After 3PM provides new insights about children and families during the hours of 3 to 6 p.m., when schools let out and many parents are working.

- **State of the States: Building a Strong Teacher Workforce for Students with Disabilities and English Learners**

National Council on Teacher Quality (September 2025)

The report finds that States should focus on six key policy matters to ensure that special education and English learner teachers are ready to support these growing student populations from day one and stop the revolving door of turnover.

5. In the News

- **Educators Say Oklahoma's School Cellphone Ban Has Been A 'Game Changer'**

Oklahoma Voice (October 13, 2025)

- **H-1B Visa Holders Handed Major Win by Supreme Court**

Newsweek (October 15, 2025)

- **Nearly 3 In 4 Families Lack After-School Program Access**

K-12 Dive (October 16, 2025)

- **Powerschool Hacker Sentenced. What Can Schools Take Away From The Incident?**

K-12 Dive (October 17, 2025)

6. Weekly Calendar - What's coming up this week?

- **The Evolving Role of School Principals:** The American Federation of School Administrators (AFSA), the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) will hold a webinar to discuss how principals, assistant principals, and administrators are balancing more than ever before, caring for the physical and mental health of students and staff, ensuring campuses remain safe and welcoming, and navigating the fast-changing challenges of educational technology, from AI in the classroom to the debate over cell phone bans.

Monday at 4pm ET

- **Cell Phones in Schools and Ties to Academic Performance:** The American Enterprise Institute (AEI) will hold a virtual discussion on "Are Cell Phones in Schools to Blame for Poor Academic Outcomes?"

Monday at 4:30pm ET

- **Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee:** The Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee will hold a markup of S. 1070 (119), the "National STEM Week Act."

Tuesday at 10am ET

- **Cash Assistance for Children:** The Urban Institute will hold a discussion on "Cash Assistance for Children: Research Roundup and Policy Future."

Tuesday at 12:30pm ET

- **The Importance of Real Skills for the AI World**: The Brookings Institution will hold a discussion on “The importance of real skills for the AI world.”
Friday at 1pm ET
- 7. **Future Hearings & Events**
 - **Politics and K-12 Education**: The Cato Institute holds a virtual discussion on “No Adult Left Behind: How Politics Hijacks Education Policy and Hurts Kids.”
October 29 at 12pm ET
- 8. **On The Floor of Congress This Week**
 - **Senate and House floor**: Potential consideration of continuing appropriations bill
- 9. **Important U.S. House and Senate Links**
- 10. **About BPAG**

1. COSSBA Policy Priorities

SCHOOL BOARDS

FORDHAM EXAMINES SCHOOL BOARDS AND THEIR CONSTITUENTS

On Tuesday, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute **hosted a webinar** titled “Are School Boards Out of Touch With Their Constituents?” featuring political scientists Michael Hartney of Boston College and the Hoover Institution, and Vladimir Kogan of The Ohio State University. Supported by the Wallace Foundation and moderated by Fordham President Michael Petrilli, the discussion examined findings from a **new national survey** of school board members and their alignment with local communities. Hartney outlined survey results showing that while school board members generally reflect the nation’s political balance, they are disproportionately white, college-educated, and more skeptical of charter schools and teachers’ unions compared to the broader public. The study also found that partisan alignment between boards and their districts largely holds, but on key policy issues, such as accountability, school choice, and union influence, boards often diverge from constituent views. Kogan framed these findings within the broader context of democratic accountability, arguing that school board elections often fall short of true representation due to low voter turnout, weak competition, and limited voter information. Panelists discussed reforms including aligning board elections with major electoral cycles to boost participation, improving transparency through better district performance data, and considering alternatives such as mayoral control in underperforming districts. Board member Kelly Piacsek of Waukesha, Wisconsin, added a practitioner’s perspective, stressing the need for balance between collaboration with administrators and independent oversight. The conversation concluded with a call for stronger democratic accountability, better information-sharing, and results-driven governance to ensure school boards more accurately reflect and serve their communities.

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2. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up

The federal government remains partially shuttered as Congress repeatedly failed to pass a funding measure to reopen federal agencies last week. On Thursday, the Senate again rejected a stopgap resolution to reopen the government. Republicans criticized Democrats for refusing concessions,

while Democrats accused Republicans of holding the government “hostage” to ideological priorities.

Last week, the administration initiated mass layoffs via reduction-in-force (RIF) orders rather than standard furloughs, a shift pursued by Office of Management and Budget Director Russ Vought as a deliberate action. On October 15, U.S. District Judge Susan Illston issued a temporary restraining order blocking the administration from cutting over 4,100 federal employees, finding evidence the layoffs appeared “politically motivated” and lacked proper planning. In reaction, some Republicans argued the executive has broad authority during a shutdown; others, including Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Susan Collins (R-ME), expressed concern. Meanwhile, Democrats framed the mass firings as punitive and dangerous, with one House Democrat saying, “we cannot allow the dismantling of core services under cover of a shutdown.”

The shutdown continues this week. The House remains out of session, as they have for the last month, while the Senate continues to meet and hold unsuccessful votes on measures to fund the government for several months. Democrats are reportedly rejecting Republican offers to hold a vote on continuing healthcare subsidies in return for agreeing to a “clean” continuing resolution, arguing that no formal offer has been made. It’s not clear which party is “winning” this shutdown, and as long as that remains the case, it’s not clear what will force an end to it.

How does this impact State School Board Associations?

At the Department of Education, reductions in force efforts have reportedly affected many programs. It has been rumored that K-12 federal education programs are currently being managed by just a handful—and maybe as few as two—employees. The National Science Foundation also faced staffing cuts—cuts that are contributing to delays in grant evaluations and stalling scientific initiatives. If the shutdown continues, school districts that rely on Impact Aid payments to supplement federal land in their communities could see a delay in their November payments and there could also be a delay in reimbursements for school meal programs. Finally, the Department of Agriculture has alerted states that the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or “food stamp program” will not have the money to make full November payments to state governments, who administer the program. Families who rely on could see a dramatic reduction in the food aid they receive in November.

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3. In Brief – Last Week in Washington

JUDGE TEMPORARILY BLOCKS TRUMP ADMIN SHUTDOWN RIFS

On Wednesday, a U.S. District Court judge temporarily blocked the Trump administration’s plan to terminate thousands of federal workers, including sharp cuts at the Department of Education (ED). The ruling prohibits both new reduction-in-force (RIF) notices and the enforcement of those already issued. The legal action stems from a lawsuit filed by two major unions—the American Federation of Government Employees and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees—accusing the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) of exceeding its authority and violating the law by threatening mass firings during the shutdown. ED has already seen two rounds of major staffing cuts in 2025. In March, it slashed nearly half its workforce, reducing from roughly 4,133 employees at the start of Trump’s term to about 2,183. The restructuring included closing seven of 12 regional civil rights offices, affecting oversight over many states. In April, lawsuits challenged the ability of the Institute of Education Sciences to

function after further downsizing. In October, the administration issued notices affecting 466 additional ed employees, spanning divisions like civil rights, special education, budgeting, and school safety. Under the judge's October 15 order, the mass firings are on hold. The court found the shutdown-era terminations to be "arbitrary and capricious," exceeding legal authorities. It is also requiring the federal government to file two submissions: first, a full accounting of all RIF actions covered by the injunction, including both actual and planned RIFs, identifying the agency involved, the number of employees affected, and the programs, projects, or activities (PPAs) implicated; and second, a description of the steps the government has taken to comply with the temporary restraining order, detailing how it is adhering to the court's directive.

AFTERSCHOOL ALLIANCE RELEASES 2025 "AMERICA AFTER 3PM" REPORT

On Wednesday, the Afterschool Alliance hosted an event to announce the release of their 2025 "America After 3PM" report. The event, "*How Children Spend the Hours After School*," spotlighted the growing demand for after-school programs and the challenges in meeting it. Nearly 30 million parents want their children in such programs, yet more than three in four lack access, with low- and middle-income families hardest hit. Parents overwhelmingly view after-school programs as vital for safety, skill-building, academic engagement, and providing peace of mind for working families. However, affordability, limited availability, and transportation remain the biggest barriers, exacerbated by stagnant federal funding since 2022. Speakers highlighted both the personal and societal stakes. Harrisonburg, Virginia Mayor Deanna Reed underscored how programs support families and urged stronger federal backing for 21st Century Community Learning Center grants. Maryland State Board of Education President Dr. Joshua Michael stressed the need for all states to adopt dedicated after-school funding, citing new data showing three in four children miss out on programs their parents want. Dr. Deborah Moroney of the American Institutes for Research pointed to decades of evidence that after-school opportunities directly boost youth development, particularly in STEM and civic engagement. Law enforcement voices, including Michigan Prosecutor D.J. Hilson, framed after-school programs as crime-prevention tools, noting every dollar invested yields a \$3 return. Glendale, Arizona official Manny Padia described their long-term community impact, from inspiring careers to reducing justice-system involvement. The event concluded that collaboration among policymakers, educators, families, and communities is essential to expand access, so every child has a safe, enriching place to grow.

"ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS" ROLE IN CONNECTING UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

On Wednesday, Broadband Breakfast hosted its weekly Broadband Breakfast Live Online discussion on the role of "anchor institutions," including schools, libraries, and healthcare facilities, in expanding broadband access and advancing digital equity. The webinar, moderated by Broadband Breakfast Editor and Publisher Drew Clark, featured Michael Wallace of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences; Anne Slaughter of the Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS); Roger Zambrano of the Los Angeles County Office of Education; and Joseph Wender, Executive Director of the Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition. Panelists underscored the critical role anchor institutions play in connecting underserved communities. Wallace described how telehealth networks supported by the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) Rural Health Care Program have delivered life-saving care across Arkansas, while Slaughter highlighted libraries' role as "connective tissue" in digital equity ecosystems, providing device access, Wi-Fi, and digital literacy training despite declining federal support. Zambrano outlined the challenges K-12 systems face in sustaining connectivity and

cybersecurity amid inadequate E-rate funding, calling for stronger coordination between state and federal programs. Wender emphasized the need to modernize the Universal Service Fund (USF) to ensure sustainable support for E-rate and rural healthcare programs, noting the [Supreme Court's decision upholding the USF's constitutionality](#). He also warned that the [cancellation of the Digital Equity Act programs](#) and cuts to Wi-Fi support threaten progress toward universal connectivity. Panelists discussed opportunities for state programs and public-private partnerships to help fill emerging funding gaps, while stressing that long-term solutions will require predictable, bipartisan federal action. The session also previewed the upcoming [AnchorNets conference](#), where practitioners nationwide will share strategies for bridging the digital divide and strengthening community connectivity through schools, libraries, and healthcare networks.

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4. New Publications

America After 3PM 2025

Afterschool Alliance (October 2025)

The Afterschool Alliance's fifth edition of America After 3PM provides new insights about children and families during the hours of 3 to 6 p.m., when schools let out and many parents are working. Data from parents show afterschool programs remain an urgent priority, and millions of families who want to participate are missing out.

State of the States: Building a Strong Teacher Workforce for Students with Disabilities and English Learners

National Council on Teacher Quality (September 2025)

The report finds that States should focus on six key policy matters to ensure that special education and English learner teachers are ready to support these growing student populations from day one and stop the revolving door of turnover.

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5. In the News

Educators Say Oklahoma's School Cellphone Ban Has Been A 'Game Changer'

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K-12 Dive (October 17, 2025)

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THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

6. Weekly Calendar

Monday, October 20, 2025

Webinar: The Evolving Role of School Principals

Subject: The American Federation of School Administrators (AFSA), the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) will hold a webinar to discuss how principals, assistant principals, and administrators are balancing more than ever before, caring for the physical and mental health of students and staff, ensuring campuses remain safe and welcoming, and navigating the fast-changing challenges of educational technology, from AI in the classroom to the debate over cell phone bans.

Time: 4:00 p.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

Webinar: Cell Phones in Schools and Ties to Academic Performance

Subject: The American Enterprise Institute (AEI) will hold a virtual discussion on “Are Cell Phones in Schools to Blame for Poor Academic Outcomes?”

Participants: Virginia “Ginny” Gentles, education freedom and parental rights director, Defense of Freedom Institute; Robert Pondiscio, senior fellow, AEI; Martin West, academic dean, Harvard Graduate School of Education; and Alex Baron, middle school principal, E.L. Haynes Public Charter School.

Time: 4:30 p.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

Tuesday, October 21, 2025

Markup: Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee

Subject: The Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee will hold a markup of [S. 1070 \(119\)](#), the "National STEM Week Act"; [S. 2126 \(119\)](#), the "Integrated Ocean Observation System Reauthorization Act of 2025"; [S. 2245 \(119\)](#), the "Digital Coast Act"; [S. 2357 \(119\)](#), the "Young Fishermen's Development Extension Act"; [S. 2563 \(119\)](#), the "Global Investment in American Jobs Act of 2025"; [S. 2666 \(119\)](#), the "Foreign Robocall Elimination Act"; the "PIPELINE Safety Act of 2025.

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Location: 253 Russell Senate Office Building

Contact: Live stream available [here](#).

Webinar: Cash Assistance for Children

Subject: The Urban Institute will hold a discussion on “Cash Assistance for Children: Research Roundup and Policy Future.”

Participants: Tracy Gruber, executive director, Utah Department of Health and Human Services; Sarah Rosen Wartell, president, Urban Institute; Jacob Bastian, assistant professor of economics, Rutgers University; Hilary Hoynes, professor and faculty director, Berkeley Opportunity Lab; Pamela Herd, professor of social policy, University of Michigan's School of Public Policy; Elaine Maag, senior fellow, Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center; Sam Gill, president and CEO, Doris Duke Foundation; Doug Holtz-Eakin, president; and others.

Time: 12:30 p.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

Friday, October 24, 2025

Event: The Importance of Real Skills for the AI World

Subject: The Brookings Institution will hold a discussion on “The importance of real skills for the AI world.”

Participants: Nathan Sick, senior research associate at the Urban Institute; Katonja Webb Walker, president of Kennedy-King College; and others.

Time: 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

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7. Future Hearings and Events

Wednesday, October 29, 2025

Webinar: Politics and K-12 Education

Subject: The Cato Institute holds a virtual discussion on “No Adult Left Behind: How Politics Hijacks Education Policy and Hurts Kids.”

Participants: Charles Wilson, professor of law emeritus, Ohio State University College of Law; Vladimir Kogan, professor, Ohio State University; and Neal McCluskey, director, Cato Institute’s Center for Educational Freedom.

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

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8. On The Floor of Congress This Week

Senate Floor:

Potential consideration of continuing appropriations bill

House Floor:

Potential consideration of continuing appropriations bill

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9. Links for Up-to-Date Information on Hearings, Legislation, and Events

[U.S. House and Senate 2025 Schedule](#)

[U.S. Department of Education](#)

[U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions](#)

[U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor](#)

[U.S. Senate Budget Committee](#)

[U.S. House Budget Committee](#)

[Congressional Budget Office](#)

[Federal legislative information](#)

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10. About BPAG

Bose Public Affairs Group is a full-service government affairs and public relations consulting firm that has built a reputation for producing results. We partner with clients committed to excellence in education and other social services to achieve policy and advocacy success by:

- leveraging our expertise and passion;
- strategizing intelligent solutions; and,
- Creating meaningful impact.

Our team includes long-term insiders in education policy from Pre-K through higher education, innovative thinkers and savvy strategists that provide a comprehensive array of customized client services. We have the knowledge, skills, and relationships that are necessary for successful advocacy at all levels. From grassroots to grass tops and everything in between, our broad-based legislative practice approaches every project with the same degree of determination and professionalism. BPAG provides expertise in a variety of services:

- Government Relations
- Research and Analysis
- Advocacy Training
- Association Management
- Strategic Communications
- Policy Events

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